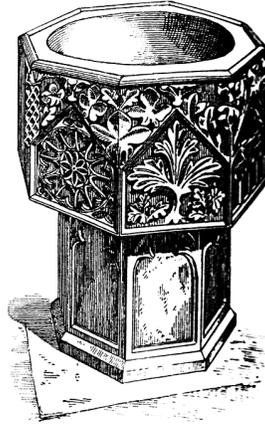


Baptism



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BAPTISMAL GRACE**13****INFANT BAPTISM****14****Baptism in Scripture****In the Gospels****Matthew 3:11-17**

- ✘ There is a physical-spiritual relationship in John's Baptism
- ✘ The Baptism ritual of John is done with water for repentance
- ✘ John says that the one to come after him will baptize with "spirit and fire" a Hebrew parallelism that means the same thing.
- ✘ Jesus did not need to be Baptized for repentance but still he says the ritual must be done "for the sake of righteousness"
- ✘ For Jesus the cause was water Baptism but the effect was God's proclamation of him and the revelation of the Spirit. Notice how this is similar to what John prophesied about the one coming after him.

John 1:25-36

- ✘ The above ideas in Mark are explained in John. John the Baptist baptized primarily to reveal Jesus.

Luke 7:27-30

- ✘ There are two groups of people in this passage and two cause-effect relationships with Baptism
- ✘ The first group are the people and tax collectors. They are said to have acknowledged the justice of God *because* they had been baptized.
- ✘ The second group are the Pharisees and lawyers who in not being baptized resulted in "rejecting God's purposes for themselves"

John 3:22-28 John 4:1-3

- ✘ Jesus and the Disciples are continuing the tradition of John the Baptist by using the ritual of Baptism likely for the same thing: repentance

Matthew 28:19-20

- ✘ Jesus give a direct command to Baptize.
- ✘ Considering the history of John's baptism and that the disciples continued to baptize this must also be the same water ritual.

John's Baptism was the ritual action of repentance that was continued by Jesus' disciples and commanded to be continued by him after his resurrection with the prophecy of a coming baptism of the Holy Spirit.

John's Baptism and Pentecost

Acts 1:3-9 and 2:1-7

- ✘ Before the ascension Jesus promised the disciples would be baptized by the Holy Spirit
- ✘ This promise was fulfilled on Pentecost, but keep in mind the context of this promise that originally came from John in connection with his Baptism

Acts 2:36-41

- ✘ During Pentecost Peter proclaims the Gospel, and is asked what the proper response should then be
- ✘ Peter then gives two actions with two results of those actions: Repent and be Baptized resulting in forgiveness of sins and the gift of the Holy Spirit
- ✘ Remember that Jesus commanded his Disciples to continue the water ritual, and we saw from Jesus' Baptism the completion of that ritual. At Pentecost that completion came on the disciples and now they are commanding the people to submit to this gift.
- ✘ NB: "Baptized for the forgiveness of sins" in Greek uses the exact same construction as Matthew 26:28 "for this is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins." and Luke 24:47 "that repentance for forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed in His name to all the nations". (εἰς) "For" in Greek does not mean "because of" or "with a view to". (cf Wallace, *Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics*, 369-371)

Acts 2:38 has Peter giving a "salvation invitation" to the people saying: "repent, and each of you be baptized into the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit." Wallace lists four views for this passage, and does not list the possibility of a causal εἰς (because of/with a view to) as grammatically feasible. (Wallace, *Grammar*, 369-371)

The options he presents are a) physical only baptism, b) spiritual only, c) text should be repunctuated or d) baptism for the 1st century Jew was both spiritual reality and physical symbol.

Wallace rebuts (a) by saying that repentance always precedes baptism, which will be dealt with later, and that this would go against a *sola fide* soteriology, an assumption not found in the exegesis of the text. Lutherans, Anglicans and Reformed all agree that faith is part of the equation with the sacraments, and all hold to *sola fide*. In actuality this is a position no one holds to, as all of the Great Traditions of the Church see the Holy Spirit at work in the physical element of water, and do not see the water itself being the prime cause of the grace given. Wallace then rightly points out that a spiritual only baptism does not fit well

with the context, and trying to restructure the sentence to get around the issue makes the sentence very awkward and thus highly unlikely. The fourth option Wallace endorses but does not quite connect the idea correctly as he stills wants to hold on to a strong physical/spiritual dichotomy in the sacrament.

