



Lesson 5

BAPTISM

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In past studies we have looked at the way God grants us the forgiveness of sins. We've seen that forgiveness is not dependant on our good works, but rather God offers it to us because of Christ's work. We've seen that we receive the forgiveness of sins through faith. And we've seen that this faith is created and strengthened by the Holy Spirit working through God's Word. All of this God does simply because of his grace — that undeserved love that he feels for all people.

In our next two lessons we want to look at other ways that God shares his grace with us — through the Sacraments. We define the sacraments in this manner.

☑ **DEFINITION: The Sacraments** — are:

1. a sacred act started by Jesus
2. in which the words of forgiveness are linked to something you can see and touch
3. by means of which God offers, gives, and assures us of the forgiveness of sins, salvation, and eternal life

Using that definition we see only two sacraments in the Scriptures: Baptism and the Lord's Supper. Just like God's Word, these Sacraments serve as ways God shows us his grace. In church terminology, we often call these "Means of Grace."

☑ **DEFINITION: Means of Grace** — the gospel in word and sacraments, by which God offers and gives us the forgiveness of sins, salvation, and eternal life

We begin the study of the sacraments by looking at baptism. And the questions that we will want to answer in this study are:

- ◆ What is baptism?
- ◆ How can water save us?
- ◆ What does my baptism mean for me today?

WHAT IS BAPTISM?

Please read the following passages and then answer the corresponding questions.

Ephesians 5:25-26 Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her to make her holy, cleansing her by the washing with *water* through the word.

Matthew 28:19 Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

Matthew 3:11 [John the Baptist said,] "I baptize you with *water*..."

Acts 8:36 As they traveled along the road, they came to some water and the eunuch said, "Look, here is *water*. Why shouldn't I be baptized?"

- 1) According to the italicized portions of those passages, what is one component of Baptism?
- 2) According to the underlined portions of those passages, what is the other component of Baptism?

Ephesians 5:25-26 Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her to *make her holy, cleansing her by the washing with water through the word.*

Acts 22:16 And now what are you waiting for? Get up, be baptized and *wash your sins away*, calling on his name.

Acts 2:38 Peter replied, “Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins.”

Mark 16:16 [Jesus said,] “Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved...”

John 3:5 Jesus answered, “I tell you the truth, no one can enter the kingdom of God unless he is born of water and the Spirit.

3) According to the italicized portions of those verses, what does baptism do?

4) Therefore, what gifts are offered in the sacrament of baptism? (Look at the underlined portions of those passages.)

On the basis of what we’ve looked at so far, how would you answer that question, “WHAT IS BAPTISM?”

The next question we need to consider is...

HOW CAN WATER SAVE US ?

Please read the following passages and then answer the corresponding questions.

Romans 6:3-5 Or don’t you know that all of us who were *baptized into Christ Jesus* were baptized into his death? We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life. If we have been united with him like this in his death, we will certainly also be united with him in his resurrection.

1 Peter 3:21 This water (the water of the flood at the time of Noah) symbolizes baptism that now saves you also—not the removal of dirt from the body but the pledge of a good conscience toward God. It saves you by the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Galatians 3:27 All of you who were baptized into Christ have *clothed yourselves with Christ*.

5) According to the italicized portions of those passages, to whom are we linked when we are baptized?

6) Therefore, the power of baptism to offer forgiveness *doesn’t* come from the water. Where does that power to forgive come from? (Look at the underlined portions of those passages.)

Baptism offers forgiveness of sins and salvation by linking us to Christ. Through baptism, we receive the benefits of Christ's death and resurrection. Let's look at how this is accomplished. Please read the following passages and then answer the corresponding questions.

Romans 3:22 This righteousness from God comes through *faith* in Jesus Christ to all who believe.

1 Corinthians 15:14 And if Christ has not been raised, our preaching is useless and so is your *faith*.

Galatians 2:16 We know that a man is not justified by observing the law, but by *faith* in Jesus Christ. So we, too, have put our *faith* in Christ Jesus that we may be justified by *faith* in Christ.

