

## On Baptism

### **TCC Official Statement** (from the website)

*Baptism and The Lord's Supper are the two sacraments Jesus instructed His followers to keep. Baptism is the initiation rite into the Christian Faith. For an adult, it must follow a confession of faith in Jesus Christ as Lord. For an infant, it is an expression on the part of the parents and the church that the child is received into the community of believers, and will be nurtured in the faith until the time when the child decides for him or herself to become a disciple of Christ.*

### **OT Foundations**

1. Noah's Ark and the salvation from the waters of the flood (Gen. 6-9)

**Waters as vehicle in which both salvation and judgment are carried out**

2. Exodus and the passing of the Red Sea as **THE** symbol of Salvation in the OT (Ex. 15)

"The Lord is my strength and my song, and he has become my salvation..." – Exodus 15:2a

The waters do not save Israel; Yahweh is the Savior. However, He uses the waters to carry out His salvation against Egypt. The Israelites only have to watch and 'believe' Yahweh's salvation on their behalf against Egypt's chariotry (Ex. 14:29-31):

'But the people of Israel walked on dry ground through the sea, the waters being a wall to them on their right hand and on their left. Thus the Lord saved Israel that day from the hand of the Egyptians, and Israel saw the Egyptians dead on the seashore. Israel saw the great power that the Lord used against the Egyptians, so the people feared the Lord, and they believed [Hebrew **believed** which is the same way Abram **believed** God in Genesis 15:6] in the Lord and in his servant Moses.' – Exodus 14:29-31

### **Definition of Baptism**

- A visible sign, a ratification of the **new covenant** and **our salvation**
  - Meaning of the Sign
    - John's baptism was a prophetic sign (Matthew 3:1-17; Mark 1:1-11; Luke 3:1-22; John 1:19-34). Biblical signs are physical representations of spiritual reality.
    - John came in the Spirit of Elijah (Malachi 4:5-6; Matthew 17:10-13), calling God's people to confess their sin, by being baptized in the Jordan River.
    - John's baptism, however, did not cleanse people of their sin; God needed to cleanse them of their sins. He prophesied that one coming after him would be far greater than he, one who would baptize in the Holy Spirit rather than the waters of the Jordan, in other words, one who would **effectively cleanse them of their sin**.

- When Jesus underwent John's baptism, He was proclaimed by the Father and the Holy Spirit as the one in whom forgiveness of sins would be granted.
- Christian water baptism now signifies not merely a confession of sins, it signifies both a confession of sin, and an acceptance of the effective cleansing of God in Jesus Christ.
- Akin to a signature in the modern world (in the ancient world a 'seal')
- In our evangelical Protestant tradition (Reformation), water baptism does not save a person, but it is nevertheless a tangible sign to the person baptized that Christ has saved them by cleansing them from their sins. It is a sign to God and to the community that this person has been transferred from darkness into the light.

***Baptism is a passage from sin to righteousness*** (Romans 6:3-4)

The Exodus imagery of the transfer from death to life is fulfilled in the victory that Christ secured over death when he rose from the dead. Paul makes a direct correlation in Romans 6:3-4. On the basis of the analogy of Christ's death and resurrection, we too have died to sin and are alive to righteousness.

The rite of baptism serves as the tangible illustration that we have gone through this 'passage' from death into newness of life. Baptism is our loud statement to ourselves, to God and to the community that we have risen to a new life, away from sin and to righteousness.

"Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life." – Romans 6:3-4

***...from death to resurrection*** (1 Peter 3:20-22)

Waters of baptism are the conduit of God's salvation. There is no ambiguity in the Noah narrative as to who saves whom. The waters are the physical means of what God does for Noah and his family. Likewise, Peter makes it clear that it is the resurrection and what Christ has done that saves us, not the water of baptism.

"...in the days of Noah, while the ark was being prepared, in which a few, that is, eight persons, were brought safely through water. Baptism, which corresponds to this, now saves you, not as a removal of dirt from the body but as an appeal to God for a good conscience, through the resurrection of Jesus Christ, who has gone into heaven and is at the right hand of God, with angels, authorities, and powers having been subjected to him." – 1 Peter 3:20b-22

***...entrance into the family of God*** (Colossians 2:11-12 and the relationship between circumcision and baptism)

Circumcision in Genesis 17 is an external seal/sign of what God has already accomplished in providing Isaac to Abraham and Sarah as the child of the promise. Circumcision, therefore, does not accomplish anything beyond being a sign, but it does say the child belongs to the blessing of Abraham his father. Circumcision is a visible statement that Isaac is being grafted into the line of blessing (just as Ishmael was also circumcised and grafted into the line of blessing because his father was Abraham, as well). By not performing circumcision, an Israelite baby was “cut off” (Gen 17:14, i.e., he didn’t really belong to the community). Thus, it was an important first step but it was not a saving step. Everyone in ancient Israel also needed to confess their faith and trust in Yahweh as adults just as Abram did in Gen 15:6 when “he believed God and it was credited to him as righteousness.” His confession of faith came first as an adult, circumcision came later. This is an important point to remember! (See Romans 4:9-12.) Ultimately, circumcision needed be something of the **heart** and therefore couldn’t be something an 8-day old baby could do. You confirm your physical circumcision with a spiritual circumcision/**dedication** of the heart!

“...the LORD your God will circumcise your heart...” – Deut. 30:6

In the same way, baptism of infants introduces the person into the family of God. This baptism does not save the child, but it prepares them for a confession of faith they will need to make as adults. (See statement on the TCC website on infant baptism).

“In him you were also circumcised, in the putting off of the sinful nature, not with a circumcision done by the hands of men but with the circumcision done by Christ, having been buried with him in baptism and raised with him through your faith in the power of God, who raised him from the dead.” – Colossians 2:11-12 (NIV 1984)