



1

- Believers-only baptism—an argument from *fulfillment* leading to *discontinuity*
 - Jer. 31:31-34; 32:37-41, Jn. 1:11-13, Rom. 9:2-4/8:15-17 and Gal. 3:29
- Believers-only baptism—an argument from explicit NT instances and commands
 - Acts 2:41; 8:12-13, 36-38; 18:8; 19:5; 22:16; 1 Cor. 1:16/16:15; Matt. 28:18-20
- Believers-only baptism—an argument from “baptism-as-commitment”
 - Jn 3:22-23; 4:1-2; Matt. 28:18-20; 1 Cor. 1:10-17
 - Though baptism *symbolizes* cleansing, death to sin and resurrection, union with Christ etc., it also plays an *instrumental role* in the conversion/discipleship process, marking out those who have been baptized as followers of the person into whom they were baptized.
 - ❖ D.A. Carson: “[Baptism] is a sign of both entrance into the Messiah’s covenant community, and of pledged submission to his lordship.”

2

- Does baptism replace circumcision? | An ambiguous question (see next section)
 - Baptism may “replace” circumcision in some superficial sense, but it is not identical in meaning or function, making the question a confusing one.

A Critique of Reformed Paedobaptism/Paedobaptistic Covenant Theology

- The Framework of “Covenant” Theology and the Resulting Hermeneutical Error(s)
 - John Murray: “With reference to circumcision it must be fully appreciated that it was not essentially or primarily the sign of family, racial or national identity. Any significance which circumcision possessed along the line of national identity or privilege was secondary and derived. Its primary and essential significance was that it was the sign and seal of the highest and richest spiritual blessing which God bestows up on men.”

3

- Covenantal Baptists reject a supra-covenant of grace as an umbrella for redemptive history in favor of a foundational promise teased out in biblical covenants that are modified as the biblical narrative moves forward. While “covenant” theology articulates a very clean and elegant structure as it “hovers” over the text of Scripture, when pressed down onto it, the shape is too uniform and does not fit the contours present as redemptive history progresses and certain elements continue while others do not.
- While the theological motifs of promise and covenant are related, they are nevertheless distinct, with a promise being a future guarantee of something, and a covenant being a particular arrangement between parties. In Scripture, we see promises of covenants (e.g., New Covenant foretold in Jer. 31) and covenants including promises (e.g., Abrahamic covenant and the promise of land and progeny). Nevertheless, it is important to keep the two categories distinct.

4

Jeremiah 31:31-34 – Three Reformed, Paedobaptistic Efforts

- Jer. 31 describes only the faithful of all kinds within the covenant to come, and therefore, is not describing a different covenant make-up from the current situation—people of all classes and kinds within the covenant have always known God, been faithful and had the law in their heart (e.g., Ps. 40:8; 119:11)
- Jeffrey Neill: The “knowledge” described in Jer. 31:31-34 to be possessed by all members of the NC is not “saving knowledge,” but a kind of knowledge that was formerly only had by the Levitical priesthood who were uniquely tasked with teaching the law and ordinances to the people. In the New Covenant, the ceremonial and priestly laws are abolished, which means that people can teach and learn God’s word without a priesthood.
- Richard Pratt: Jer. 31 describes a pure covenant, but one that is fulfilled in an already-not yet manner. The NC, therefore, has been inaugurated, but awaits consummation in the new heavens and new earth in which everyone will know God and be faithful forever. The “pure” aspect of the NC is yet to come.

5

Responding to “Mixed” Covenant Proof-Texts

- Heb. 6:4-6
- Nothing about the context here suggests that “falling way” (Gr. *parapesontas*) implies departure from NC membership, which is not even mentioned. Moreover, as those who hold to eternal security, our Reformed paedobaptistic brothers and sisters must still account for the “falling” away of someone so described, either a believer whose fall was not away from salvation, someone who was closely associated with “church life” but was never truly repentant, or an “effective warning.”
 - On the second interpretation, (Reformed) Baptists can accommodate the “falling away” in light of visible participation in the local church without requiring the inappropriate import of a mixed covenantal framework.

6

- Heb. 10:29-30
 - Reformed Baptist Interpretation #1: The “he” of verse 29 refers to Christ, not to the profaning individual. This understanding is 1) equally grammatically viable 2) “the Son of God” is actually the closest antecedent in the sentence 3) Jesus said that he would be sanctified so that we could be sanctified (Jn. 17:19) 4) Heb. 9:12 explicitly mentions Jesus entering into the heavenly tent as high priest on the basis of his own blood and 5) this interpretation fits with an Old Testament understanding of high priests being consecrated/sanctified—set apart—for their position by blood (cf. Lev. 11:30).
 - Reformed Baptist Interpretation #2: If the “he” refers to the individual in question, we should remember that the verb “to sanctify” is consistently used in the book of Hebrews to describe a believer who has been set apart forever and forgiven in light of Christ’s sacrifice. Consider two such uses in the same chapter.

7

- “And by that will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.” Heb. 10:10
- “For by a single offering he has perfected for all time those who are being sanctified.” Heb. 10:14
- Given their commitment to eternal security, a paedobaptist must confess on pain of exegetical inconsistency that such a person is depicted as a believer, implying that the person being considered here is someone who truly appeared to be a Christian and part of the covenant—and perhaps even believed in some sense—but was nevertheless unregenerate.

8

Responding to “Covenant Children” Proof-Texts

- Abrahamic genealogical principle (Gen. 17:9-14)
 - Paedobaptists frequently overlook the fact that Abraham’s “seed” takes on four distinct references as Scripture develops, each of which must be acknowledged: 1) All of Abraham’s offspring (including Ishmael and the sons of Keturah—Gen. 25) 2) Abraham’s special, physical offspring in the line of promise (Isaac, Jacob, the Twelve tribes) 3) those who are “in Christ” (Gal. 3:29) and 4) Christ himself (Gal. 3:16).
 - What the covenantal paedobaptist ends up with is a biblical theology stuck in transition whereby the *physical seed* of those who are Abraham’s *spiritual seed* (i.e., Christian parents) are said to receive the covenant sign on the basis of “continuity” with the Abrahamic genealogical principle.

9

- Acts 2:38-39 | “for you and for your children”
 - What, exactly, is the **content** of “the promise” here?
 - Who, exactly, are the **recipients** of the promise in vs. 39?
 - Who, exactly, was baptized as a result of the promise?

10