

The Doctrine of Christian Baptism
Trinity Baptist Church Discipleship Training
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Introduction:

Baptism is a command of our Lord Jesus Christ. It is one of the two ordinances of the Christian Church. Unfortunately, it is also a doctrine that is surrounded by disagreement and controversy among believers. While admitting the lack of conformity among believers, we must never consider it a minor issue of doctrine. The sacraments are one of the three marks of a true church of the Reformed tradition. Our Lord did not leave this ordinance to the imagination of men. The purpose of this study is to examine the Biblical doctrine of baptism, including the subjects of baptism as well as the mode and meaning of baptism.

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Authority for a Discussion on Baptism

- I. The Scriptures are the only rule of faith and practice
 - A. This is clearly taught in the London Confession of 1689 (As well as the Westminster Confession)
 1. Chapter 1:6 – “The whole counsel of God concerning all things necessary for his own glory, man’s salvation, faith and life, is either expressly set down or necessarily contained in the Holy Scripture: unto which nothing at any time is to be added, whether by new revelation of the Spirit, or traditions of men.”
 2. Chapter 1:10 – “The supreme judge by which all controversies of religion are to be determined, and all decrees of councils, opinions of ancient writers, doctrines of men, and private spirits, are to be examined, and in whose sentence we are to rest, can be no other but the Holy Scripture delivered by the Spirit, into which Scripture so delivered, our faith is finally resolved.”

- B. The regulative principle should govern our worship, i.e., only those elements of worship commanded by God are to be allowed in worship
1. London Confession of 1689, 22:1 – “. . . the acceptable way of worshipping the true God is instituted by himself, and so limited by his own revealed will, that he may not be worshipped according to the imaginations and devices of men, nor the suggestions of Satan, under any visible representations, or any other way not prescribed in the Holy Scriptures.”
 2. The ordinances are considered a part of Biblical worship
London Confession of 1689, 22:5 – “The reading of Scriptures, preaching and hearing the Word of God, teaching and admonishing one another in psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs, singing with grace in our hearts to the Lord; as also the administration of baptism, and the Lord’s supper, are all parts of religious worship of God, to be performed in obedience to him, with understanding, faith, reverence and godly fear; moreover, solemn humiliation with fastings, and thanksgivings upon special occasions, ought to be used in an holy and religious manner.”
- C. While believing in the unity of Scripture, as baptism is an ordinance of the New Covenant church our primary source of primary instruction concerning baptism must be the New Testament
1. The New Testament is the final and clearest revelation of God to man.
 2. It is often explained using the Augustinian statement, “The New is in the Old concealed, the Old is in the New revealed.
 3. The clearest revelation of practice in the New Testament church is found in the New Testament. Paul told Timothy he was writing to establish proper practice within the church
1 Timothy 3:14-15 – “These things write I unto thee, hoping to come unto thee shortly: But if I tarry long, that thou mayest know how thou oughtest to behave thyself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth.”
 4. Some errantly seek instruction for Baptism from the ordinances of the Old Covenant.
Walter Chantry writes: “No Baptist begins to seek an answer to the question, ‘Who should be baptized?’ by studying the Bible’s doctrine of the covenants. Rather, he begins with the New Testament texts which deal directly with the term ‘baptize.’ In a later study of Covenant Theology, he finds confirmation and undergirding of his conclusions.”
(Chantry, Walter J. *Baptism and Covenant Theology*. P. 1)
 5. Fred Malone affirms the unity of Scripture:
“The New Testament also describes the unity between the two testaments in terms of typological promise and fulfillment. Thus, through Jesus Christ, born-again Christians (circumcised and uncircumcised) become the fulfilled children of Abraham (Galatians 3), the true Jew and circumcision (Romans 2:29, Philippians 3:1-3, Colossians 2:11-12), the new temple of God (1 Corinthians 3:16-17, Ephesians 2:19ff.) and, therefore, the new Israel of God (Galatians 6:16, Jeremiah 31:31-34). This unity between the testaments must be affirmed over and over, especially when exploring the question of infant baptism.”
(Malone, Fred, *The Baptism of Disciples Alone*. P. 45)

