

Infant Baptism

Intro.

Infant baptism has been with us now since the 4th century A.D. You may see some of it in the 2nd and 3rd centuries but the 4th century is where it really is in full bloom. It finds its roots in the emperor Constantine who married Christianity to the state, to Rome. So church and state became one. They were inseparable. To be a member of the church was to be a member of Rome and vice-versa. Out of that comes Roman Catholicism. To maintain control of the citizens of Rome and the church, infant baptism was born. To not be baptized as an infant then, meant you were not a part of Rome or the church of Rome. The punishment resulted in being banished or excluded from human society and ended up, in many cases, in being put to death. Infant baptism did not originate therefore out of the scripture. That was no problem for Roman Catholicism, who based much of what it believed, not on scripture, but simply ideas that came from the fleshly, depraved minds of its leaders. This continued for 1,200 years. That brings us to the Reformation in the 16th century. Martin Luther and the reformers rebel against Rome and proclaim justification by faith alone. However, for political reasons, Luther did not purge infant baptism, its practice and belief, out of the Reformation and so we have it still with us today. A group called the Anabaptists (re-baptizers) emerged, discrediting infant baptism and following the practice of believer's baptism. The penalty for following this belief was beheading. With the resurgence of reformed theology today, this practice of infant baptism has again become a debated subject among many within the Church at large. That is why we are addressing it here.

The Issue

The real issue is whether infant baptism is biblical.

Let's look at the facts:

A. It is nowhere to be found in the Bible.

1. There is no scripture commanding infants to be baptized. Not one.
2. There is no example anywhere in the Bible of an infant being baptized. None.
3. There are no instructions in the Bible as to how to do it. None.
4. There is no verse or passage in the Bible that gives the meaning of infant baptism. None.
5. Jesus nor John the Baptist ever baptized any infants. None.
6. Paul and Peter both talk about baptism but not once about infant baptism. Not once.

B. Baptism is mentioned in the Bible but it is always done after someone has individually and personally professed faith in Christ. Let's look at the scripture

Household of Cornelius

Acts 10:44-48

44 While Peter was still speaking these words, the Holy Spirit fell upon all those who were listening to the message.

45 All the circumcised believers who came with Peter were amazed, because the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out on the Gentiles also.

46 For they were hearing them speaking with tongues and exalting God. Then Peter answered,

47 "Surely no one can refuse the water for these to be baptized who have received the Holy Spirit just as we did, can he?"

48 And he ordered them to be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ. Then they asked him to stay on for a few days.

Note: 1. No mention of infants. 2. They heard the message, they believed, the Holy Spirit fell on them and they were baptized. 3. Infants don't hear, don't believe and don't receive the Holy Spirit.

Household of Crispus

Acts 18:8

8 Crispus, the leader of the synagogue, believed in the Lord with all his household, and many of the Corinthians when they heard were believing and being baptized.

Note: 1. No mention of infants. 2. Crispus and his household along with other Corinthians believe and are then baptized.

Household of Lydia

Acts 16:14-15

14 A woman named Lydia, from the city of Thyatira, a seller of purple fabrics, a worshiper of God, was listening; and the Lord opened her heart to respond to the things spoken by Paul.

15 And when she and her household had been baptized, she urged us, saying, "If you have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come into my house and stay." And she prevailed upon us.

Note: 1. No mention of infants. 2. Lydia believes and is baptized. 3. We therefore naturally assume her household believed first, like Lydia did and the other accounts in Acts, and then was baptized. 3. Because the pattern in Acts is : hear, believe, baptize – there would need to be a specific statement that infants were present in the household.

Household of Stephanas

1 Cor 1:14-16

14 I thank God that I baptized none of you except Crispus and Gaius,

15 so that no one would say you were baptized in my name.

