

Should Babies Be Baptized?

Should babies be baptized or should a person be old enough to accept the responsibility to make his own decision whether or not to be baptized and to live the Christian life? God approves of religious practices only if He has authorized them in the New Testament (2 Timothy 3:16,17; 2 John 9; Galatians 1:6-9; Matthew 15:9; Proverbs 14:12; Colossians 3:17). So, we should not practice infant baptism unless the New Testament shows that God wants us to practice it.

Part I: Can Babies Meet the Conditions that Must Precede Baptism?

God is no respecter of persons (Acts 10:34,35; Romans 2:11). He did not give two sets of prerequisites for baptism: one for babies and one for adults. Whatever the Bible requires of some people to be baptized, it requires the same of all people.

A. Before Baptism One Must Hear and Understand the Gospel.

Mark 16:15,16 – Before one is baptized, the __gospel__ must be preached to him.

John 6:44,45 – No one can come to Jesus until he has __learned__ from the Father

Acts 2:36,41 – Peter taught that people must __know assuredly__ that Jesus is Lord and Christ. Those who were baptized were those who gladly received this message.

Can babies hear, learn, and gladly receive the gospel message in this way?

B. Before Baptism One Must Believe the Gospel.

Mark 16:16 – Every creature who is baptized must first __believe__ the gospel.

Galatians 3:26,27 – All people, who are baptized, must do so by __faith__.

Acts 8:12 – The people of Samaria were baptized when they __believed__, not before.

The person who is baptized must first believe. Never were people baptized on the basis of someone else's faith, such as their parents' faith. No one else can believe for us, just like no one else can be baptized for us.

[See also Acts 8:36-39; 18:8; Romans 1:16; 10:13-17.]

C. Before Baptism One Must Repent of Sins.

Acts 2:38 – Every person who is baptized must first __repent__. This requires a personal choice. No one else can make this decision for us. Can a baby make this choice?

Some people claim that “children” in verse 39 means babies are included among those to whom this “promise” was made. But “children” simply means offspring, regardless of age (note Matthew 3:9; 10:21; 21:28; John 8:39). So, the “promise” to the “children” was fulfilled when they were old enough to do what God requires (believe, repent, etc.), not while they were babies.

[See also 2 Corinthians 7:10; Mark 1:4,5.]

D. Before Baptism One Must Confess Christ.

Romans 10:9,10 – To be saved, one must believe and __confess__ Christ with his mouth

Acts 8:35-39 – The candidate for baptism must make a statement such that the one who baptizes him/her understands that he is baptizing someone who does __believe__. But babies cannot communicate regarding their faith in any understandable way

Churches that practice infant baptism also commonly practice “confirmation.” The existence of such a practice is an admission that the child did not understand, believe, and repent before he was baptized. But people who do not meet these prerequisites should not even be baptized!

Babies cannot hear and understand the gospel, believe it, repent of sins, or confess Christ. To baptize them anyway would be disobedience, because it is acting without God's authority.

Part II. Can Babies Be Baptized for the Right Reason?

A. Each Individual Is Responsible to Serve God from Proper Motives.

Romans 6:17,18 – To be freed from sin, one must obey the gospel from the __heart__

Acts 2:40,41 – People who gladly received the message were baptized.

Since a baby cannot possibly make this decision and cannot communicate any such decision to us, to baptize it anyway would violate God's law of personal responsibility.

[Cf. Romans 2:28,29; 1 Peter 1:22; 3:21; 2 Corinthians 8:5; Revelation 22:17; Philippians 2:12; 1 Corinthians 13:1-3.]

B. Each Person Should Be Baptized for the Proper Purpose.

What are the proper purposes for which all must be baptized?

Mark 16:16 – He who believes and is baptized will be saved.

Acts 2:38 – Repent and be baptized for the remission of sins.

Acts 22:16 – Be baptized and wash away your sins.

1 Peter 3:21 – Baptism also now saves us.

Consider the Lord's Supper as an illustration. Even if a person does the right actions, but if his reasons are wrong, he displeases God (1 Corinthians 11:23-29). Likewise, if a person is baptized but does not do it to receive forgiveness of sins, then the baptism is not proper. Can a baby understand and make the choice to be baptized for the proper reasons?