- II. Baptism rests upon the authority of the Lord Jesus Christ
- A. The Great Commission
Matthew 28:18 – "All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth."
 1. The word for power is ἐξουσία (exousia) which points to authority with the power of enforcement.
 2. On the basis of this authority Jesus commanded His disciples to carry the gospel into the world, making disciples of those who believe, baptizing them, and then instructing them according to His commandments.
- B. Baptism must be regulated by His divine instruction
 1. The new believer submits to baptism by the command of Christ
 a. Baptism marks the commencement of discipleship
Matthew 28:19 – "Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost:"
 The word for "teach" is μαθητεύω (matheteuo) – a verb meaning "to make a disciple"
 b. As disciples are made, they are baptized as an act of obedience and disciplined in the doctrines of Christ.
 c. "in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit" describes the full submission of the new believer to the authority of the triune God
 2. The church conducts baptism by the command of Christ

The Subjects of Baptism

- A. The testimony of Scripture points to believer's baptism alone
 1. The Baptisms in the Gospels are believer's baptisms
 a. Clearly the baptisms of John the Baptist and Jesus' disciples make no mention of infant baptism
 b. Some Paedobaptists attempt to separate the baptisms of John the Baptist and Jesus' disciples from the Christian baptism commanded in the Great Commission.
 (1) We have to assume that the 12 Apostles were baptized by John or by each other
 (2) We have no record of their rebaptism after the Great Commission
 2. The examples of baptisms recorded in the book of Acts assume the baptism of believers
Acts 2:41 – "Then they that gladly received his word were baptized"
Acts 8:12 – "But when they believed Philip preaching the things concerning the kingdom of God, and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women."
Acts 8:36 – "And as they went on *their way*, they came unto a certain water: and the eunuch said, See, *here is* water; what doth hinder me to be baptized?"
Acts 16:14-15 – "And a certain woman named Lydia, a seller of purple, of the city of Thyatira, which worshipped God, heard *us*: whose heart the Lord opened, that she attended unto the things

which were spoken of Paul. ¹⁵ And when she was baptized, and her household. . ."

Acts 16:30-33 – ". . ."Sirs, what must I do to be saved? ³¹ And they said, Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house. ³² And they spake unto him the word of the Lord, and to all that were in his house. ³³ And he took them the same hour of the night, and washed *their* stripes; and was baptized, he and all his, straightway."

Acts 18:8 – "And Crispus, the chief ruler of the synagogue, believed on the Lord with all his house; and many of the Corinthians hearing believed, and were baptized."

Problems with the Paedobaptist Position

- I. History shows that the early church practiced believers baptism
 Infant baptism did not appear until about A.D. 180
 Paul Jewett – "Beginning with Augustine and moving back to New Testament times, I have evaluated each relevant passage from ancient Christian sources and have reached the conclusion that the practice of infant baptism appears in the Western Church about the time of Irenaeus (A.D. 180) and in the Eastern Church somewhat later, but prior to Origen (A.D. 233)
 (Paul Jewett, *Infant Baptism & the Covenant of Grace*, 7)

- II. There are serious Biblical problems with Paedobaptism
 - A. Lack of Positive Command
 1. Although there are direct commands and examples for the baptism of believers, authority for the baptism or sprinkling of infants is absent
 2. There is not one single example or positive command in Scripture for the baptism or sprinkling of infants.
 3. Paedobaptists are without positive Biblical evidence or authority
 - B. Infant Baptism is not in accord with the Biblical Doctrine of Election
 1. Election is not of families or tribes but of individuals
 2. Paedobaptists are guilty of the assumption that there is special favor upon the children of the elect.
 - a. John Calvin – "Our children, before they are born, God declares that he adopts for his own when he promises that he will be a God to us, and to our seed after us. In this promise their salvation is included. None will dare to offer such an insult to God as to deny that he is able to effect to his promise."
 (John Calvin, *Institutes*, Vol. 2, 4:15:20, 525)
 - b. Paul Jewett writes: "The doctrine of 'presumptive election' was given confessional status initially by the Reformed party of Switzerland in the *First Helvic Confession*. In this confession baptism is defined as the 'washing of regeneration.'"
 (Paul Jewett, *Infant Baptism & the Covenant of Grace*, 155)
 3. God's election is personal and saving.
 To take babies, make them a part of the church, and then later lose them to hell is a gross violation of election.

