

Fundamentals of Our Faith from the Beginning

Understanding the Church: The Ordinance of Baptism

Concerning Baptism at CBC

1. Baptism is a New Covenant sacrament ordained by Christ as the initiatory sign and seal of fellowship with Him in His death and resurrection. It signifies our regeneration and new birth, our engrafting into Christ, the remission of our sins, and our giving up unto God through Jesus Christ to live and walk in newness of life. It is a means of grace whereby the Holy Spirit imprints a seal upon the faith of the one baptized, a seal that testifies to the realities of the gospel that baptism signifies.
2. The only proper subjects of baptism are those who profess repentance toward God and faith in Jesus Christ as the sole ground of their justification and who desire to obey Him as their Lord and Savior and who have given due consideration to the meaning of baptism, the costs of discipleship, and who are able to examine themselves for participation in the Lord's Supper.
3. Baptism is administered by the church by a properly appointed minister of the gospel as a public witness to a believer's profession of repentance, faith, and obedience and as public affirmation of his or her separation from the world and membership in the body of Christ. Consequently, baptism at CBC is always a public reception of the one being baptized into membership in our local body. Likewise, baptism is a prerequisite for participation in the Lord's Supper.
4. Baptism is to be done by full immersion in water except in unusual circumstances that may require another mode.

1. The only proper subjects...

- a. Those who profess repentance toward God and faith in Jesus Christ as the sole ground for their justification.
 - i. Acts 2:38, "repent and each of you be baptized..."
 - ii. Acts 20:20-21, "...solemnly testifying...of repentance toward God and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ."
 - iii. Romans 3:28, "For we maintain that a man is justified by faith apart from works of the Law..." (cf. Romans 4:1-8).
- b. Those...who desire to obey Him as their Lord and Savior.
 - i. Matthew 7:21, "...but he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven will enter."
 - ii. Romans 10:9, "...if you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord...you will be saved" (cf. Acts 2:36).
- c. Those...who have given due consideration to the meaning of baptism.
 - i. Acts 2:38, "...be baptized"
 - ii. Romans 6:1-7, "...or do you not know that all of us who have been baptized..."
- d. Those...who have given due consideration to...the costs of discipleship.
 - i. Matthew 16:24, "...must take up his cross and follow me..."
 - ii. Luke 14:26, "If anyone...does not hate his own father and mother..."
- e. Those...who are able to examine themselves for participation in the Lord's Supper.
 - i. 1 Corinthians 11:28, "...but a man must examine himself..."
 - ii. 2 Corinthians 13:5, "...test yourselves...examine yourselves."

2. What about kids?

- a. The key question is one of credible profession.
 - i. Do they have a reasonable understanding of the gospel, and are they embracing Christ for their salvation?
 - ii. Are there reasonable signs of regeneration—awareness of sin, desire to obey, interest in the things of the Lord, etc.
 - iii. Do they have a reasonable sense of the costs of discipleship, and are they willing to pay them out of devotion to Christ (at least as they are able to comprehend them)?
 - iv. Is it reasonable to believe that their faith is their own and not an appeasement to parents or peers?
 - v. Parents will play a key role in discerning these things, but ultimately the church exercises the power of the keys and not the parents (this should serve as a comfort to parents as they receive help from the elders).
- b. Baptism is into membership along with essential duties (e.g. the 4 things).
 - i. This would include a commitment to the regular gathering of the church in as much as this is possible given family circumstances.
 - ii. This would include a commitment and desire to receive instruction and be disciplined.
 - iii. This would include a commitment and desire to be connected to the community in age appropriate ways.
 - iv. This would include a commitment and desire to serve in age appropriate ways.
 - v. This would include a commitment and desire to share their lives in age appropriate ways.
- c. Parents should encourage and, in some cases, exhort children to be baptized.
 - i. Baptism is call to faith and discipleship, and parents should be calling children to faith and discipleship.
 - ii. Membership in the body is an instrument of maturation and should be welcomed by parents desiring to see their children grow and mature.
 - iii. Membership teaches children how to function as fellow family and prepares them for life in local church community.
 - iv. Healthy membership will endear them to the local church and will encourage them to seek for healthy community wherever they go.

Understanding the sacraments, and specifically baptism, as seals:

“The sacrament is not just our doing something in God’s presence; it is His doing something for us. He is really there, acting.” The sacraments are like the seal on a birth certificate which makes it official and confirms all of the rights associated. “As seals, the sacraments confirm and guarantee the covenant promises” (John Frame, *Systematic Theology*, p. 1061). Like the seal imprinted on your birth certificate, baptism is the seal imprinted on your faith that confirms its authenticity.