

HC 71-73—Two common confusions about Baptism

Brothers and sisters in Jesus Christ:

Baptism is a **sensible sign that points you to the work of the Savior** on the cross.

Baptism is **a seal God implants on your soul, assuring you your sins are washed away**. This seal of assurance strengthens your faith, assuring you have been redeemed, adopted, and have the hope of heaven in your heart.

You then respond with covenant faithfulness.

But some are not satisfied with what the Lord teaches about baptism and they **either underestimate** the value of baptism or they **overestimate it**. You will see these errors corrected today.

Our headings are:

Some Underestimate the Value of Baptism

Some Overestimate the Value of Baptism

Our goals are: That **you will be refreshed by the covenant mark of baptism God put on you, that you embrace the benefits you get in your soul, and that you then live like you have these benefits.**

Some Underestimate the Value of Baptism

71 Q. WHERE DOES CHRIST PROMISE THAT WE ARE WASHED WITH HIS BLOOD AND SPIRIT AS SURELY AS WE ARE WASHED WITH THE WATER OF BAPTISM?

A. In the institution of baptism where he says: “Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.” **“He who believes and is baptized** will be saved, but he who does not believe will be condemned.” This promise is repeated when Scripture calls baptism the washing of regeneration and the washing away of sins.

72 Q. DOES THIS OUTWARD WASHING WITH WATER ITSELF WASH AWAY SINS?

A. No, only Jesus **Christ’s blood and the Holy Spirit cleanse us** from all sins.

73 Q. WHY THEN DOES THE HOLY SPIRIT CALL BAPTISM THE WASHING OF REBIRTH AND THE WASHING AWAY OF SINS?

A. God has good reason for these words. He wants to teach us that **the blood and Spirit of Christ** wash away our sins just as water washes

away dirt from our bodies. But more important, **he wants to assure us, by this divine pledge and sign,** that the washing away of our sins spiritually is as real as physical washing with water.

1. Jesus showed there are benefits from baptism by tying baptism and salvation closely together.

These were some of his final words on earth.

Matthew 28:19 “Go therefore and **make disciples** of all the nations, **baptizing them** in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,

So those who **believe Jesus kept the covenant and died for them and are saved must be baptized.** For **even though baptism doesn’t cause salvation, baptism and salvation go together.**

So don’t underestimate the value of baptism.

2. Apostle Paul also used very strong language to show the close relationship between salvation and baptism.

Titus 3:5 **not by works of righteousness** which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us, through the **washing of regeneration** and **renewing of the Holy Spirit,**

He deliberately **tied baptism and regeneration together to make the assurance stronger.** It is tied so strongly that he calls baptism the “**washing of regeneration.**”

He wasn’t saying water washes away sins. It was just a figure of speech. **He did this to assure you in a special way that just as you are 100% sure that just as water washes away dirt from the body, so you can be 100% sure Christ blood washes away all your sins.**

So don’t underestimate the value of baptism.

3. The Old Testament showed the strong relationship with salvation and the sign of the covenant.

God assured believers and their children (Genesis 17, Exodus 4) of his promises at their circumcision, and he consequently threatened anyone who rejected the sign of the covenant for himself and for his children.

Death or excommunication was the punishment for ignoring the covenant. So circumcision was not merely a sign!

In fact, God was going to kill Moses because he had failed to circumcise his son.

And this law requiring the sign of the covenant be tied to salvation and put on the children of believers was in place long before Sinai. It was given to Abraham and to Moses.

So don't underestimate baptism's value.

4. There are some important lessons you must learn from this?

a. It is an act of defiance against God for those who refuse to be baptized or bring their children to be baptized. God does not change. He wanted the sign on believers and their children in the Old Testament, and he wants it now.

b. Charismatics and Baptist churches minimize baptism and treat it as a mere sign, so help them see and believe this good doctrine (among other things) before you marry them. Challenge their thinking so they can get the full benefits of baptism. Help them so they don't rob their children of these benefits.

c. If you marry someone who rejects the importance of baptism that will affect you and your children; it affects how you view your children and how you will raise them. He will view children as pagans. Be careful.

d. If a preacher minimizes baptism by taking it as merely a sign or limiting it to adults, it will affect his ability to faithfully preach the Word of God. He will miss the grace that comes from baptism. He will treat children as pagans. Apostle Paul said children of believers are holy.

Some Overestimate the Value Baptism

1. Some teach baptism washes away the sins of children and parents.

This is a lie. This gives false assurances. This is called "sacramentalism." With this view, a man can be lazy and not "work out his salvation" or evangelize his children. He will feel his ticket to heaven has been paid. Roman Catholics and Mormons believe this.

Baptism does not wash away sins. Rather, the blood of Jesus Christ washes away all your sins. The outward action, baptism, shows the inward reality (having been washed in the blood of the lamb). Baptism doesn't cause the inward reality.