- C. Paedobaptism is a serious violation of the command for the church to remain distinct from the world
1. Paedobaptism must either admit that the baptized infants are regenerate or admit that they have brought the unregenerate into the church.
 2. For churches who allow their children to come to the Lord's Table is to increase their sin by partaking with those who have no part with Christ.
- D. Paedobaptism ignores the consistent example in Scripture that faith and repentance must precede baptism.
- Mark 16:16** – “He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned.”
- Acts 2:41** – “Then they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added *unto them* about three thousand souls.
- Acts 8:12-13** – “But when they believed Philip preaching the things concerning the kingdom of God, and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women. ¹³ Then Simon himself believed also: and when he was baptized, he continued with Philip, and wondered, beholding the miracles and signs which were done.”
- Acts 8:36-37** - “And as they went on *their way*, they came unto a certain water: and the eunuch said, See, *here is* water; what doth hinder me to be baptized? ³⁷ And Philip said, If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest. And he answered and said, I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God.”

III. The Issue of the Covenants

- A. Entrance into the Old Covenant was with an ethnic nation through physical descent
- Genesis 17:19** – “And God said, Sarah thy wife shall bear thee a son indeed; and thou shalt call his name Isaac: and I will establish my covenant with him for an everlasting covenant, *and* with his seed after him.”
- Genesis 17:8-10** – “And I will give unto thee, and to thy seed after thee, the land wherein thou art a stranger, all the land of Canaan, for an everlasting possession; and I will be their God. ⁹ And God said unto Abraham, Thou shalt keep my covenant therefore, thou, and thy seed after thee in their generations. ¹⁰ This *is* my covenant, which ye shall keep, between me and you and thy seed after thee; Every man child among you shall be circumcised.”
1. Every male child was given the sign of circumcision
 2. Circumcision is what set him apart from the Gentile world
 3. Circumcision was done without regard for whether or not they were true believers in God – The Pharisees were legitimate members of the covenant community though Jesus called them a generation of vipers.
- Matthew 23:33** – “Ye serpents, ye generation of vipers, how can ye escape the damnation of hell?”
- B. Paedobaptists erroneously transfer the promises given to Abraham and his seed to believers and their seed
1. They fail to recognize that the Abrahamic promises were fulfilled in Jesus Christ – that Jesus Christ is Abraham's final physical seed
 2. They fail to recognize that Abraham's offspring are now spiritual – the elect who are his offspring through faith in Christ and union with Him

Galatians 3:7 - "Know ye therefore that they which are of faith, the same are the children of Abraham."

3. Paedobaptists errantly include elements of some Old Covenant promises into the Covenant of Grace and thus redefining the eternal Covenant of Redemption according to the promises of the historical covenants.

Fred Malone writes:

"To project the administratively attached elements of the historical covenants back into eternity past by an erroneous inference and to thereby redefine the Covenant of Redemption and its historical outworking, the Covenant of Grace, is poor hermeneutics at best and unbiblical at worst."
(Malone, *The Baptism of Disciples Alone*, 64)

- C. Entrance into the New Covenant is not dependant upon ethnic descent or heredity
John 1:12 - "But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, *even* to them that believe on his name: ¹³ Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God."

1. The New Covenant is made with individual on the basis of their faith
Galatians 3:7-9 - "Know ye therefore that they which are of faith, the same are the children of Abraham. ⁸ And the scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the heathen through faith, preached before the gospel unto Abraham, *saying*, In thee shall all nations be blessed. ⁹ So then they which be of faith are blessed with faithful Abraham."

2. The elect are not identified as the offspring of believers but as those who would be brought to faith in Christ

- D. The Bible clearly teaches that those who are brought into the New Covenant have experienced a radical change.

Jeremiah 31:33-34 - "But this *shall be* the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel; After those days, saith the LORD, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people. ³⁴ And they shall teach no more every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the LORD: for they shall all know me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith the LORD: for I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more."

- a. An infant cannot have this kind of knowledge of God
"for they shall all know me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them"
- b. An infant cannot be said to have been justified
"for I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more."

