

20. Baptism – part one

WCF chapter 28 *Modern Language version – 1993 – OPC*

28.1. Baptism is a sacrament of the new testament, ordained by Jesus Christ, by which the person baptized is solemnly admitted into the visible church. Baptism is also for him a sign and seal of the covenant of grace, of his ingrafting into Christ, of regeneration, of forgiveness of sins, and of his surrender to God through Jesus Christ to walk in newness of life. By Christ's own appointment, this sacrament is to be continued in his church until the end of the age.

2. The outward element to be used in this sacrament is water, with which the person is to be baptized in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Baptism is to be performed by a minister of the gospel, lawfully called to that office.

Reminder: The purpose of both sacraments...

WCF 27.1 “... signs and seals of the covenant of grace... to represent Christ and his benefits and to confirm our relationship to him...”

Romans 4:11, “He received the sign of circumcision as a seal of the righteousness that he had by faith while he was still uncircumcised. The purpose was to make him the father of all who believe without being circumcised, so that righteousness would be counted to them as well...”

Sign: points to something else = Christ!

Seal: confirms that a promise is true = we belong to Him

Baptism: basics

Sacraments of the NT: baptism & Lord's Supper

Ordained by Jesus: part of the church's job – Matthew 28:19

= sign of admission into the visible church:

1 Cor. 12:13, “For in one Spirit we were all baptized into one body...”

= a sign and seal of the covenant of grace:

baptism always speaks of the promise of redemption for all who trust in Christ alone

- “ingrafting into Christ”: union with Christ
Romans 6:1-5 – with and in Christ
- regeneration and forgiveness: washing
Titus 3:5, Ezekiel 36:25
- our surrender to God: repentance and faith
Romans 6:4

... to the person being baptized (and to others recalling their own baptisms)

... to the end of the world – Matthew 28:19-20

Water! (vs. medieval Catholicism: oil, exorcisms...)

Into the Triune name (vs. cults) – Matthew 28:19-20

Ordinarily by and in the church

3. Dipping of the person into the water is not necessary. Baptism is rightly administered by pouring or sprinkling water on the person.

4. Not only those who personally profess faith in and obedience to Christ, but also the infants of one or both believing parents, are to be baptized.

5. Although it is a great sin to despise or neglect this ordinance, nevertheless, grace and salvation are not so inseparably connected with it that a person cannot be regenerated or saved without it. Neither is it true that all who are baptized are undoubtedly regenerated.

6. The efficacy of baptism is not tied to that moment of time when it is administered. Nevertheless, by the right use of this ordinance, the grace promised is not only offered but really exhibited and conferred by the Holy Spirit to all (whether adults or infants) to whom that grace belongs, according to the counsel of God's own will, in his appointed time.

7. The sacrament of baptism is to be administered only once to any person.

How? The mode of baptism?

Dipping? Pouring? Immersion? It *really* doesn't matter...

Biblical pointers...

NT "baptism" has various meanings:

- e.g. sometimes meant washing (e.g. chairs were "baptized", Mark 7:4) or taking food (Matt. 26:23)

Background of OT sprinkling:

- Blood on finger (LXX "*bapto*")... and sprinkle before the Lord - e.g. Leviticus 4:5 etc
- Referred to by NT as "various baptisms" – Hebrews 9:10ff

Salvation symbolism of "pouring" & "sprinkling"

- Holy Spirit poured out - Acts 1:5, 2:17, Romans 5:5
- Sprinkling with Christ's blood → cleansing and forgiveness – Hebrews 9:19-22, 10:22

Salvation symbolism of immersion

- Burial, resurrection – Romans 6:2-4

Who should be baptised?...

We all agree that baptism is for those who believe: unbaptized people who profess faith are baptized

- E.g. Acts 2:41, 8:12 etc

We do not all agree that baptism is also for believers' children!

- *Come back next week!*

Baptism: not to be neglected... but not essential to salvation

You can be saved by the promise without having the sign and seal of the promise - e.g. thief on cross

Warning: baptism and regeneration don't always go together – Baptismal regeneration is false... & the church cannot see hearts

- e.g. Simon Magus in Acts 8:13,23
- Baptism *always* speaks of God and the gospel, even if it's not true of the person baptised

The freedom of the Spirit

- "not tied to that moment of time"... but when the Spirit enables "right use"

Administered once:

- When it's hard: e.g. baptised Catholic gets converted...
- Church is to labour to avoid improper baptisms
- But God's grace wins!

Personal response: for what should we give thanks... confess... pray?

Next week: Baptism part two – the baptism of believers' children – arguments for and against