C. A Baby Cannot Be Baptized for Forgiveness because It Has No Sins.

How could a baby become guilty of sin?

We become sinners when we transgress God's law (1 John 3:4; James 1:13-15; Isaiah 59:1,2). But some people believe that babies have inherited guilt from Adam.

Ezekiel 18:20 – The child does not bear the sin of the father; the wickedness of the wicked is upon himself and the righteousness of the righteous is upon himself.

2 Corinthians 5:10 – Each will be judged according to what he has done, good or bad

Guilt is not inherited. Further, no one will be justified because someone else decided to do good. Specifically, babies are not held accountable for a parent's decision to have a child baptized.

The Bible says that Jesus was without sin (Hebrews 2:14,17; 2 Corinthians 5:21; 1 John 3:5), but how could He have been without sin if babies inherit the guilt of Adam's sin?

If a baby is guilty of sin, what happens if it dies before it is baptized, or if its parents refuse to baptize it? Wouldn't it follow that the baby is eternally lost?

Since baptism is essential to salvation, if a baby is a sinner, then its salvation must depend entirely on others to decide to baptize it. It has no choice in the matter, and cannot possibly influence its own destiny. This contradicts all the scriptures we have quoted showing that salvation is a matter of individual choice (2 Corinthians 5:10; etc.).

What condition is a baby in?

Psalms 106:37,38; Jeremiah 19:4,5 – Babies sacrificed to idols were innocent

Hebrews 12:9 – God is the Father of our spirits, in contrast to human fathers who are fathers of our flesh. Would the sinless, righteous God give us sinful spirits?

Matthew 19:14; 18:3 – The kingdom is for those who are like little children. Other passages show that to enter the kingdom we must become innocent or cleansed of sin (Colossians 1:13,14). So little children must be innocent and we become like them by being forgiven.

Jesus did not **baptize** the babies who came to Him; He touched them and prayed for them (Matthew 19:13; Mark 10:13-16). They could come to Him just as they were, without baptism.

Some people baptize babies as a "dedication" to encourage parents to train the child properly. But the gospel says that the purpose of baptism is to receive remission of sins. Baptism of babies as a "dedication" constitutes a human invention that perverts the purpose of baptism.

A baby does not need forgiveness for the simple reason that he is not guilty. He is in a safe condition, not accountable for sin until he is old enough to be able to understand and accept the responsibility to obey God. Since baptism is for the remission of sins, and since a baby has no sins, it follows that babies do not need baptism.

Part III. Can Babies Fulfill the Requirements that Follow Baptism?

God requires baptized people to fulfill certain responsibilities. If a person is not able to accept these responsibilities, then he is simply not ready to be baptized. Here are some examples:

A. All Baptized People Should Exhort and Encourage Other Christians.

1 Corinthians 12:13,25,26 – Baptism makes people members of Jesus' body, the church (Ephesians 1:22,23; 5:23). All members in the church should __care for__ one another.

Ephesians 4:16 – Each part should work to __edify__ the body.

What work can babies do? None. Therefore, they should not be baptized into the body.

B. All Baptized People Should Worship God.

Acts 2:38-42,47 – The Lord added baptized people to His church (verses 41,47). These people then continued in __breaking__ bread, prayer, and the apostles' __doctrine__.

1 Corinthians 14:15-20 – Members of the church should assemble with other Christians to sing, pray, and teach. This should be done with __understanding__. But babies cannot do so.

1 Corinthians 10:16,17; 11:23-29 – All members of the body should __eat__ the bread and __drink__ the cup in communion (10:16,17). If they eat without understanding, they eat and drink damnation to themselves (11:23-29).

God requires all members of the church to do things that babies cannot do. Therefore, the command to be baptized is not addressed to babies and does not include them.

C. Baptized People Should Put God First in Their Lives.

Romans 6:3,4,11-18 – Baptized people should walk in __newness of life__ and not let __sin__ reign in their bodies, but must use their members as instruments of righteousness.

Romans 12:1,2 – Brethren should present their __bodies__ as living sacrifices to God

1 Corinthians 15:58 – Brethren should always abound in the __work of the Lord__

Matthew 28:19,20 – Baptized people should be taught to obey all Jesus' __commands__. They must be **capable** of learning those commands and must have a heart willing to obey.