- D. Christians have been circumcised with a circumcision made without hands (Romans 2:28-29; Jer. 31:31-34; Heb. 8:7-11)

1. True believers would be circumcised in their hearts which is putting off the body of the sins of the flesh - this is NOT BAPTISM, which is NOT WITHOUT HANDS.
2. Circumcision was not replaced by baptism, but by a new heart and life, symbolized by baptism.
3. Those who are baptized have already received this circumcision made without hands

Colossians 2:11-12 – "In whom also ye are circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, in putting off the body of the sins of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ: ¹² Buried with him in baptism, wherein also ye are risen with *him* through the faith of the operation of God, who hath raised him from the dead."

4. Clearly, this can only apply to believers. To say that this includes baptized infants is to admit baptismal regeneration! (At least one would have to admit that an infant who had "put off the body of the sins of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ (Col.2:11) would have no need for future conversion!)

IV. Paedobaptism will have a negative effect upon the purity of the church

A. The Church defined

1. Invisible Church – the body of Christ composed of all of the elect, redeemed by Christ and effectually called into fellowship with Christ. All of this church will enter into glory and the everlasting presence of Christ.
2. The visible representation of the body of Christ comprised of local churches with their members. Although the visible church may include members who are not a part of the invisible church it should strive to maintain a regenerate membership. This is accomplished through caution in receiving new members and church discipline for gross violations of Christian conduct.

B. Paedobaptism leads to an unregenerate church membership

1. Paedobaptists make an improper disconnection between the visible and invisible church
2. Paedobaptists must either admit to baptismal regeneration or that their children are regenerate from the womb or that they are receiving unregenerate church members
(All three positions are held by various Paedobaptist groups)

V. Concerning household baptisms –

A. Many Paedobaptists use the examples of household baptisms to support the baptism of infants

1. This is a dangerous hermeneutic from silence
2. Households may or may not have had infants. These passages speak of baptism but not of infants.
3. Since every example of baptism in Scripture is of believers, we must assume that the ones baptized in these households were also believers.

B. Case study

1. Lydia - **Acts 16:14-15**
 - a. Says nothing about infants.
 - b. Gill points out that she was in Philippi on business and there would have been little likelihood that infants were present. "Her household seems to have consisted of menial servants she brought along with her, to assist her in her business."
2. The Philippian jailer - **Acts 16:30-33**
Verse 32 states, "and they spake unto him the word of the Lord, and to all that were in his house." Try to envision Paul leaning over the cribs preaching to the infants!

3. Crispus - **Acts 18:8**

It specifically says that those in the house of Crispus who were baptized were those who "believed on the Lord."

4. Stephanas - **1 Cor. 1:16**

a. This is made ridiculous in light of chapter 16

1 Corinthians 16:15-16 – "I beseech you, brethren, (ye know the house of Stephanas, that it is the firstfruits of Achaia, and *that* they have addicted themselves to the ministry of the saints,) ¹⁶ That ye submit yourselves unto such, and to every one that helpeth with *us*, and laboreth."

b. Are we to assume that the infants of Stephanas had taken leadership positions and that Paul was exhorting the Church of Corinth to "submit" to their leadership?

C. The Great Commission established the pattern for baptism. Even if the apostles baptized infants, it was not the believers baptism of the Great Commission. The practice in Acts was not to baptize infants, though we find that believing adults are specifically mentioned.

D. Paedobaptists quickly admit that there are no Biblical examples for paedobaptism (yet still defend their position as Biblical).

Louis Berkhof states: "It may be said at the outset that there is no explicit command in the Bible to baptize children, and that there is not a single instance in which we are plainly told that children were baptized. But this does not necessarily make infant baptism un-Biblical."

(Louis Berkhof, Systematic Theology (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1939; reprint 1993), 632.)

VI. Arguments against paedobaptism from the Great Commission - (Matt. 28:19-20; Mark 16:15)

A. The great commission includes ONLY believers. (Matt. 28:19-20; Mark 16:15) Every use of the word *disciple* in the New Testament refers to a willful follower of a teachers. This would exclude infants.

B. If another commission could be found to baptize infants, these infants, UPON BELIEVING THE GOSPEL, must be baptized according to this commission.

C. Had the command been to "circumcise them in the name of the Father...". INFANTS WOULD STILL BE EXCLUDED, NO MATTER WHAT THE FORMER PRACTICE OF CIRCUMCISION! This is because the command is to do this to believers!