Peter is saying that Baptism incorporates both a spiritual and physical reality, and this therefore makes the physical reality more than a symbol. To say water here is only a picture takes the force of Peters command out, whereas it is fully effective and fits the context if baptism is seen as the act of repentance *par excellence*, and under normal conditions are inseparable. There is a parallel, as Fowler notes, between the Greek here for "for the forgiveness of sins" and the Greek in Matthew 26:28 and Luke 24:47. The first is a reference to the blood of Christ and the second is a reference to the preaching of the Gospel, and one would not conclude that these are mere "symbols" or "pictures". Baptism is like preaching, it is the word made visible, saying there is sacramental efficacy in baptism no more places a strain on *sola fide* then saying one must hear the gospel (or pray a "sinner's prayer"?) to be saved.

Pentecost was the fulfillment of John's prophecy and Jesus' promise to be Baptized by the Holy Spirit, the connection of which Peter makes with water Baptism.

Water and Spirit

Acts 10:37-48 and Acts 11:12-18

- ✘ When we approach the Book of Acts we have to remember two things: First as history it will be more *descriptive* then *prescriptive*. Secondly, Acts is a transition period between Israel of the Old Covenant and the Church of the New.
- ✘ As Peter was speaking to gentiles the Holy Spirit descended on them just like Pentecost
- ✘ The reason the disciples were shocked was because the gentiles were supposed to be outside of God's covenant
- ✘ God granted them the Holy Spirit first as a sign of his acceptance of Gentiles
- ✘ This explains the reaction of Peter: If the gentiles have already received the promises of the covenant, what is to stop them from having the ritual that was supposed to grant those promises?
- ✘ When Peter testifies before the Jerusalem Council about this incident this is the explanation he gave: it showed that the Spirit is not making a distinction between Jew and Gentile.

Acts 19:1-8

- ✘ On his journey Paul finds some people who were previously baptized by John.
- ✘ Although that had received this earlier form of Baptism, it had not happened after the descent of the Spirit and so had not received this gift yet.
- ✘ This is likely what is meant by them not hearing about there being a Holy Spirit. As good Jews they would have believed in a holy Spirit in an Old Testament sense. What is new is that there is the opportunity to receive the Spirit.
- ✘ Because they had already been Baptized Paul did not rebaptize them, all he needed to do was *complete* the Baptism by laying his hands on them so that the full gift could be received
- ✘ The *normative* cause-effect of the Churches' baptism is water->Holy Spirit. This incident happened during the transition and like the previous example was out of order, but in a different way.

It is important to note that there is no distinction between spirit and water Baptism, but that there is water baptism that is sometimes appropriated as a metaphor for something else. It is true that sometimes salvation and baptism are not always connected in Acts, but the only evidence of salvation before baptism is Acts 10,¹ in which case it comes before anything, even prayer, and reads like an exception. Especially considering the astonishment of the disciples that they would have received the Spirit, it is difficult to take a universal paradigm out of the initial Gospel to the Gentile world. If so then we must also include speaking in tongues as normative. It is seen though that there was to be a connection between the Holy Spirit and baptism, as evidenced by the astonishment of the Apostles. Which is why if they already have the Spirit, then they should be baptized.² To form a theology based on a normal paradigm, it is better to ask not what the Holy Spirit did during this time, but what was expected to happen. These inconsistencies do not refute a connection between the gift of the Spirit and baptism but only complicates it.³ Although the Holy Spirit cannot be contained by Baptism, which again no Sacramentalist, even Catholics, would say, rather it is expected that in a faithful baptism God bestows the gift of the Spirit.

Under all normal expectations then the dichotomy is not between "Spirit" and "water" baptism, but between water/spirit sacramental Baptism and a metaphorical usage of the word "baptism". Places such as 1 Corinthians 12:13 strengthen this as the most natural way to take the verse "Sprit baptized us into one body" is not a "spirit baptism" but the Sprit as the agency of water baptism. The two major places where "Baptism" is possibly used in a metaphorical way are Mark 10:38-39 and 1 Corinthians 10:2.

