

Top 10 Questions Regarding Baptism
(No Gallop Poll was consulted ...
Just some thoughts as compiled by Pastor Calvin!)
Updated Feb. 2008

The Word of God – His Command...

Matt 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. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.""

The Word of God – His Work...

Titus 3:5-6, "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, whom he poured out on us generously through Jesus Christ our Savior..."

10. What is baptism?

It is an act of God that unites us with the risen Christ and makes us members of God's family. It is not just plain water, but it is water included with God's command with His word. (When God speaks, it comes to be...see Gen. 1:1 ff)

9. What are the elements of baptism?

Baptism joins water and God's word, to give us life, forgiveness, and salvation. God is present at the calling of His Name, "In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit

8. What does the word "baptize" mean?

Literally = "to wash" In baptism God is "washing away our sin"
It is also used in Scripture to mean, sprinkling.

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7. What are some of the special symbols we use to celebrate baptism?

-The sign of the cross is done to acknowledge that God is the one present and has given his own Son to die for us.

-A white garment is sometimes worn to signify for our culture purity and the new life clothed with Christ.

-A baptismal candle may be lit each anniversary of the baptism as a way of teaching and reminding us of our relationship with God and His family the church.

-A baptismal banner is used to share the great news of baptism with the whole congregation!

6. What is the role of the parents, sponsors, and the church community?

The role of the parents

Parents are called by God to care for the spiritual, as well as the physical needs of their children.

The role of sponsors

Sponsors help the baptized person bear witness to Christ. They live the Christian life as an example. They pray for the baptized person to lead a Christian life.

The role of the church community

Prayer, support, and encouragement

5. Who is to be baptized? Many historical churches baptize babies: Roman Catholic, Lutheran, Episcopalian, Presbyterian, Methodist. However the Baptist and Church of Christ do not. Why does the Lutheran church baptize infants?

From the writings of the early apostles we have indications that the church has baptized babies. In fact up to about the 1500's the teaching of infant baptism was not disputed. We believe that if God was so opposed to infant baptism, we would have a clear word in Scripture about this.

a. The apostles baptized entire families

St. Paul baptized

The household (family) of Stephanas 1 Cor. 1:16

Lydia and her household Acts 16:15

Keeper of his family and all with him Acts 16:33

St. Peter baptized

Cornelius and all who were with him Acts 10:48

b. God's command. Babies belong to "all nations"

(4 x's Jesus includes "all" or a form of "all"...)

Matt 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. And surely I am with you **always**, to the very end of the age."

Infants, adults, middle ages "all" included in "all"

Blondes, brunettes, etc... "all" included in "all"

This passage does not speak of exclusion, but of inclusiveness

c. The Need for Baptism

The Scripture make plain that we are all by nature sinful and in need of forgiveness.

Rom 3:23, "for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,"

John 3:6, "That which is born of the flesh is flesh."

Eph 2:3, "...Like the rest, we were by nature objects of wrath."

We will not automatically choose God and His way. We will "naturally" oppose God. A child left to "decide" for himself/herself will oppose God --- every time." That is the power and effect of sin in our lives.

- d. The forgiveness won for us so many years ago on the cross is given us in the gift of baptism.

Titus 3:5-6, "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, whom he poured out on us generously through Jesus Christ our Savior..."

Joel 2:28, "And afterward, I will pour out my Spirit on all people...."

Eph 5:26, "to make her holy, cleansing her by the washing with water through the word..."

4. Can an infant believe?...a related question that helps answer the previous question

The question indicates just how ingrained "works righteousness" is in our lives! The question assumes that there is something the infant, or adult for that matter, must "do" as if "believing is a doing thing" to receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. This is a totally foreign concept in Scripture!

Eph 2:8-9, "For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith-- and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God-- not by works, so that no one can boast."

3. A better way of asking this questions is: Can God pour out His Spirit on and infant? On an adult?

Joel 2:28, "And afterward, I will pour out my Spirit on all people...."

Faith and belief in the Lord Jesus Christ is something the Lord works in our hearts through the powerful working of his Holy Spirit.

1 Cor 12:3, "Therefore I tell you that no one who is speaking by the Spirit of God says, "Jesus be cursed," and no one can say, "Jesus is Lord," except by the Holy Spirit."

The power of baptism doesn't depend on the person being baptized but on God!

2. Why do some churches insist on full immersion?

Lutheran churches are not opposed to immersion as a possible method for baptism. In fact the scripture addresses this imagery.

Rom 6:4, "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."

The idea of going down into the water and rising up certainly is a great visible image of what God is doing in baptism. We who were dead in Christ now rise to newness of life.

Col 2:13, "When you were dead in your sins and in the uncircumcision of your sinful nature, God made you alive with Christ. He forgave us all our sins,..."

However the overriding passage for me in this area is this one.

I Jn 4:18, "There is no fear in love. But perfect love drives out fear, ..."

In my mind God would not have us even doubting for one second His love for us. Doubts about God's love are created when we wonder about the "correct" amount of water. The Lord's love for us is not an area that we even need doubt. When one begins to "measure" aspects of faith we get in trouble. How much water is "enough?" --- A cup, a gallon, 10 gallons, 50 gallons, a river, an ocean, a bigger ocean? When one measures there is room for doubt. The Scripture uses the word "baptize", it can mean immersion, but it can also mean pouring or sprinkling! God is at work through the water (any amount), not the water through God. The water doesn't use God! God uses the water-and that wonderful powerful work through any amount!

1. Why do we speak of baptism as being born again?

John 3:3-5, "In reply Jesus declared, "I tell you the truth, no one can see the kingdom of God unless he is born again." "How can a man be born when he is old?" Nicodemus asked. "Surely he cannot enter a second time into his mother's womb to be born!" Jesus answered, "I tell you the truth, no one can enter the kingdom of God unless he is born of water and the Spirit."

This has got to be one of my favorite aspects of sharing the incredible wonder of God – as creator physical life and of spiritual life – same God! ...

...Illustrate how one enters physical life "through water" (amniotic fluid...)

God give us new life, (spiritual rebirth) through water as well. The water used in baptism!! The imagery is so prevalent in Scripture. The children of Israel were delivered from their enemies, the Egyptians, through water (Red Sea) and also entered into the Promise Land through water (the Jordan River). One cannot but make the connection to God "delivering" us to the promise land (heaven) through the waters of holy baptism! Wow! What an awesome God. Pick a date for baptism!