16 Now I did baptize also the household of Stephanas; beyond that, I do not know whether I baptized any other.

1 Cor 16:15

5 Now I urge you, brethren (you know the household of Stephanas, that they were the first fruits of Achaia, and that they have devoted themselves for ministry to the saints),

Note: 1. No infants mentioned. 2. The same household that was baptized in 1:16 is the same household that devoted themselves for ministry (obviously they were adults or old enough to serve) in 16:15.

Household of the Philippian Jailer

Acts 16:27-34

27 When the jailer awoke and saw the prison doors opened, he drew his sword and was about to kill himself, supposing that the prisoners had escaped.

28 But Paul cried out with a loud voice, saying, "Do not harm yourself, for we are all here!"

29 And he called for lights and rushed in, and trembling with fear he fell down before Paul and Silas,

30 and after he brought them out, he said, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?"

31 They said, "Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved, you and your household."

32 And they spoke the word of the Lord to him together with all who were in his house.

33 And he took them that very hour of the night and washed their wounds, and immediately he was baptized, he and all his household.

34 And he brought them into his house and set food before them, and rejoiced greatly, **having believed in God with his whole household.**

Note: 1. No infants are mentioned. 2. The whole household believes along with the jailer and they are all baptized. 3. Hearing the gospel, then believing, then baptism. Infants can't understand and infants can't believe.

Household of the nobleman

John 4:53

53 So the father knew that it was at that hour in which Jesus said to him, "Your son lives"; and **he himself believed and his whole household**.

Note: 1. Infants are not mentioned. 2. "Household" here are those who are capable of believing. 3. Baptism is not mentioned.

Misc. passages that are used to prove infant baptism.

Acts 2:38-39

38 Peter said to them, "Repent, and each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.

39 "For the promise is for you and your **children** and for all who are far off, as many as the Lord our God will call to Himself.

Note: 1. No mention of infants. 2. Verse 38 is true believer's baptism. 2. Verse 39 has nothing to do with infant baptism. It is saying that for future generations (children) who come by repentance, the promise of the forgiveness of sin and the gift of the Holy Spirit will be available to both Jew ("you") and Gentile("all who are far off").

Matt 18:1-4

1 At that time the disciples came to Jesus and said, "Who then is greatest in the kingdom of heaven?"

2 And He called a **child** to Himself and set him before them,

3 and said, "Truly I say to you, unless you are converted and become like **children**, you will not enter the kingdom of heaven.

4 "Whoever then humbles himself as this child, he is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven.

Note: 1. No mention of infants. 2. Jesus uses children to illustrate the fact that that is how you come into the Kingdom – like a child with simple faith, having nothing to contribute.

Matt 19:14

14 But Jesus said, "Let the **children** alone, and do not hinder them from coming to Me; for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these."

Note: 1. No mention of infants. 2. If these represent all children that were ever born, then everyone is in the Kingdom which is universalism. 3. This is saying the same thing as the last passage in Matt. 18 – the Kingdom of heaven belongs to people who are just like these children who have simple faith and nothing to contribute to their salvation.

1 Cor 7:12-14

12 But to the rest I say, not the Lord, that if any brother has a wife who is an unbeliever, and she consents to live with him, he must not divorce her.

13 And a woman who has an unbelieving husband, and he consents to live with her, she must not send her husband away.

14 For the unbelieving husband is sanctified through his wife, and the unbelieving wife is sanctified through her believing husband; for otherwise your **children** are unclean, but now they are holy.

Note: 1. No infants mentioned. 2. Children, like unbelieving husbands or wives are set apart (holy) and blessed because of a believing spouse, mother, or father. They are spared from much trouble in the world because there is a spiritual influence in the home.

- As seen in the above verses, there is an attempt by pedobaptists (those who believe in infant baptism) to find any verse, regardless how obscure and having nothing to do with infant baptism, to try and support their belief.

It reminds me of the story of Charles Spurgeon, who was in a discussion with someone who believed in infant baptism. As the discussion was going nowhere, Spurgeon suggested that they play a little game. One of them would give a verse that supported his side and then the other man would give a verse that supported the other side.