Romans 15:18,19 I will not venture to speak of anything except what Christ has accomplished through me in leading the Gentiles to obey God by what I have said and done — by the power of signs and miracles, through the power of the Spirit.

Ephesians 1:17 I keep asking that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the glorious Father, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation, so that you may know him better.

7) According to the italicized portions of those passages, what is it that links a person to Christ?

8) According to the underlined portions of those passages, how is that link established?

Now let's look precisely at what happens in baptism. Please read the following passages and then answer the corresponding questions.

John 3:5,6 Jesus answered, "I tell you the truth, no one can enter the kingdom of God unless he is born of water and *the Spirit*. Flesh gives birth to flesh, but *the Spirit* gives birth to spirit."

Titus 3:4,5 But when the kindness and love of God our Savior appeared, he saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy. He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the *Holy Spirit*.

Acts 2:38 Peter replied, "Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the *Holy Spirit*."

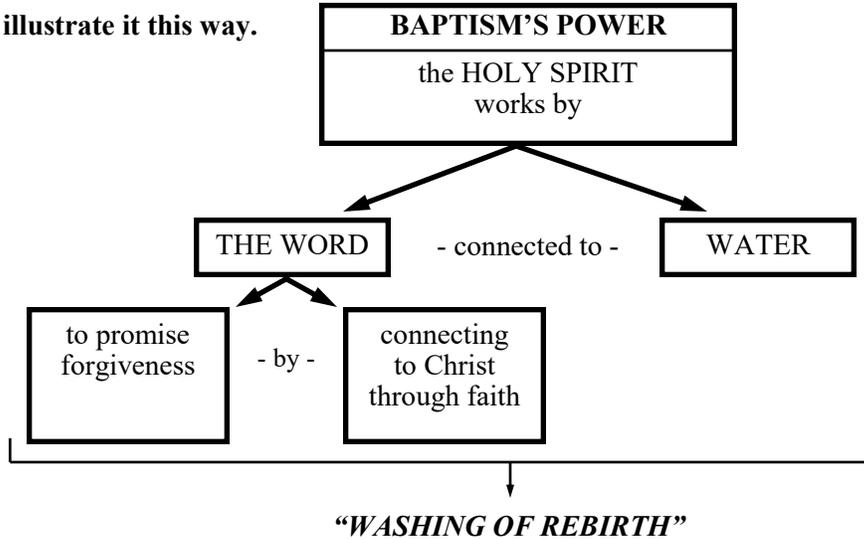
9) Earlier we said that baptism consisted of water connected to God's Word. In these passages we see why the word is the part of baptism that gives it power. According to the italicized portions of those passages, who works through the Word in baptism?

10) Based on the answers to questions #7, 8, and 9, what do you think "the gift of the Holy Spirit" is in Acts 2:38?

On the basis of what we have looked at in this section of our Bible study, how would you answer that question, "HOW CAN WATER SAVE US?"

THE WATER OF BAPTISM, IN AND OF ITSELF, IS POWERLESS TO DO ANYTHING. HOWEVER, THROUGH GOD'S WORD, WHICH IS CONNECTED WITH THE WATER, THE _____ CREATES (OR STRENGTHENS) SAVING _____ IN A PERSON'S HEART. THIS THEN LINKS THAT PERSON TO _____.

You could illustrate it this way.



This illustrates that the water, by itself, could accomplish nothing. But coupled with God's powerful Word the miracle of baptism takes place.

The next question that we need to consider, then, is...

For Whom Is Baptism Intended?

Please read the following passages and then answer the corresponding questions.

Psalm 14:3 (also Romans 3:12) There is *no one* who *does good*, not even one.

Romans 3:23 *All have sinned* and fall short of the glory of God.

Genesis 8:21 Every inclination of [mankind's] heart is evil from childhood.

Psalm 51:5 Surely I have been a sinner from birth, sinful from the time my mother conceived me.

John 3:6 Flesh gives birth to flesh. (Note: "Flesh" in the New Testament is generally used in the sense of "sinful flesh.")

Romans 8:7 The sinful mind is **hostile to God**. It does not submit to God's law, nor can it do so.

Romans 6:23 The wages of sin is **death**.

