

Celebrating Sacraments

Week 5 - Baptism in the Old Testament

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CATECHISM CORNER

Belgic Confession

Article 34

In this way God signifies to us that just as water washes away the dirt of the body when it is poured on us and also is seen on the bodies of those who are baptized when it is sprinkled on them, so too the blood of Christ does the same thing internally, in the soul, by the Holy Spirit.

It washes and cleanses it from its sins and transforms us from being the children of wrath into the children of God. This does not happen by the physical water but by the sprinkling of the precious blood of the Son of God, who is our Red Sea, through which we must pass to escape the tyranny of Pharaoh, who is the devil, and to enter the spiritual land of Canaan.

So ministers, as far as their work is concerned, give us the sacrament and what is visible, but our Lord gives what the sacrament signifies- namely the invisible gifts and graces; washing, purifying, and cleansing our souls of all filth and unrighteousness; renewing our hearts and filling them with all comfort; giving us true assurance of his fatherly goodness; clothing us with the "new self" and stripping off the "old self with its practices."

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WHAT WE BELIEVE

1. Read 1 Corinthians 10:1-13. In verses 1-4, Paul describes four parallel experiences that "all" the Israelites shared (under the cloud, through the sea, spiritual food, spiritual drink). What Old Testament events do these clearly allude to, and why does Paul use the term "baptized into Moses"(v. 2) to describe the Red Sea/cloud crossing?
2. What does Paul mean when he says in verse 6, "these things took place as examples for us."?
3. Verses 7-10 list four specific sins from Israel's history with corresponding judgments. For each one (idolatry in v. 7, sexual immorality in v. 8, putting Christ to the test in v. 9, grumbling in v. 10), identify the likely Old Testament background Paul is drawing from and explain how he adapts or applies it to his audience.
4. Verse 13 shifts to a positive assurance about temptation. What do the phrases "common to man", "God is faithful," and "the way of escape" communicate about the nature of temptation and God's role in it, in light of the preceding warnings from Israel's failures?

EXODUS AND BAPTISM

"The exodus was understood as an act of redemption, so it was no stretch for him (Paul) to associate it with the events and symbols of Christian redemption. Dunn asserts that the Red Sea crossing, the manna, and the water were only material events of deliverance to the Israelites. They can be recognized as "baptism" or "spiritual food and drink" only from the spiritual vantage point of the new covenant brought about by Christ's death and resurrection. Dunn writes, "We can regard them as 'sacraments, in the same way as we can regard the Israelites as 'our fathers' (v. 1), because their concrete experience of (literal, physical) redemption is an allegory of our concrete experience of (spiritual) redemption."

Garland, D. E. (2003). 1 Corinthians (p. 450). Baker Academic.

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GOD SPEAKS TO US

1. Paul describes how all the Israelites were "baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea" (v. 2), experiencing God's deliverance and identification with their leader, yet most still fell into sin and judgment. In what ways does your own baptism into Christ (as the true Rock and greater Moses) represent a similar deliverance from the "Egypt" of sin and the world, and how might reflecting on this typology strengthen your commitment to live differently from Israel's pattern of failure?

2. Just as the Israelites' "baptism" into Moses brought them under his leadership and covenant obligations, Christian baptism signifies union with Christ and entry into the new covenant community. How does this passage challenge any tendency to view your baptism merely as a past event or ritual, rather than an ongoing call to follow Christ faithfully and avoid the idolatry, immorality, testing, and grumbling that plagued those who were similarly "initiated"?

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GOD SPEAKS TO OUR FAMILY

1. Our text highlights grumbling against God as a sin that led to destruction (v. 10), contrasting with the privileges of being God's people. What steps can you take to foster gratitude and contentment in your household, rather than allowing complaints about daily challenges to erode your family's trust in God's provision?

2. Read verse 11. Pick one of the four failures from verses 7-10. How might that same attitude show up in our home (e.g., grumbling during chores, etc.)? What would it look like for your family to choose a different path this week?

BAPTISM IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

"Peter says the flood was a "baptism" (baptisma) for Noah and his family (1 Peter 3:20-21). Paul says that the Israelites were "baptized" (baptizo) in the crossing of the Red Sea (1 Corinthians 10:2). Hebrews 9:10 uses baptimos to refer to the ceremonial washings of the

old covenant. This means that baptism existed in the Old Testament. That's where our theology of baptism must begin. To say otherwise is to interpret scripture contrary to the apostles.

