

Associated Gospel Churches - Articles of Faith and Doctrine

Baptism

March 26, 2006

Baptism

XX. Baptism

We believe that the New Testament clearly prescribes baptism for believing disciples as a symbol and proclamation of the believer's death to sin and resurrection to newness of life. Further we believe and practise immersion as the mode of baptism prescribed by the New Testament in accordance with its word meanings, examples, and symbolism.

Matthew 28:19-20; Acts 2:38; 8:12; Romans 6:3

Baptism

- **AGC position – ‘Baptistic’ view**
 - **baptism meant only for believers (‘believers’ baptism’)**
 - **a symbol and profession of faith that is already present – not the cause of regeneration**
 - **baptism of infants not endorsed**
 - **baptism by immersion (not sprinkling or pouring, etc.)**

Baptism

- **meaning of baptism**

- **derived from Greek word ‘*baptizo*’ (to plunge, dip or immerse)**
- **symbolizes our union with Christ in His death, burial and resurrection**

“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.” (Rom. 6:3-4)

Baptism

- meaning of baptism

- Roman Catholic view

- baptism is not only symbolic, but a sacrament that *in itself* conveys grace to those being baptized

- baptism itself causes regeneration (i.e. new birth)

- “Baptism is that Sacrament in which man being washed with water in the name of the Three Divine Persons is spiritually reborn.” (Ott, *Fundamentals of Catholic Dogma*, as cited in Grudem, p.971)

- baptism therefore considered necessary for salvation (except perhaps under extreme circumstances)

- “Baptism by water... is, since the promulgation of the Gospel, necessary for all men without exception for salvation.” (Ott, *Fundamentals of Catholic Dogma*, as cited in Grudem, p.972)

Baptism

- **meaning of baptism**
 - **Roman Catholic view**
 - **baptism results in eradication of sins, including original sin and all personal sins committed before baptism, and in infusion of sanctifying grace**
 - **baptism results in the person being incorporated into the Mystical Body of Christ, even if the baptism is “unworthily received”**

Baptism

- **meaning of baptism**

- **AGC (baptistic) view**

- **baptism is a symbol of our union with Christ in His death, burial and resurrection**

- **buried with Him in death (i.e. dying to sin) and raised with Him to walk in newness of life**

“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.” (Rom. 6:3-4)

Baptism

- **meaning of baptism**
 - **AGC (baptistic) view**
 - **does not impart grace in itself, apart from faith - is not the cause of regeneration, but testifies to it**
 - **baptism is not necessary for salvation, though believers should be baptized in obedience to Christ's command**
 - e.g. the thief on the Cross was not (could not be) baptized, yet Jesus said to him, 'I tell you the truth, today you will be with me in paradise.' (Luke 23:43)
 - Christ's command: "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...*" (Matt. 28:19)

Baptism

- **meaning of baptism**

- **AGC (baptistic) view**

- **to make baptism necessary for salvation runs contrary to justification by faith alone (AGC Article VII)**

- **results in justification by faith + works → similar to Galatian heresy of justification by faith + circumcision**

“We who are Jews by birth and not ‘Gentile sinners’ 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 and not by observing the law, because by observing the law no one will be justified.” (Gal. 2:15-16)

“For we maintain that a man is justified by faith apart from observing the law.” (Rom. 3:28)

Baptism

- **Modes of baptism**
 - various modes of baptism practiced, including
 - **immersion**
 - **sprinkling**
 - **pouring**

Baptism

- **Modes of baptism**
 - **AGC position**
 - **baptism by immersion is the mode prescribed by the New Testament**
 - **immersion best fits word meanings, examples, and symbolism of baptism in the NT**

Baptism

- Modes of baptism

- Baptism by immersion

- **word meanings support baptism by immersion**

- Greek “*baptizo*” = to plunge, dip, or immerse something in water
 - Greek word for sprinkling = “*rhantizo*” – used in places in NT to speak of cleansing from sin (e.g. Heb. 9-10), but not used to describe baptism

Baptism

- Modes of baptism

- Baptism by immersion

- examples that support baptism by immersion

- Jesus was baptized *in* the Jordan, and *came up out of* the water

“At that time Jesus came from Nazareth in Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan. As Jesus was coming up out of the water, He saw heaven being torn open and the Spirit descending on Him like a dove.” (Mark 1:9-10)

- went *into* the Jordan to be baptized – not necessary if sprinkling or pouring
 - He came up “out of” (Greek = *ek*) the water, not “away from” (Greek = *apo*) the water, as some try to argue