Baptism is the result of that inward reality. You are washed, sanctified, and justified by the Lord's work by his Holy Spirit, not by your baptism.

1Corinthians 6:11 And such were some of you. But you were **washed**, but you were **sanctified**, but you were **justified** in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God.

1John 1:7 But if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and **the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin.**

Revelation 1:5 and from Jesus Christ, the faithful witness, the firstborn from the dead, and the ruler over the kings of the earth. To Him who loved us and **washed us from our sins in His own blood,**

Baptism does not wash away the sins of parents nor the sins of children.

2. Some say children can't be saved because children don't have faith and therefore, ought not be baptized!

This is an overestimation of baptism. How?

The Bible teaches we need not worry about the salvation of children dying in infancy. Elect children can be saved on account of his parent's or parents' faith.

Didn't God condemn children for the sins of their first parents...not having committed a single sin themselves? Doesn't God say children are sinful from the time they are in their mother's wombs because of their parents' sin? So **why couldn't God similarly save children on account of their parents' faith? So to demand a child have faith to get the sign of the covenant is overestimating the value of baptism.**

(Strangely, they still believe all young children who die will go to heaven because they are innocent. That is perverse. **That is denying total depravity.**) There is only one way to be saved: through faith.

3. Some say they don't want their children baptized because they may reject God later in life.

But even adults who are baptized reject God and yet they are baptized. You surely know others who were baptized and rejected the faith.

But if children reject God's covenant later, they will incur a severer judgment. They must take full responsibility for their sins.

Furthermore, **don't mistake covenant for salvation.**

Let me illustrate: There are those who argue that Israel (God's covenant people) will one day return to Palestine and take possession of it. That is not biblical. **The Jews rejected the covenant and God rejected them.** The Jews can only come to God through faith in Jesus. **Similarly, if a child rejects the covenant God, will reject him.**

So teach your children to make their "calling and election sure."

Teach them to show they believe.

Teach them to **study the Bible**, to **bruise their knees praying**, and to **tire their lips** with speaking God's truth.

Teach them to **be dedicated to the Lord**, **mortify their flesh**, and **lead God-fearing lives.**

4. Some believe baptism may help as part of your salvation, which is another overestimation, but baptism does not even help to wash away your sins; baptism is not part of your salvation.

a. To prove this, let us look at the 1st passage that is often misused to show this.

Mark 16:16 "He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned.

You will only make the mistake of thinking baptism saves if you ignore the 2nd part of the verse...or if you ignore the clear teachings from other parts of the Bible that you are saved by faith alone...

Look at the whole verse: **The one who is condemned is the one who does not "believe"**...not the one who is not baptized. The Jews were all covenant people, but many Jews were not saved. Ishmael and Esau were covenant people, but they were not saved either. But they were judged more severely by God for being in his covenant and rejecting it.

Linguistically, this verse does not prove baptism is essential for salvation.

Consider this. If you hear, "Go home and eat," what is the command? Is it "go home," is it "eat," or is it "go home and eat?" You can't linguistically prove which is the command.

So you must look at clear passages to interpret unclear ones. Clear passages teach **faith is the only essential thing for your salvation.**

b. Consider 2 other verses misused to teach that baptism saves or at least helps to save.

Acts 2:38 Then Peter said to them, "**Repent, and let every one of you be baptized** in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.

Apostle Peter was giving directions about how they should live and become a member of the church, having been regenerated.

Acts 22:16 'And now why are you waiting? **Arise and be baptized, and wash away your sins,** calling on the name of the Lord.'

Apostle Paul was being told how he could join the church after he was saved.
Baptism does not make you a Christian.

Baptism is a response to regeneration.

Wasn't the unbaptized thief on the cross saved? Aren't unbaptized converts in prisons saved?

Conclusion:

What wonderful benefits come from baptism! As surely as water washes away dirt from your body, so Christ's blood and Spirit wash away all your sins. But what a waste that such a beautiful assurance is abused by those **who teach you are saved from your sins by baptism,** by those who teach that **you are partially saved by baptism,** and **by those who teach baptism is merely a ritual sign with no grace from it.**

Brothers and sisters in Jesus Christ:

1. I hope you are refreshed daily with assurance in your heart, from your baptism and when you see others baptized, that your sins were washed away – totally washed away by Christ's blood.

2. I hope you can answer those with erroneous views of baptism.

3. I hope you will talk about your baptism. (And it doesn't matter who sprinkled the water, or if they used a lot of water, but of God who marked you.) Tell the world you were united with Christ in his life, death, burial, and resurrection, and he then marked you for eternal life. This will bring glory to God.

4. Because you realize the greatness of Christ's work for you and his promise for you, you must also be ready to face insults – and even death - for him.

Finally: If you are not yet a believer in Christ, ask God to work a work in your heart so your mouth will drop-that you will be stunned by what God does in you. Ask him to take away your sins because of Christ's death on the cross so that he will no longer be angry with you, but he will delight in you. Ask him to change your heart.