The Bible's theology of baptism begins in Genesis 1 with a world of water from which everything else will be created and structured. On Day 2, God separated the water into two bodies, with waters above and waters below. This will become the symbolic paradigm for baptism. At the flood, Noah and his family were baptized by water from above (the rain). The wicked were submerged. At the Red Sea, the Israelites were baptized by water from above (Psalm 77:16-20). The wicked Egyptians were submerged. Submersion represents death and hell, sprinkling and pouring represents cleansing from heaven." -Adam McIntosh

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GOD SPEAKS IN WORSHIP

1. In verse 7, some Israelites "sat down to eat and drink and rose up to play" while worshiping a golden calf. How can things we enjoy (like food, fun, or music) turn into false worship?
2. Verse 13 says God is faithful and always gives a way out of temptation. How can this promise help us when we are tempted to worship something or someone other than God (like money, popularity, or comfort)? What can we do together as a group or family to help each other choose true worship every day?

BAPTISM OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

"As the gospel began to spread, there were outpourings of the Spirit among the Samaritans (Acts 8:14-17), the God-fearers (10:44), and the Gentiles (19:1-6). The apostles witnessed these events and concluded that since God had given His Spirit to each group, there were no second-class citizens in the new covenant, no limitations on Samaritans, Greeks, or other Gentile converts. Based on this truth, Paul affirmed, "To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good" (1 Cor. 12:7). So, according to classical Christianity, the idea of the baptism of the Holy Spirit is this: Every Christian receives not only the Spirit's work of regeneration, but also the Spirit's empowering for participation in the ministry of the gospel. That does not mean everyone is called to be a pastor, a preacher, or an evangelist, but every Christian has been set apart and empowered by the Holy Spirit, like those seventy elders of Israel. But whereas only some believers in the Old Testament received the empowerment of the baptism of the Holy Spirit, every believer in the New Testament receives it. Thus, even though there is a distinction between water baptism and Spirit baptism, one of the things the new covenant sign of baptism indicates is the participation of every believer in the power and anointing of the Holy Spirit. Water baptism is a sign of Spirit baptism."

Sproul, R.C.. What Is Baptism? (Crucial Questions Series Book 11) (Function). Kindle Edition.

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ROMAN CATHOLIC BAPTISM THEOLOGY AND PRACTICE

In Roman Catholic theology, Baptism is the "gateway to the life in the Spirit," serving as the

foundational sacrament that incorporates individuals into the Body of Christ. It is viewed not merely as a symbolic gesture, but as an efficacious sign that effects what it signifies: the washing away of Original Sin and all personal sins, and the rebirth of the soul as an adopted child of God.

The Church teaches that Baptism confers an indelible spiritual mark upon the soul, meaning the sacrament can never be repeated. It is considered necessary for salvation, though the Church also recognizes "Baptism of Desire" and "Baptism of Blood" for those who seek God or suffer for the faith without receiving the water rite.

The practice requires the use of natural water and the specific Trinitarian formula: "I baptize you in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit." While immersion is valid, the pouring of water is more common in the Latin Rite. A hallmark of Catholic practice is infant baptism, which emphasizes that grace is a free gift from God that does not depend on human merit. The rite is enriched by symbols such as anointing with oil, wearing white garments, and lighting a paschal candle.

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THE GOSPEL CALL

1. Paul warns, "Let anyone who thinks that he stands take heed lest he fall" (v. 12), after showing how easily people can fall. How can this verse help you talk to friends or family who feel spiritually "safe" because they are moral, go to church sometimes, or have a Christian background? What questions could you ask them to lovingly challenge self-confidence and point them toward humble dependence on Christ alone?
2. Read verse 13. How can you use this assurance when sharing the gospel with someone who says, "I could never change" or "I'm too far gone with my sins"?

BAPTISM HISTORY

"Let us turn to the Gentile Christian Church. Here voices from the most widely scattered territories bear us unanimous witness that the primitive usage of baptizing households (Acts 11:14; 16:15, 33; 18:8; cf. 1 Cor. 1:16) survived uniformly in east and west. Hippolytus graphically describes to us how in the Roman Church long before his time, as early as the second century, at the festival of Easter the families who were being admitted were baptized; first the children, including the infants who could not yet speak (i.e. answer the baptismal questions), then the adult males and last the women (see pp. 74 f.). Tertullian also takes us into the second century, but to Africa. He is the first to report to us the custom that godparents (sponsores) took part in the baptismal ceremony who made promises for the future Christian 'walk and conversation' of the infants (parvuli, see pp. 81-84); they are most probably identical with the sponsors mentioned in the Church Orders, who stood surety for those intending to change their religion when names of candidates for the catechumenate were announced, and in this character vouched for the families of the infants. And lastly we are pointed to Syria by the Pseudo-Clementine writings, which at least indirectly bear witness that families were not torn asunder at baptism."

Jeremias, J. (1960). Infant Baptism in the First Four Centuries (D. Cairns, Trans.; p. 41). SCM Press Ltd.