No one should be baptized unless he has made such a commitment. A baby cannot do this, so he should not be baptized until he is old enough to choose for himself to do so.

We have learned what God says people must do **before** they can be baptized, **during** baptism (the proper purpose), and **after** baptism. Babies do not qualify in any of these areas.

Part IV. Can Infant Baptism Be Scripturally Defended?

Notice some efforts that have been made to justify baptizing babies.

A. Babies with Faith

Some people claim that babies can have faith, so should be baptized.

Romans 10:13-17 – Faith comes by __hearing__ God's word. Do churches teach babies the gospel before baptizing them? Of course not. If the child had faith from infancy, why do they try to instill faith in these children later in life in "confirmation"?

Remember that 1 Corinthians 14:20 expressly states that babies are not capable of having understanding of the kind required for members of Jesus' church.

We have shown that people must repent of sin and confess Christ before baptism, then they must fulfill the duties of baptized people. Even if babies could have faith, we could never know it because they cannot understandably confess it. And remember, all baptized people are in the church and must learn to fulfill the duties of membership. Even if babies had faith (which they do not), that would only be part of what God requires.

Just suppose babies could believe. Logically, then, babies could also DISbelieve. But the Bible says to baptize the ones who believe and **not** the ones who do **not** believe (Mark. 16:16; Acts 8:12,36,37; etc.). How do we make such a distinction?

Babies do not have “saving” faith to be baptized until they are old enough to repent, confess, and fully accept the responsibility of living the Christian life. As already shown, they are innocent and do not need baptism until they reach the stage where God holds them accountable.

B. Household Conversions

Some people claim Bible examples of households being baptized must have included babies.

But none of these examples actually say that babies were included. Many households do not include babies or even small children. It is a misuse of Scripture to make assumptions about passages that say nothing about a subject and then use those unproved assumptions to reach conclusions that contradict the plain teaching of other Scriptures. Consider the examples:

Cornelius’ household – Acts 10:1-11:18; 15:7-11

Notice some things that people in this household did that babies cannot do:

10:33,44; 11:1,14 – All came together to ___hear___ what God had commanded.

10:2,35 – All in the household ___feared___ God.

15:7,9; 10:43 – They heard and ___believed___.

11:18 – They ___repented___.

10:35 – They were told to ___work___ righteousness.

No babies were baptized here! All baptized people met conditions that babies cannot meet.

Lydia’s household – Acts 16:13-15,40

The Bible teaches that a man should be the head of his wife (Ephesians 5:22-25). So the man is mentioned in describing household activities. The fact no man is mentioned regarding Lydia’s household would imply that she had no husband, let alone children. Paul later “encouraged” those who were brethren (NKJV), including Lydia’s house (verse 40). Did this include babies?

The Jailer’s household – Acts 16:23-34

Before the baptism, Paul spoke the ___word___ to all in the house (verse 32), and they ___believed___ (verses 31,34). So, no babies were included among those baptized.

Stephanas’ household – 1 Corinthians 1:16; 16:15

Stephanas’ house ___ministered___ to the saints. Again, people who are baptized must be old enough to be active in God’s work as members of the church. This does not include babies.

Household conversions just confirm what we have learned elsewhere. All who are baptized must do things that babies cannot do. The command to be baptized does not include babies.

Conclusion

Infant baptism is objectionable for several reasons.

First, infant baptism is an unauthorized change in God’s pattern for baptism.

God tells us the conditions people must meet before, during, and after baptism; but babies do not fit. To baptize babies is to act by human authority without divine authority.

Second, infant baptism leads people to believe they are saved when they are not. When people have been baptized as babies, later they become old enough to be responsible for their conduct. Then they should be baptized, but they often refuse because they believe they have already done so. So, their infant baptism was not Scriptural, but it leads them to refuse Scriptural baptism for the remission of sins. As a result they never receive forgiveness of sins!

A final objection to infant baptism is that it is almost always done by sprinkling or pouring, not by immersion. But the Bible says that baptism is a burial (Romans 6:4; Colossians 2:12). A person must go down into the water and come up out of it (Acts 8:38,39; Mark 1:9,10). Bible baptism requires washing the whole body in water (Hebrews 10:23).

If your baptism was improper, you need to obey God in Scriptural baptism (Acts 19:1-6).

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