2 Peter 2:4 For if God did not spare angels when they sinned, but **sent them to hell**.

11) According to the italicized portions of those passages, who is guilty of sin?

12) According to the underlined portions of those passages, at what time in our lives are we first considered guilty of sin in God's eyes?

13) According to the portions of those passages that are printed in boldface, what happens if our sin is not taken care of?

Acts 22:16 Be baptized and *wash your sins away*.

John 3:5 Unless a man [literally “Unless anyone...”] is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God.

Acts 2:38,39 Peter replied, “Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the *forgiveness of your sins*. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. The promise is for you and your children.

14) According to the italicized portions of those passages, what does baptism do to sins?

15) According to the underlined portions of those passages, whom is this blessing meant for?

16) And whom would that therefore include? (Look at the last part of Acts 2:39.)

Therefore, one way we can tell who baptism was intended for is by looking at who has the *need* for baptism. The second way we can tell who baptism was intended for is by looking at Christ’s command to his disciples (including us) which he gave before he ascended.

Matthew 28:18-20 Then Jesus came to them and said, “*All authority in heaven and on earth* has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you.

17) According to the italicized portion of those passages, what does Jesus have?

18) And according to the underlined portion of those passages, what does Jesus ask us to do?

19) Who do you think would be included in “all nations”?

Incidentally, it’s important to note that Jesus does not command baptism alone. Not only are the disciples to baptize, they are to “teach...everything.” Baptism is not a magic ritual which saves a person, no matter what. Baptism is a miracle through which the Holy Spirit creates saving faith. But can faith ever be lost? Please read the following passages and then answer the corresponding questions.

1 Corinthians 10:12 If you think you are standing firm, be careful that you don't fall!

Luke 8:13 They believe for a while, but in the time of testing they fall away.

Psalms 119:28 Strengthen me according to your word.

20) On the basis of those passages, can a person fall away from faith?

21) How does the Holy Spirit keep our faith strong?

On the basis of what we have looked at in this section of our Bible study, how would you answer that question, “FOR WHOM IS BAPTISM INTENDED?”

Unfortunately, that is something that not all church bodies believe and confess. Some churches refuse to baptize infants. We maintain that Scriptures are clear on the matter. “All nations” is a clear statement. The burden of proof is on those who would claim that “all nations” would *not* include children. They must produce evidence — from Scripture — which would show that children are not to be included. Additionally, the teaching that we are sinful from the moment of conception (due to original sin) is clear. God’s intention to damn sinners is clear. And his promise to save sinners through the means of grace, which would include baptism, is crystal clear. Arguments against infant baptism are *never* made on a Scriptural basis. For a more detailed look at the fallacy behind rejections of infant baptism, please see Appendix VIII.

The final question we need to consider is...

WHAT DOES MY BAPTISM MEAN FOR ME TODAY?

Please read the following passages and then answer the corresponding questions.

Galatians 5:17 The sinful nature desires *what is contrary to the Spirit*, and the Spirit what is contrary to the sinful nature. They are in conflict with each other.

Romans 6:3-6 Or don't you know that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, **we too may live a new life.**

If we have been united with him like this in his death, we will certainly also be united with him in his resurrection. For we know that our old self was crucified with him so that the body of sin might be done away with, that **we should no longer be slaves to sin.**

Colossians 2:11,12 In him you were also circumcised, in the putting off of the sinful nature, not with a circumcision done by the hands of men but with the circumcision done by Christ, having been buried with him in baptism and raised with him through your faith in the power of God, who raised him from the dead.

22) According to the italicized portions of those passages, what does our sinful nature always want?

23) According to the underlined portions of those passages, what is one of the things baptism does?

24) Therefore, what is one thing that our baptism should remind us of every day? (Look at the portions of those passages printed in boldface.)

We will not always succeed in living that “new life” — a life that gives perfect glory to God. Therefore baptism will remind us of something else, as well. Please read the following passages and then answer the corresponding questions.

Psalm 38:18 I *confess* my iniquity; I am *troubled* by my sin.