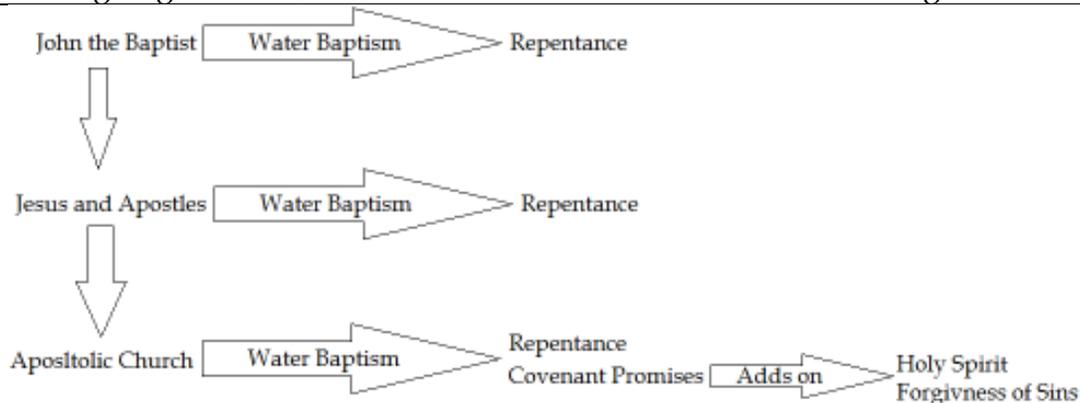
As recorded in Mark 10:38-39 Jesus asks James and John if they will truly be able to

¹ Fowler, *More Than a Symbol: The British Baptist Recovery of Baptismal Sacramentalism*, 160.

² Acts 10:47

³ James F. White, *The Sacraments in Protestant Practice and Faith* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1999), 66.

“drink the cup that I drink, or be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with”. Considering it is coupled with “cup” that can also be used as a metaphor,⁴ and the context it is clearly also metaphorical baptism. However, unlike Romans 6 it cannot be confused for literal baptism. Romans 6 differs in that the Christian readers are said to be Baptized into Christ, which is a different construction and that the context is not within a section that would naturally bring to mind literal baptism, especially considering it is coupled with another common metaphor in Mark. In Romans there is not other indication that a metaphorical baptism is intended, and if a metaphor is being used it is not being used in the same way as in Mark. In Mark the metaphor is undergoing an event, in this case probably the suffering of Christ. In Romans 6 Baptism is not undergoing an event, it is that which causes an event to be undergone.



Throughout Acts water Baptism is seen as the normative means for the Baptism of the Holy Spirit, following Peter's statement in Acts 2. Here we see that the promise of baptism by the Holy Spirit was not in opposition but in enhancement of John's water Baptism so that they became combined into one action.

Baptism and Salvation

Acts 16:14-15

- ✘ There is a cause-effect here: The woman opened her heart and she was baptized
- ✘ The text does not say “believe” but is using Baptism as a metonymy for the entire salvation event. This is the proper response to the Gospel.

Acts 16:30-33

- ✘ Here is a stronger example of the conflation in scripture between baptism/belief/salvation.
- ✘ The jailer asked what to *do* to be saved (for an action), Paul tells him to “believe”, the result of which he was baptized. The action of belief that granted salvation was his baptism.

The Bible uses baptism as a synonym of salvation, indicating this as the normal way in which a person goes from being “not saved” to “saved”.

⁴ Ps 116:13; Isa 52:22; Rev 14:10

Baptism of Paul

Acts 22:12-16

- ✘ Paul recounts his conversion story and in doing so tells how Ananias commanded him to respond to the events of the Damascus road
- ✘ First, it should be noted that up to this point Paul's sins must not have been forgiven, because Ananias specifically tells him how to do so. This means that his Damascus road conversion did not forgive his sins!
- ✘ Paul is told to be baptized, thus have his sins washed away through calling on his name. "Calling on his name" here is connected to the ritual of Baptism, the total effect of which grants forgiveness of sins.
- ✘ Notice that "believe" is not used here. It is likely implied, and certainly Paul must have believed before this event, and would have believed to be baptized, but it is the ritual itself that is connected here with forgiveness.

The other strong mention of baptism in Acts is 22:16 which treats Baptism something akin to the popular "sinners prayer". Baptism is where a person can "call on the name of the Lord" and so have their sins washed away. Although Demarest brushes the verse aside as saying this would be a "superficial reading", (*The Cross and Salvation*, 296) he fails to demonstrate this other than by quoting F.F. Bruce saying "it would be against the genius of Christian religion to have a rite apart from any repentance within." This is a straw man, as no Protestant or Catholic sacramentalist is saying that repentance is unimportant.

He admits Paul is using a close connection between the reality and the symbol, but fails to see that this is precisely because there is a very real correlation between them.