Baptism

- Modes of baptism

- Baptism by immersion

- examples that support baptism by immersion

- “Now John also was baptizing at Aenon near Salim, *because there was plenty of water*, and people were constantly coming to be baptized.” (John 3:23)

- the need for plenty of water more consistent with baptism by immersion – not much needed for pouring; even less for sprinkling

Baptism

- **Modes of baptism**

- **Baptism by immersion**

- **the symbolism of baptism supports baptism by immersion**

- **immersion into water symbolizes our union with Christ in His death**

- “We were therefore buried with Him through baptism into death...”
(Rom. 6:4)

- **coming up out of the water symbolizes our union with Christ in His resurrection**

- “...in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life.” (Rom. 6:4)

- **this symbolism is largely lost with other modes of baptism**

Baptism

- **Who should be baptized?**
 - **New Testament pattern**
 - **baptism should be administered only to those who give believable profession of faith**
 - **i.e. ‘believers’ baptism’**
 - **since baptism symbolizes the beginning of Christian life, should be given only to those who have *in fact* begun that life**

Baptism

- Who should be baptized?

- Believers' baptism

- NT accounts strongly suggest that only those who demonstrated faith were baptized

“Those who accepted his message were baptized, and about three thousand were added to their number that day.” (Acts 2:41)

“But when they believed Philip as he preached the good news of the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women.” (Acts 8:12)

““Can anyone keep these people from being baptized with water? They have received the Holy Spirit just as we have.’ 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 10:47-48)

Baptism

- **Who should be baptized?**

- **Believers' baptism**

- **Baptism is the outward sign of inward regeneration; thus should be given only to those who show evidence of having begun the Christian life**

“...for all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ.” (Gal. 3:27)

“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 Jesus Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life.” (Acts 8:12)

Baptism

- **Who should be baptized?**

- **Believers' baptism**

- **Baptism is the outward sign of inward regeneration; thus should be given only to those who show evidence of having begun the Christian life**

“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.’” (Acts 2:38)

Baptism

- **Who should be baptized?**
 - **Believers' baptism - objections**
 - **primary objection to believers' baptism comes from supporters of infant baptism**
 - **argue that NT speaks of baptism of entire households, which must have included infants**

Baptism

- Who should be baptized?

- Believers' baptism - objections

- some Scriptures used to support infant baptism

“One of those listening was a woman named Lydia, a dealer in purple cloth from the city of Thyatira, who was a worshiper of God. The Lord opened her heart to respond to Paul’s message. *When she and the members of her household were baptized*, she invited us to her home...” (Acts 16:14-15a)

“At that hour of the night the jailer took them [Paul & Silas] and washed their wounds; then immediately *he and all his family were baptized.*” (Acts 16:33)

“Yes, *I also baptized the household of Stephanas*; beyond that, I don’t remember if I baptized anyone else.” (1 Cor. 1:16)

Baptism

- **Who should be baptized?**
 - **Believers' baptism – response to 'household baptisms'**
 - **there is no explicit mention of infants being baptized in any of the accounts of households being baptized**
 - **in most cases of household baptisms recorded in NT, we have reason to believe that the entire household believed in Christ – and were therefore baptized on their profession of faith**
 - **“At that hour of the night the jailer took them [Paul & Silas] 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 16:33-34)**

Baptism

- **Who should be baptized?**
 - **Believers' baptism – response to 'household baptisms'**
 - **in most cases of household baptisms recorded in NT, we have reason to believe that the entire household believed in Christ – and were therefore baptized on their profession of faith**
 - *“Yes, I also baptized the household of Stephanas; beyond that, I don't remember if I baptized anyone else... You know that the household of Stephanas were the first converts in Achaia, and they have devoted themselves to the service of the saints...” (1 Cor. 1:16, with 1 Cor. 16:15)*
 - **Cornelius' household follows the same pattern (Acts 10)**
 - **Lydia's household is the only one where conversion of the entire household is not explicitly stated (Acts 16:14-15)**

Baptism

- **Who should be baptized?**
 - **Roman Catholic view**
 - **baptism should be administered not only to adult converts, but also to infants**
 - **because baptism is necessary for salvation, and the act baptism itself causes regeneration and incorporates the person baptized into the Body of Christ**
 - **infants who die without baptism are thought to be lost forever – spend eternity in *limbus infantum* (“limbo”)**

Baptism

- **Who should be baptized?**

- **Roman Catholic view**

- **baptism should be administered not only to adult converts, but also to infants**

- **inability to believe is not considered a reason against baptism of infants, because the faith of the church is substituted for the faith of the infant**