2 Corinthians 7:10 Godly sorrow brings *repentance* that leads to salvation.

Galatians 3:27 All of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ.

Acts 20:21 I have declared to both Jews and Greeks that they must turn to God in *repentance* and have faith in our Lord Jesus.

25) According to the italicized portions of those passages, what will we do when we fail in our life of service to God and commit sin?

26) Part of repentance is remembering why we have forgiveness. When we sin, where do we turn for forgiveness? (Look at the underlined portions of those passages.)

✔ **DEFINITION: Repentance** — sorrow over sin accompanied by reliance on Christ alone for forgiveness

When we commit sin our baptism reminds us that Christ’s righteousness covers over that sin (cf. Galatians 3:27). We therefore have the comfort of knowing that when God looks at us he doesn’t see our sinfulness, but Christ’s perfection. That comfort is the beauty of baptism. It is summed up well in the following passage.

Isaiah 54:10 “Though the mountains be shaken and the hills be removed, yet my unfailing love for you will not be shaken nor my covenant of peace be removed,” says the LORD, who has compassion on you.

Baptism is a way that God makes a “covenant of peace” with us. A covenant is a legal agreement between two parties. This covenant is based on faith in the work of Jesus Christ. The beauty of baptism is that even when we aren’t faithful in keeping God’s commands, God is faithful in offering us forgiveness. His love for us “will not be shaken.” His covenants will not “be removed.” Incidentally, God’s covenant of peace — his promise to forgive — is the reason that we don’t need to be re-baptized every time we sin. Our unfaithfulness cannot negate God’s faithfulness!

On the basis of what we have looked at in this portion of our Bible study, how would you answer that question, “WHAT DOES MY BAPTISM MEAN FOR ME TODAY?”

MY BAPTISM SERVES AS A DAILY REMINDER THAT...

TAKING IT DEEPER

- A) Agree or Disagree — The power of baptism lies in the holy water.
- B) Agree or Disagree — Baptism is a ceremony where we say that we want God to take care of this person.
- C) Agree or Disagree — Babies are too young to understand baptism.
- D) Agree or Disagree — Babies are too young to believe in Jesus.
- E) Agree or Disagree — It makes no difference whether you are baptized or not.
- F) Agree or Disagree — You should be re-baptized if you switch religions and become Lutheran.
- G) Agree or Disagree — We lose the blessings of baptism if we don't act like Christians.
- H) Agree or Disagree — Babies who die without baptism are damned.
- I) Question: Is it necessary that someone be baptized in order to be saved? Why or why not?
- J) Question: Baptism is given to us by Christ in the New Testament. The Old Testament believers didn't have baptism. Does this mean they were somehow "less Christian"? Why or why not?
- K) Question: Who has the power to baptize?
- L) Question: If baptism creates faith, why don't we fly over a football stadium with a blimp, dump thousands of gallons of water on the crowd, and announce over the loudspeaker, "I baptize you in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit"?
- M) Exercise — In Appendix IX you will find Martin Luther's summary of the doctrine of Holy Baptism as it appears in the Small Catechism. Read through that summary and determine if it is an accurate confession of what the Bible teaches.

Appendix VIII — Arguments Against Infant Baptism

The arguments against infant baptism generally fall into two categories. Some of them deal with the sinfulness of children, and others deal with the faith of children. The following is a list of various arguments that are leveled against infant baptism., and Scriptural responses to them.

ARGUMENT — Infants are too young and innocent to commit sin.

This argument doesn't acknowledge what the Bible says about original sin. In Psalm 51:5 King David writes that he was "sinful from the time my mother conceived me." Jesus explains in John 3:6 that, "Flesh gives birth to flesh." This Bible makes no distinction between "original sin" and "actual sin." There is no hint that God tolerates original sin. The Bible teaches that if sinful actions are done in ignorance, God still considers them sinful (cf. Hebrews 9:7). Sinful actions that are committed against our will are still considered sinful (cf. Romans 7:19). The Bible teaches clearly that God intends to punish the person who commit sin with hell (cf. Exodus 34:7; 2 Peter 2:4).

