

New City Catechism Class

Week Forty-Four

Q44: What is baptism?

A44: Baptism is the washing with water in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit; it signifies and seals our adoption into Christ, our cleansing from sin, and our commitment to belong to the Lord and to his church.

Matthew 28:19 “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...” (ESV)

Preliminary questions:

- What is a sign? (Colossians 2:11-12; 1 Peter 3:21; Acts 2:38)
- What is a seal? (Galatians 2:27; Romans 4:11; 6:3-4, cf. 1 Cor. 9:2)
A seal is a guarantee of the truthfulness of the thing signified.

Discuss the question:

- Why is this a relevant question?
- What are the prominent views of baptism?
 1. Baptism is a means of grace whereby the person (usually an infant) is spiritually regenerated/born again when baptized. [In this view, baptism is not simply a sign and seal, **it brings about** what it signifies, i.e. regeneration/salvation.]
 2. Repentance and baptism are two essential works or steps to salvation. Repentance alone is not sufficient for salvation; water baptism is also essential. [In this view, baptism is of the same nature as faith; and, though it signifies spiritual truths, it is **more than a sign**.]
 3. Faith (which constitutes repentance) is what is essential for salvation; and baptism, though meaningful and helpful, is not necessary. [In this view, baptism is a sign in the sense that it symbolizes salvation, but it is only a convenience and can be separated from what it signifies. Baptism as a seal is not generally discussed.]
 4. Baptism is a sign that signifies key aspects of our salvation and a seal that assures us that what is signified is indeed true. As a sign and seal ordained by God, baptism must not be disregarded. Receiving baptism authenticates repentance and faith.

Discuss the Scripture:

- What is the relationship between baptism, teaching, and disciple-making?
- Does Jesus command that we baptize disciples? What does this mean for us?
- Why does Matthew use the preposition “into”? (cf. Acts 19:3)
[As a rule, Matthew does not interchange the prepositions “in” (*en*) and “into” (*eis*)?]
- What does being baptized “into” the name of the Trinity signify?

Discuss the answer in light of the Scripture:

- How does baptism signify and seal our adoption into Christ? Our cleansing from sin?
- How does Matthew's concept of “into the name” speak to our union with Christ?
- How does it relate to our identity as members of the church?
- How does baptism signify our commitment to Christ as Lord?
- Why might people refuse baptism?

Have you been baptized?

If not, are you willing to obey Christ in this covenant sign?