D. Even if the rite of circumcision is continued in baptism the subjects have been specifically limited to believers. The Lord commanded His disciples to baptize believers. To include infants because they are not specifically forbidden is to disobey the Lord.

E. The command is to baptize into (εἰς) the name of the Father... Indicating union with and subjection to God. Infants can't thus be baptized.

F. We are commanded to teach the ones baptized. Infants are not included.

G. The practice of infant sprinkling ultimately leads to denying deny true believers the baptism commanded by Christ! The true ordinance is denied, and thus the spiritual benefit of obedience.

VII. Other Logical Problems with the Paedobaptist position

- A. While properly admitting a difference between the visible and invisible church, the Paedobaptist position does not strive for a regenerate visible church membership (also noted above). Infants are baptized into the church where they remain members unless brought under church discipline. This means that adult children, baptized as infants and brought up in the church (yet still unregenerate), could then baptize their children and perpetuate an unregenerate church membership.
- B. Children raised as church members and receiving all the benefits of church membership are far less likely to see themselves as sinners in need of a Savior. The practice risks poisoning souls. If the church accepts them as members in good standing why would God not accept them?
- C. Are children, who are baptized into the church, then allowed to partake of the Lord's Supper of which they have no part in the Christ of the supper?
1. Are not those who are damned in 1 Cor. 11 for partaking of the Lord's table unworthily (V.27-29) guilty of not discerning the Lord's body (V.29).
 2. Is an unregenerate man (or child) capable of discerning the Lord's body?
1 Corinthians 1:18 – “For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved it is the power of God.”
1 Corinthians 2:14 – “But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know *them*, because they are spiritually discerned.”
 3. If the children, on the other hand, are excluded from the table, upon what grounds are they denied if the Lord's supper as an ordinance (sacrament) of the church? A.H. Strong states, "No reason can be assigned for restricting to intelligent communicants the ordinance of the Supper, which would not equally restrict to intelligent believers the ordinance of Baptism." (A.H. Strong, Systematic Theology, p.952)
- D. Paedobaptists imply (if not actually affirm) that all of the children of the elect are also elect (also noted above). This would contradict John 1:13.
John 1:13 – “Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.”
 The implication of paedobaptism is that the faith of the parents becomes the faith of the child.
 The Westminster Confession implies that the infant has been engrafted into Christ Chapter 28:1 – “Baptism is a sacrament of the New Testament ordained by Jesus Christ, not only for the solemn admission of the party baptized into the visible church, but also to be unto him a sign and seal of the covenant of grace, of his being engrafted into Christ, of regeneration, of remission of sins, and of his giving up unto God, through Jesus Christ to walk in newness of life: the sacrament is, by Christ's own appointment, to be continued until the end of the world.”
- E. There is no Biblical command obliging us to regulate baptism by circumcision but if one were to be found upon what ground of authority would we change the extent.
1. Assuming one's desire to be thoroughly Biblical, those who baptize infants based upon this covenant relationship should baptize only male children
 2. Why do they not baptize only on the eighth day.
 3. Why are not adult children of a new convert baptized?

Arguments on the Issue of Mode

1. The mode of baptism is not an unessential aspect to the ordinance. The mode demonstrates the outward symbolic signs of the inward spiritual realities. The truth of our salvation is demonstrated in the ordinance.
2. The mode of baptism would not be an issue for either side were it not essential for the Paedobaptist position. While it may be difficult to prove Biblically that sprinkling was never practiced (such as in the case of illness), it is also highly difficult to argue that sprinkling was practiced universally to the exclusion of immersion, although some Paedobaptist churches refuse to immerse believing adults even upon request - a clear effort to perpetuate the Paedobaptist position.
Even the *Westminster Confession* 28:3 states: "Dipping of the person into water is not necessary; but baptism is rightly administered by pouring, or sprinkling water upon the person."
3. Although Godly men have argued for the Biblical support of sprinkling as the mode of baptism, Scripture evidence is strong in support of immersion.
The Biblical accounts of baptism show the candidate went down into the water
 - A. **Matthew 3:6** – "And were baptized of him in Jordan, confessing their sins."
 1. Note, "In Jordan" not with or by the Jordan.
 2. Why would someone go down into a river so that some water could be poured on their head (and this was done consistently!).
 - B. This is seen again in Mark's Gospel
Mark 1:9 – "And it came to pass in those days, that Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee, and was baptized of John in Jordan."
 1. Here the word εἰς (eis) is used – literally translated "Into Jordan"
This is also the same word used in the Great Commission –
Matthew 28:19 – "Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost:"
 2. Jesus was Baptized into the Jordan
 3. Disciples are Baptized into union with the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit signifying our union with the godhead. It only makes sense to immerse one into union with Christ, not sprinkle.
 - C. We find the same thing at the baptism of Christ - "and Jesus, when he was baptized, went up straightway out of the water" (Matt. 3:16).
 - D. At the baptism of the Ethiopian Eunuch - It is implied that they had come upon a body of water. They then went down into the water
Acts 8:36 – "And as they went on *their way*, they came unto a certain water: and the eunuch said, See, *here is water*; what doth hinder me to be baptized?"
Acts 8:38 – "And he commanded the chariot to stand still: and they went down both into the water, both Philip and the eunuch; and he baptized him."
 - E. In John 3 the place for baptism was chosen because of the large quantity of water. Sprinkling demands very little water. A skin used to carry water could have baptized a multitude.