Additionally, this argument minimizes what is considered sinful. Attitudes and thoughts can be every bit as sinful as speech or actions (cf. Ephesians 2:3). The two-month old who screams in anger because he is hungry is guilty of actual sin, even though he doesn't know what he is doing.

All sin — both original and actual — is washed away through the miracle of baptism.

ARGUMENT — God doesn't hold infants accountable for sins they commit before they are old enough to understand what they are doing. (This is sometimes known as the "age of accountability.")

In order to deny the Biblical teaching of infant baptism you need to manufacture supporting "truths" which have no basis in Scripture. As stated above, there are clear passages declaring the sinfulness of children, and clear passages declaring God's intentions to punish sin. But there is no passage which suggests that God ever ignores sin because of the age of the sinner.

The "age of accountability" teaching is horrible, for it attempts to counter God's threats to punish sin with a man-made theory which is contrary to clear passages of Scripture. If the sinfulness of infants is plainly taught, and God's promise to punish sin is plainly stated, then the way that children escape that punishment must be equally plain. The way to escape God's threats to punish sin *is* revealed in God's Word. God offers forgiveness of sins through baptism.

ARGUMENT — God offers forgiveness through faith in Jesus. Infants and little children can not understand Jesus Christ and his work.

This argument assumes that saving faith is only the cognitive recognition that Jesus was born in a stable, that he lived a perfect life, that he died on the cross, that he rose again. But the Bible describes faith as more than an intellectual process. It is more than mere head-knowledge. Romans 10:10 — "Is is *with your heart* that you believe..."

The Bible teaches that this heart-knowledge is something that we cannot come to possess by our own power. In Ephesians 2:8 Paul writes, "It is by grace you have been saved, through faith — and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God." Faith is given to us as a gift. And since God is all powerful, it is no more miraculous for him to give that gift to an unbelieving infant as it is for him to create faith in the heart of an unbelieving adult.

In addition to this, the Bible teaches that children can have faith. In Matthew 19:14 we read, "Jesus said, 'Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these.'" In Mark 10:15 Jesus says, "I tell you the truth, anyone who will not receive the kingdom of God like a little child will never enter it." Christ himself describes these little children as already possessing the kingdom of heaven. And there is nothing in the Bible that speaks of people possessing the kingdom of heaven outside of saving faith. Therefore when Jesus tells us that those little children have received the kingdom of God, he is telling us they possess saving faith. More than that, he even says children have faith we should emulate. Little children accept whatever is told them without questioning. You can point to the sky and call it green, and a little child will embrace your word simply because you spoke it. God asks us to embrace his Word in that child-like faith.

These are not the only examples of the Bible describing children having saving faith. In Matthew 18:6 Jesus says, "But if anyone causes one of these little ones *who believe in me* to sin, it would be better for him to have a large millstone hung around his neck and to be drowned in the depths of the sea." The Greek word there for "believe in" is a form of PISTEUO. It's the same word that appears over and over in the following portion of John's Gospel, where saving faith is clearly described.

The Son of Man must be lifted up, that everyone *who believes* (PISTEUO) in him may have eternal life. "For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that *whoever believes* in him shall not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him. *Whoever believes* in him is not condemned, but *whoever does not believe* stands condemned already because he *has not believed* in the name of God's one and only Son." (John 3:14-18)

This might raise the question, "How young can a child be and still have faith? One year? Six months? Six weeks?" There would be no reason to limit. Consider the following two portions of Scripture.

People were also bringing *babies* to Jesus to have him touch them. When the disciples saw this, they rebuked them. But Jesus called the children to him and said, "Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these. I tell you the truth, anyone who will not receive the kingdom of God like a little child will never enter it." (Luke 18:15-17)

When Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, the baby leaped in her womb, and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit. In a loud voice she exclaimed: "Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the child you will bear! But why am I so favored, that the mother of my Lord should come to me? As soon as the sound of your greeting reached my ears, the *baby* in my womb leaped for joy. Blessed is she who has believed that what the Lord has said to her will be accomplished!" (Luke 18:41-45)

The italicized words in those passages come from the same Greek word — BREPHE. It's a word used to describe a child anywhere from inside the womb to the pre-toddler years. In that first section Jesus says that these babies possess the kingdom of God. In the second section, Elizabeth, speaking under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, explains that the reason her baby leapt was for joy. While the main purpose of this passage is not to establish an age at which God could create faith, it does illustrate there would be absolutely no reason to limit it. And if God can work joy at being in the presence of his Savior in an unborn infant, God can create saving faith in whomever he pleases.

