Dec. 20, 2008

Chapter 49: Baptism
Who should be baptized?
How should it be done?
What does it mean?

Definitions:
1. Ordinance or Sacrament?
2. Major Doctrine?
3. Believer’s (Baptistic) or Infant (Paedobaptist) Position:
   → My position is Baptistic – namely, that baptism is appropriately administered only to those who give a believable profession of faith in Jesus Christ.
   → Louis Berkhof’s Systematic Theology responsibly advocates the paedobaptist position (“infant baptism”)

A. The Mode and Meaning of Baptism
1. The Greek word βαπτίζω (baptizō) means “to plunge, dip, immerse” something in water.
2. The sense “immerse” is appropriate and probably required for the word in several NT passages (Mark 1:5; Mark 1:10; John 3:23; Acts 8:36; Acts 8:38-39)
3. The symbolism of union with Christ in his death, burial, and resurrection seems to require baptism by immersion (Rom. 6:3-4; Col. 2:12)

→ Objection: The essential thing symbolized in baptism is not death and resurrection with Christ, but purification and cleaning from sins. (Titus 3:5; Acts 22:16)
→ Response: To say that washing away of sins is the only thing (or even the most essential thing) pictured in baptism does not faithfully represent NT teaching. (Col 2:11-12; Rom 6:1-11)

B. The Subjects of Baptism
2. The Argument From the Meaning of Baptism: The outward symbol of beginning the Christian life should only be given to those who show evidence of having begun the Christian life (Gal. 3:27; Rom. 6:3-4; Col. 2:12)
3. Alternative #1: The Roman Catholic View - Baptism should be administered to infants, as baptism is necessary for salvation, and that the act of baptism itself causes regeneration.
   (see Ludwig Ott, Fundamentals of Catholic Dogma, 355-356; also See also: Catechism of the Catholic Church (1994), sections 1213, 1215, 1250, 1263-1266)
   → Catholic doctrine and practice concerning baptism:
   1. Baptism is ordinary administered by a priest, yet in unusual circumstances a deacon, layperson, or even an unbeliever may perform baptism
   2. Sacraments work apart from the faith of the people participating in the sacrament:

→ Response To Roman Catholic View:
1. Salvation depends on faith alone – not on faith plus works. (Eph. 2:8-9; Rom. 6:23)
2. The debate about baptism is similar to that of Paul’s argument concerning circumcision (Gal. 1:6; Gal. 3:10; Gal. 5:4)
→ Conclusion: No work is necessary for salvation, and therefore baptism is not necessary for salvation.
   • What about John 3:5?
     1. Best understood against the background of the promise of the new covenant in Ezekiel 36:25-27:
     2. A Spiritual Washing (Titus 3:5; Eph. 5:26)

   • What about 1 Peter 3:21?
     1. “An appeal to God for a good conscience” = a request for forgiveness of sins and new heart
     2. In baptism, we make such an appeal

4. Alternative #2: The Protestant Paedobaptist View: (Baptism is rightly administered to all infant children of believing parents)
   a. Infants Were Circumcised in the Old Covenant:
   b. Baptism is Parallel to Circumcision (Col. 2:11-12)
Response to Arguments for Paedobaptism:

(1) Baptism and circumcision, though similar, are also different in some important ways:

(2) The NT does not talk about a “covenant community” made up of believers and their unbelieving children and relatives and servants.

Physical elements were only a shadow of what is to come:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>OT Elements</th>
<th>NT Elements</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Physical Birth</td>
<td>Spiritual Birth (John 3:5-8)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fed on manna</td>
<td>Fed on Christ (John 6:48-51)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical water</td>
<td>Spiritual water (John 4:10-14)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical temple</td>
<td>Spiritual temple (1 Peter 2:5)</td>
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<td>Physical sacrifices</td>
<td>Spiritual sacrifices (1 Peter 2:5)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Physical land</td>
<td>A heavenly one (Heb. 11:16)</td>
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<td>Abraham’s physical seed</td>
<td>Spiritual descendents (Gal. 3:29)</td>
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(3) Examples of household baptism: evidence is not decisive for one position or another (Acts 16:32-34; 1 Corinthians 1:15-16, 16:15; John 4:53; Acts 18:8; Acts 2:39-41)

(4) “What does baptism do?”

(5) Concern about Practical Consequences

C. The Effect of Baptism

→ Joy from public profession of one’s faith

→ Joy from reassurance of having a clear physical picture of dying and rising with Christ and washing away sins.

→ Strengthens and encourages our faith

D. The Necessity of Baptism

E. The Age for Baptism

(1) Are the child old enough to give a believable profession of faith?

(2) Is there convincing evidence of genuine spiritual life?

(3) Is there some degree of understanding regarding the meaning of trusting in Christ?

F. Remaining Questions:

1. Do Churches Need to be Divided Over Baptism?

2. Who Can Baptize?

All of the class lessons and outlines are posted on the class website www.christianessentialssbc.com. To order CDs, e-mail Jason Van Haselen jvanhaselen@yahoo.com or JT Collins jcollins@veritycp.com. Jason and JT are also available in the sound booth before and after the class.