John 3:23 – “And John also was baptizing in Aenon near to Salim, because there was much water there: and they came, and were baptized.”

- 4 There is much debate over the meaning of the word βαπτίζω (baptizo, translated baptize).
 1. It is of interest to note that the highly respected lexicon of Liddell and Scott, which I quote because it is a secular classical Greek lexicon and thus not as likely to be influenced by theological prejudices, does not give the definition of sprinkle for the word. Rather it uses such definitions as: to be drowned; of ships, to sink; flooded; drenched; to be head and ears in debt; getting into deep water; dipping in water, immersion.
 2. In the New Testament the word βαπτίζω (baptizo) is never used in the passive voice with the word water as the subject of the verb. In other words, water is never said to be baptized (or sprinkled) upon the person which is what you would expect if baptizo meant “to sprinkle.” The person is always the subject as he is “baptized.”

- 5 Even Calvin, himself a Paedobaptist, believed that the Biblical word for baptize (βαπτίζω baptizo) means to immerse.

“Whether the person baptized is to be wholly immersed, and that whether once or thrice, or whether he is only to be sprinkled with water, is not of the least consequence: churches should be at liberty to adopt either, according to the diversity of climates, although it is evident that the term *baptize* means to immerse, and that was the form used by the primitive Church.”

(John Calvin, *Institutes*, Vol. 2, 4:15:19, 524)

- 6 The symbol of baptism seems most appropriate with immersion. Paul said, "We were buried therefore with him through baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life" (Romans 6:4). Only immersion gives an accurate picture of dying with Christ and rising to walk in newness of life.

Who is Authorized to Administrate Baptism

1. It has been the common practice of the church that only ordained ministers administer the ordinance of Baptism.

London Confession of 1689 28:1-2 –

 1. Baptism and the Lord’s supper are ordinances of positive and sovereign institution, appointed by the Lord Jesus, the only Lawgiver, to be continued in his church to the end of the world.
 2. These holy appointments are to be administered by those only who are qualified and thereunto called, according to the commission of Christ.
2. J.L. Dagg – “The commission specifies duties, for the performance of which the apostles were to provide. One of these was the administration of baptism. They were commanded, not to make disciples and teach them the duty of being baptized; but to make disciples and baptize them. The administration of the rite was to be their care; and, where they could not perform it in their own person, it was made their duty to provide for its performance. This reasoning proves satisfactorily, that the administration was not designed to be left to any one whom the candidate might select; and it is confirmed by the

words of Paul: ‘Christ sent me not to baptize, but to preach the gospel.’ These words imply, that Christ had sent some persons to baptize. The duty was to be performed; and these words, taken in connection with the fact that John the Baptist and other apostles were commanded to baptize, confirm the deduction that the work was to be done by agents provided. . . . No separate class of officers is anywhere provided in the New Testament, for the administering the rite, and yet, if we have reasoned correctly, the apostles were under obligation to provide for it. We are led to the conclusion, that this provision was made, in the ordinary method instituted for transmitting the ministerial office.”