[The disciples] asked, "Who then can be saved?" Jesus looked at them and said, "With man this is impossible, but with God all things are possible." (Matthew 19:25,26)

The argument that children cannot have saving faith essentially makes faith into something we accomplish through our intellectual capacity. It makes faith, a gift of God, into a good work. While we can't understand how a child has faith, we believe it because the Bible tells us it is true.

ARGUMENT — Baptism is described in Scripture as something that we do as an act of obedience to Christ's command. Infants are too small to make a decision to obey Christ and be baptized. Therefore baptism should be delayed until the child is old enough to decide to be baptized.

This argument really gets to the heart of the matter of what baptism is. Is baptism something we do for God, or is baptism something God does for us? Consider the following passages.

Christ loved the church and *gave herself up* for her *to make her holy, cleansing her by the washing with water through the word.* (Ephesians 5:25,26)

In him you were also circumcised, in the putting off of the sinful nature, not with a circumcision done by the hands of men but with the circumcision *done by Christ*, having been buried with him in baptism and raised with him through your faith in the power of God, who raised him from the dead. (Colossians 2:11,12)

Christ gave himself up. Christ made the church holy through washing. Christ cleansed the church. The circumcision (here meaning a cutting off of the sinful nature) was done by Christ. Those passages don't speak of baptism as something that we do, but something that Christ does for us.

The mistake is often made over a misunderstanding of passages such as Acts 2:38, "Peter replied, 'Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins.'" This passage is understood to mean that baptism is a part of repentance. Indeed, it would be for an adult (or adolescent) who has already learned about Jesus, perhaps through reading God's Word or through the witnessing of a friend. The people whom Peter is addressing in that passage have already heard a sermon about their sinfulness (in allowing Jesus to be killed) and the purpose of Christ's work. The people were sorry for their sin, "cut to the heart," and wanted to know what they should do (Acts 2:37). Peter replied, "Repent and be baptized."

Repentance is defined as: 1) being sorry for your sin, and 2) relying on Christ for forgiveness. The people Peter preached to were sorry for their sin, and one way that God would create or strengthen their faith in Jesus Christ is through baptism. That is in perfect harmony with what all of God's Word says about baptism.

In addition to this, it's important to read the rest of that misunderstood passage. Peter's entire response is found in Acts 2:38-39 and reads: "Peter replied, 'Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. *The promise is for you and your children* and for all who are far off—for all whom the Lord our God will call.'" The promise of forgiveness which comes through the gift of the Holy Spirit (which is what faith is) is for "you and your children."

Baptism, therefore, has two abilities — to create faith and to strengthen faith. People who come to faith through reading or hearing God's Word will choose to be baptized because they understand that in baptism God strengthens their faith in the forgiveness they have in Christ. For infants (who are obviously too young to read the Bible or listen to a Gospel presentation) God creates faith through baptism. Parents claim this glorious gift for their children.

ARGUMENT — There is no mention of infant baptism in the Bible. It is anti-Biblical, since all the baptisms described in the Bible are of adults.

The mistake made here is that it is assumed that since there aren't stories about children being baptized, then the Bible must not teach it. If God's Word teaches that children are conceived sinful, that baptism washes away sin, that "all nations" are to be baptized, and if there is no other passages which limits who should be baptized, then *God's Word does teach infant baptism*. In addition to this, most likely there are examples in the Bible of infant baptism. Consider the following portions of Scripture.

He then brought them out and asked, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?"