Spurgeon said to the man. "You go first." So the man quoted Matt. 19:14 "But Jesus said, "Let the little children come to Me, and do not forbid them; for of such is the kingdom of heaven."

Then the man said, "Now it is your turn." So Spurgeon proceeded to quote Job 1:1 "There was a man in the land of Uz whose name was Job;"

The other man said, "Wait a minute. Are you crazy? That verse has nothing to do with infant baptism."

To which Spurgeon replied, "And neither does yours."

C. Baptism in the New Testament is always the outward demonstration of the inward truth of personal salvation.

Rom 6:3-7

3 Or do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus have been baptized into His death?

4 Therefore we have been buried with Him through baptism into death, so that as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life.

5 For if we have become united with Him in the likeness of His death, certainly we shall also be in the likeness of His resurrection,

6 knowing this, that our old self was crucified with Him, in order that our body of sin might be done away with, so that we would no longer be slaves to sin;

7 for he who has died is freed from sin.

- It is clear from the above passage that: 1. Baptism is an outward sign that salvation has taken place. 2. We are united to Christ in His death, burial, and resurrection. 3. We now walk in newness of life, our old self has been crucified with Christ and we are no longer slaves to sin.
- Infant baptism can make no such claim. Again look at the passages we just looked at under “B” – they clearly show that those who were baptized were those: 1. who heard. 2. who believed. 3. who were saved. 4. who were then baptized.

D. Infant baptism in the N.T. does not replace circumcision in the O.T.

Show me chapter and verse where infant baptism replaces circumcision. There is none. There is no connection because they are totally different.

Circumcision connects male Jewish infants to ethnic Israel. It had nothing to do with the spiritual condition of the individual. In the N.T., baptism has everything to do with the spiritual condition of the individual. There is no parallel between the two, there is no connection.

E. Some will say, “But the Bible nowhere forbids infant baptism.”

There are a lot of things the Bible does not forbid. That doesn't make them right, That is an argument from silence.

If you go down that road, you will end up inventing all kinds of doctrines and practices that the Bible nowhere forbids, but that nevertheless will eventually dominate what you believe. That is exactly what Rome has done and they have ended up with this massive religious structure that is unbiblical, idolatrous, fleshly, dominated by fear, and is sending millions to hell.

F. Denominations are divided as to what infant baptism accomplishes.

Roman Catholics, Lutherans, Methodists, Episcopalians, Anglicans, Greek Orthodox would see in infant baptism the salvation of the infant. Grace is imparted, and the surrogate faith of the father or mother stands in place of the infant's faith which the infant does not have.

Presbyterians, Covenant, Reformed would see some form of grace conferred and the infant set apart, but the infant is not saved at baptism.

Summary

1. Infant baptism is not biblical. It is simply not found in Scripture. Because it is not found in Scripture, people have a range of meanings and understandings as to what it actually is and does.
2. Believer's baptism is biblical. All Scripture regarding baptism refers to those who personally have put their faith in Christ alone and outwardly desire to proclaim that faith through the act of baptism.
3. Infant baptism is a leftover from 1,200 years of Roman Catholicism.
4. The Reformation did not reject and therefore remove infant baptism from its ecclesiology (the doctrine of the Church) and soteriology (the doctrine of salvation).
5. Infant baptism is a feeble attempt to hang on to an unbiblical tradition.
6. Infant baptism results in:
 1. **confusion** – what does happen to that infant when baptized? Answers by pedobaptists range from: 1. The infant is set apart. 2. God “claims the infant in baptism” (whatever that means). 3. God saves the infant.
 2. **false security** – 1. for the parents who may think their child is in some way set apart or saved. 2. for the infant as they grow and believe somehow that they are saved.
 3. **A dead ritual.**
7. We need to help those who may be caught in the web of this tradition to escape from its clutches, lest they be found trusting in something that is empty and void of the truth.