**“Faith, as it is not the effective cause of justification... need not be present. The faith which infants lack is... replaced by the faith of the Church.”
(Ott, *Fundamentals of Catholic Dogma*, as cited in Grudem, p.972)**

Baptism

- **Who should be baptized?**
 - **Roman Catholic view – a brief response**
 - **doctrine of necessity of baptism for salvation runs contrary to Biblical teaching of justification by faith alone (see previous slides)**
 - **recapitulates Galatian heresy and “is really no gospel at all” (Gal. 1:7a)**
 - **baptism in NT is for believers only (see previous slides)**

Baptism

- **Who should be baptized?**
 - **Protestant paedobaptist view**
 - **believes that baptism is rightly administered not only to adult converts, but also to all infant children of believing parents**
 - **common in many Protestant churches**
 - **Lutheran, Anglican/Episcopalian, Methodist, Presbyterian, Reformed churches**
 - **Evangelical Free churches allow individual churches to decide on whether or not to baptize infants**

Baptism

- **Who should be baptized?**
 - **Protestant paedobaptist view - Rationale**
 - **infants were circumcised in the Old Covenant**
 - outward sign of entrance into the ‘covenant community’
 - administered to all male infants of Israel
 - **in the NT, baptism parallels circumcision as the outward sign of entrance into the new covenant community**
 - should therefore be administered to all infant children of believers, as members of the covenant community

Baptism

- **Who should be baptized?**

- **Protestant paedobaptist view - Rationale**

- **in the NT, baptism parallels circumcision as the outward sign of entrance into the new covenant community**

*“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.” (Col. 2:11-12)*

- **in the NT, entire households were often baptized, including infants**

Baptism

- **Who should be baptized?**
 - **Protestant paedobaptist view - Rationale**
 - **infant children of believers should therefore be baptized, not as the cause of regeneration, but as the external sign of their inclusion into the ‘covenant community’ and the benefits thereof**
 - **baptism of infants does not cause their regeneration, but symbolizes their future regeneration**

Baptism

- **Who should be baptized?**
 - **Protestant paedobaptist view – a brief response**
 - **the NT evidence overwhelmingly supports baptism only of those who demonstrate faith (see previous slides)**
 - **entire households were baptized because entire households came to faith (see previous slides for examples)**
 - **no explicit mention of infants being baptized, but is explicit mention of entire households believing in Jesus Christ**

Baptism

- **Who should be baptized?**
 - **Protestant paedobaptist view – a brief response**
 - **the paedobaptist view fails to recognize differences between the Old and New Covenants and confuses the physical with the spiritual**
 - **entrance into the Old Covenant community (i.e. the nation of Israel) was by physical birth (and circumcision for males)**
 - **entrance into New Covenant community (i.e. the Church) is not by physical birth, but by spiritual rebirth (i.e. being ‘born again’) – signified by baptism**
 - **difference between physical children and ‘spiritual children’ - baptism should be administered only to the latter, not the former**

Baptism

- **Who should be baptized?**
 - **Protestant paedobaptist view – a brief response**
 - **the paedobaptist view fails to recognize differences between the Old and New Covenants and confuses the physical with the spiritual**
 - “...For not all who are descended from Israel are Israel. Nor because they are his descendants are they all Abraham’s children. On the contrary, ‘It is through Isaac that your offspring will be reckoned.’ In other words, it is not the natural children who are God’s children, but it is the children of the promise who are regarded as Abraham’s offspring.” (Rom. 9:6b-8)
 - “Understand, then, that those who believe are children of Abraham.” (Gal. 3:7)

Baptism

- **Who should be baptized?**
 - **the AGC view – believers' baptism**
 - **only those who give believable evidence of saving faith should be baptized**
 - **classic view of Baptist denominations**

Baptism

- **When should someone be baptized?**
 - **not explicitly stated**
 - **in narrative accounts, typically occurs immediately or very shortly after the person believes in Jesus Christ**
 - **closely linked with faith – “Repent and be baptized...” (Acts 2:38)**
 - **today, often delayed until person shows reasonable evidence of true conversion (sometimes too long?)**
 - **children – no explicit instructions, but reasonable to baptize when they are able to understand the Gospel and make a believable, personal profession of faith in Christ**

Next class

The Lord's Supper

April 2, 2006

References

- **Berkhof, L. *The History of Christian Doctrines*. (London: Banner of Truth, 1969), p. 242-251**
- **Grudem, W. *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine*. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1994), pp. 966-987.**