

The Subject of Baptism (6th)

(Today we will look at the remaining passages given from the *Westminster Confession of Faith* which the Protestants use to support the baptism of infants of believing parents.)

The passages that we will study today are Mt. 28:19; Mk. 10:13-16; Lk. 18:15. These are the last passages from the list found in the *Westminster Confession of Faith* to support the baptism of infants of believing parents.

Matthew 28:19 states, “Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.” Previously we quoted from Robert Shaw’s exposition of the Westminster Confession and referring to this passage he gave the following:

The warrantableness of infant baptism may lie inferred from the commission of the apostles to baptise “all nations,” which certainly includes infants; and from the practice of the apostles, who baptised “households,” upon a profession of faith by their domestic heads.

As you see, he said that “infant baptism” was “inferred” from this passage. John Calvin, when commenting on this passage, said, “But as Christ enjoins them to *teach* before *baptizing*, and desires that none but *believers* shall be admitted to *baptism*, it would appear that *baptism* is not properly administered unless when it is preceded by faith.” Calvin further comments that this “appearance” is a “pretence” and only applies to Gentiles, and he proceeds to connect baptism with God’s covenant to Abraham in Genesis 17:7 inferring that now children of one or more believers are included. Nevertheless, it still remains, as Calvin said, Matthew 28:19 appears to say otherwise. Calvin also stated regarding Matthew 3:6 and Mark 1:5, “That men may come forward, in a right manner, to be baptized, *confession of sins* is demanded from them: otherwise the whole performance would be nothing but an idle mockery.” In order to make allowances for his reformed views of infants and small children, he says this is for adults. (Allow me to say that many quotes like this can be supplied by other reformers. Calvin was not alone in stating the obvious of these and other like passages.) However, in both passages, nothing is said or implied in the passages regarding infants. The protestants or reformers build their doctrines on inferences and suppositions. Matthew 28:19 plainly declares that the order is first, teach, and then baptism. Also, verse twenty follows with further teaching after baptism. This cannot be done with infants and small children. The obvious sense from the text is that when one understands the truth of the gospel, baptism follows. To read into the Scriptures, as Shaw does, and not accept the Scriptures as God inspired them is unwarranted to say the least and dangerous to say the most. Our Lord said in Revelation 22:20-21, “For I testify unto every man that heareth the words of the prophecy of this book, If any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book: And if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the book of life, and out of the holy city, and *from* the things which are written in this book.” I am not saying that the protestants are necessarily willful or malicious in their interpretations, but I am saying that it is a serious matter to deny the plain teaching of God’s Word and read into it what is not said or plainly taught.

Now we come to the last two passages. Since both passages are in the same context we will study them together.

First is Mark 10:13-16, “And they brought young children to him, that he should touch them: and *his* disciples rebuked those that brought *them*. But when Jesus saw *it*, he was much displeased, and said unto them, Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not: for of such is the kingdom of God. Verily I say unto you, Whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little

child, he shall not enter therein. And he took them up in his arms, put *his* hands upon them, and blessed them.” Second is Luke 18:15, “And they brought unto him also infants, that he would touch them: but when *his* disciples saw *it*, they rebuked them.”

Let us quote again from Calvin in his *Commentaries on the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, and Luke* regarding these passages along with Matthew 19:13. He said, “Those *little children* have not yet any understanding to desire his blessing; but when they are presented to him, he gently and kindly receives them, and dedicates them to the Father by a solemn act of blessing.” The passages do say that the Lord took them in His arms and blessed them, but they do not say that Christ dedicated “them to the Father.” That is inferred as the reformers do in so many other passages regarding the baptism of infants or small children. Calvin further states, “He declares that he wishes to receive *children*; and at length, *taking them in his arms*, he not only embraces, but *blesses* them by the *laying on of hands*; from which we infer that his grace is extended even to those who are of that age.” Notice that Calvin said that “we infer that his grace is extended ... to those who are of that age.” Here is another inference. He went on to say, “To exclude from the grace of redemption those who are of that age would be too cruel; and therefore it is not without reason that we employ this passage as a shield against the Anabaptists. They” (the Anabaptists—JKB) “refuse baptism to *infants*, because infants are incapable of understanding the mystery which is denoted by it. We, on the other hand, maintain that, since baptism is the pledge and figure of forgiveness of sins, and likewise of adoption by God, it ought not to be denied to *infants*, whom God adopts and washes with the blood of his Son. Their objection,” (by “their objection” Calvin is referring to Anabaptists—JKB) “that repentance and newness of life are also denoted by it, is easily answered. *Infants* are renewed by the Spirit of God, according to the capacity of their age, till that power which was concealed within them grows by degrees, and becomes fully manifest at the proper time. ... In short, by embracing them, he testified that they were reckoned by Christ among his flock. And if they were partakers of the spiritual gifts, which are represented by Baptism, it is unreasonable that they should be deprived of the outward sign.”

Calvin and the reformers and protestants of today “infer that grace is extended ... to those of that age” and that “God adopts and washes them with the blood of his Son.” They also maintain that “*Infants* are renewed by the Spirit of God, according to the capacity of their age, till that power which was concealed within them grows by degrees, and becomes fully manifest at the proper time,” and children/infants are “reckoned by Christ among his flock ... and partakers of the spiritual gifts.” If this is true, then all infants/children who are baptized are either saved or some fall out of grace and are lost. No wonder Charles Hodge said when writing about infant baptism, “Do let the little ones have their names written in the Lamb’s book of life, even if they afterwards choose to erase them. Being thus enrolled may be the means of their salvation.” *Systematic Theology*, Vol. 3, p. 588.

One thing is obvious from these passages. Nothing is stated in them about baptism. Whatever is included in the blessing given by Christ, it is certain that nothing was said about baptism. Furthermore, it is obvious that Christ did not baptize them because Scriptures states that “Jesus himself baptized not,” Jn. 4:2.

We have studied all the passages connected with the subject of baptism (with one exception) and the Greek words used associated with those verses and nothing was said about infants or small children being baptized. Also, we looked at those passages supplied in the *Westminster Confession of Faith* given to support the baptism of infants and again we did not find any verse that stated that infants were baptized or were candidates or subjects for baptism. Therefore, the Scriptures are clearly silent on the matter. May we always yield ourselves to the authority of God—the Holy Scriptures—and not be guilty of building doctrine on inferences and suppositions but humble ourselves to the clear teaching of the Word of God.

The “one exception” passage I mentioned is I Corinthians 12:13. It reads “For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether *we be* bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit.” This passage is often used by both Baptists and protestants to teach what is considered “spirit baptism” or “regeneration.” The Lord willing we will study this passage in our next broadcast.