3. John Calvin – “It is here pertinent to observe, that it is improper for private individuals to take upon themselves the administration of baptism; for it, as well as the dispensation of the Supper, is part of the ministerial office.”
(John Calvin, *Institutes*, Vol. 2, 4:15:20, 524)

The Meaning of Baptism

- I. What Baptism does not mean
 - A. Baptism is not a means of regeneration
Regeneration must precede faith – faith must precede baptism
Mark 16:16 – “He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned.
 - B. Baptism is not a covenantal initiation of infants into the church
 1. Faith and repentance is essential to Christian conversion
Acts 16:31 – “And they said, Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house.”
 2. Christian conversion is essential for church membership
Acts 2:47 – “Praising God, and having favour with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved.”
 3. Infants are incapable of faith and repentance
 - C. Baptism is not a formulaic necessity for our salvation
 1. Some hold that Baptism is essential for salvation. This is a heretical addition to the finished work of Christ
 2. Some hold that not only is Baptism essential for salvation, it must be practiced in the name of Christ alone – they quote from **Acts 2**
Acts 2:38 – “Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.”
This is a denial of the Great Commission
- II. What is Baptism?
 - A. Baptism is an ordinance instituted by our Lord
 1. Baptism was initiated after the resurrection wherein Christ charged His disciples to baptize those who were made disciples.
Matthew 28:19-20 – “Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, *even* unto the end of the world. Amen.”
 - a. Literally we are to baptize them into (εἰς) the name of . . . signifying the unique relationship with the triune God.

- b. It is done under the authority of the local church.
Louis Berkhof – “Protestants regard a baptism legitimate, which is administered by a duly accredited minister and in the name of the triune God.”
2. Only those who profess faith in Christ can be baptized
 3. Only those who are baptized can be admitted into the membership of a local church
Where faith and repentance are the moral qualifications for membership
Baptism is the ceremonial qualification for membership
Acts 2:38 – “Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.”
- B. Baptism symbolizes our death to sin and new life with Christ - regeneration
Romans 6:3-6 – “Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death? Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also *in the likeness* of *his* resurrection: Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with *him*, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin.”
Colossians 2:12 – “Buried with him in baptism, wherein also ye are risen with *him* through the faith of the operation of God, who hath raised him from the dead.”
London Baptist Confession of 1689 29:1 - “Baptism is an ordinance of the New Testament, ordained by Jesus Christ, to be unto the party baptized, a sign of his fellowship with him in his death and resurrection; of his being engrafted into him; of remission of sins; of his giving up unto God, through Jesus Christ, to live and walk in newness of life.”
1. Baptism symbolizes the cleansing and purifying work of Christ
 2. Baptism is the outward symbol of the inward washing
Acts 22:16 – “And now why tarriest thou? arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord.”
Titus 3:5 – “Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost;”
Hebrews 10:22 – “Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water.”
1 Peter 3:20-21 – “Which sometime were disobedient, when once the longsuffering of God waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was a preparing, wherein few, that is, eight souls were saved by water. The like figure whereunto *even* baptism doth also now save us (not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God,) by the resurrection of Jesus Christ:”
- C. Baptism symbolizes our union with Christ
Galatians 3:27 – “For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ.” (the baptism here is not water baptism, but water baptism points to our spiritual baptism into Christ)

1. Christians have been united with Christ
1 Corinthians 1:30 – “But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption:”
Romans 6:3 – “Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death?”
 2. We have been united with Christ –
 Only immersion offers a proper picture of being immersed into Christ.
- D. Baptism symbolizes the cleansing and purifying work of Christ
 It is the outward symbol of the inward washing
Acts 22:16 – “And now why tarriest thou? arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord.”
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- E. Baptism illustrates our entrance into the visible church
1. The New Testament church is made up of baptized believers alone who give evidence of regeneration by their faith and repentance.
 2. The New Testament rule is to make disciples first, then baptize them
Acts 2:41 – “Then they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added *unto them* about three thousand souls.”
 3. The invisible church is expressed through the visible church upon the earth. The terms “body of Christ” and “the church” are applied in the New Testament to both the visible and the invisible church. This means that a church must strive for a regenerate membership.
 Baptism is both a symbol and testimony of entering into the invisible church and an ordinance of entrance into the visible church.
- F. Baptism is a visual demonstration of the Gospel to sinners
 Our two ordinances symbolize three essential elements of the Gospel –
 That Jesus died, was buried, and that He rose again