They replied, "Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved—you and your household." Then they spoke the word of the Lord to him and to all the others in his house. At that hour of the night the jailer took them and washed their wounds; then immediately he and *all his family* were baptized. The jailer brought them into his house and set a meal before them; he was filled with joy because he had come to believe in God—he and *his whole family*. (Acts 16:30-34)

The following day he arrived in Caesarea. Cornelius was expecting them and had called together *his relatives and close friends*... So he ordered that they be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ. Then they asked Peter to stay with them for a few days. (Acts 10:24,48)

I also baptized *the household* of Stephanas. (1 Corinthians 1:16)

Crispus, the synagogue ruler, and *his entire household* believed in the Lord; and many of the Corinthians who heard him believed and were baptized. (Acts 18:8)

In every one of those examples there must not have been any young children living in those homes if there is no such thing as infant baptism. The word “household” is often used in Greek as an idiom for the entire family — from newborn to great-grandparents — who are living in that home. The simplest reading of those passages tells us that if any children were present, they too were baptized.

These passages should *not* be used to teach the need for infant baptism. That comes from Christ’s command to baptize all nations and from the understanding that all children are conceived with original sin. But these passages do suggest that there are Biblical examples of infants being baptized.

In addition to this, we should not misinterpret the fact that the majority of accounts of baptisms in the New Testament are adult baptisms. At that point in the history of the New Testament church, when the sacrament of baptism was new, there would be more adults baptized than infants. As time went on and the number of adult converts grew, and as they got married and had babies, the ratio of infant baptisms to adult baptism would rise. The early church fathers, such as Irenaeus, Origen, Tertullian, and Hippolytus, write about infant baptism as a widely accepted practice.

ARGUMENT — The doctrine of infant baptism makes baptism into some sort of magic formula, so that if a child is baptized he/she will automatically go to heaven no matter what.

Some Christian churches might, unfortunately, hold to that notion, but it is Biblically inaccurate. In Mark 16:16 Jesus says, “Whoever does not believe will be condemned.” Baptism is only a beginning. God creates faith, but faith can be lost. It is significant to note that in the Great Commission, Jesus links “baptizing in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit” with “teaching... everything I have commanded you” (cf. Matt. 28:19,20). Baptism needs to be followed by instruction in the Word so that the Holy Spirit may keep the person in the faith.

SUMMARY

Our good and gracious God wants all to be saved (cf. 1 Timothy 2:4). He has laid out how that salvation is accomplished in his Word. God’s Word teaches that all are sinful from conception, and that he intends to damn the sinner. Therefore little children are in grave spiritual need for the forgiveness that is found in Christ Jesus. The way that God saves is through faith (Ephesians 2:8). No other method of salvation is hinted at in Scripture (John 3:5). The Bible

Appendix IX — Martin Luther and Baptism

The following paragraphs are taken from Martin Luther's *Small Catechism* and are a summary of the doctrine of Holy Baptism. Martin Luther would explain doctrines by utilizing a series of questions and answers.

THE INSTITUTION OF BAPTISM

What is baptism?

Baptism is not just plain water, but it is water used by God's command and connected with God's Word.

What is that word of God?

Christ our Lord says in the last chapter of Matthew, "Go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit!"

THE BLESSINGS OF BAPTISM

What does baptism do for us?

Baptism works forgiveness of sin, delivers from death and the devil and gives eternal salvation to all who believe this, as the words and promises of God declare.

What is God's promise?

Christ our Lord says in the last chapter of Mark, "Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned."

THE POWER OF BAPTISM

How can water do such great things?

It is certainly not the water that does such things, but God's word which is in and with the water, and faith which trusts this word used with the water.

For without God's word the water is just plain water and not baptism. But with this word it is baptism. God's word makes it a washing through which God graciously forgives our sin and grants us rebirth and a new life through the Holy Spirit.

Where is this written?

St. Paul says in Titus, chapter 3, "He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit, whom he poured out on us generously through Jesus Christ our Savior, so that, having been justified by his grace, we might become heirs having the hope of eternal life. This is a trustworthy saying."

THE MEANING OF BAPTISM FOR OUR DAILY LIFE

What does baptizing with water mean?

It means that our old Adam with his evil deeds and desires should be drowned by daily contrition and repentance, and die, and that day by day a new man should arise, as from the dead, to live in the presence of God in righteousness and purity now and forever.