His observations that the verbs "be baptized" and "have your sins washed away" are aorist while "calling on his name" is an aorist participle does not help his argument. It is true that an the aorist participle implies action before the main verb(s), and so calling on the Lord is the primary action, but that would still mean that Baptism and washing away of sin is connected in one package as happening after, so that the verse is still left with a cause-effect relationship of baptism washing away sin.

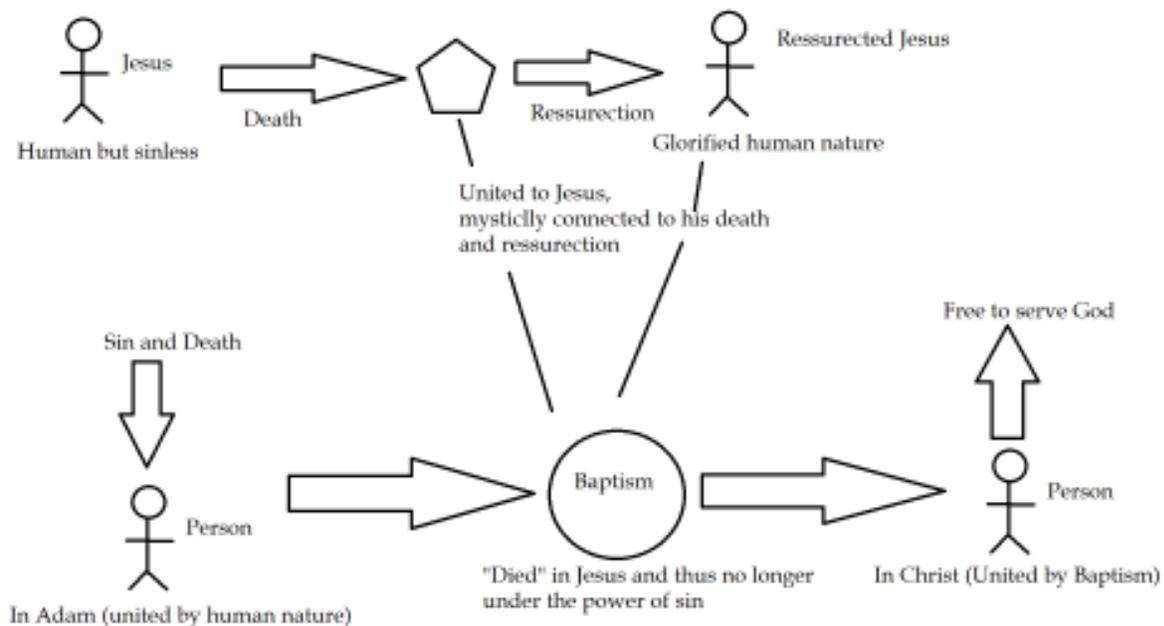
The emphasis in the verse is what Saul must do in letting himself be baptized and have his sins washed away. When seen as the act of faith where a person calls on the Lord, this verse makes perfect sense, as much as "get up and pray to the Lord, and wash away your sins, calling on his name". If anything a sacramental view is even more *sola fide*, as the verb here implies not that the people are to baptize themselves, but allow themselves to be baptized. (Wallace,

Grammar, 426) The sinner's prayer is more a work done for salvation than the baptism of the Church, where the Minister as the representative of Christ who is the one actually doing the Baptizing.

Paul's Explanations of Baptism

Romans 6:1-11 (cf also Colossians 2:9-13)

- ✘ In Romans 5-6 Paul's overarching argument in Romans contains a problem-solution.
- ✘ The problem is in Chapter 5: the bondage of all people in Adam to the slavery of sin and death.
- ✘ The solution is in the first part of Romans 6: Being united to Jesus through Baptism breaks the power of this slavery
- ✘ As humans we are part of Adamic nature, in this way we are united to Adam.
- ✘ While united to Adam we are under the powers of sin and death, which require us to die, but anyone who has died is freed from these powers
- ✘ But Jesus died for us, and in Baptism we are united to that death. Thus we do not have to literally die, but we do undergo a death through connection with his death and resurrection
- ✘ Because in a sense we "died" in Jesus, we are then freed from the powers of sin and death.
- ✘ Notice the same theme in Colossians 2:9-13



As long as humanity us under the dominion of sin there is no possibility for true sanctification. This is the problem addressed by Paul primarily in Romans 6:1-11.

If union with Adam is the problem, then the solution is union with Christ. Paul argues that Christians have switched whom they are “in.” While in Adam they were under the dominion of Sin (Rom 5:12-14), so under Christ they are freed from this dominion (6:6). This union is the basis for the Christian’s righteousness and sanctification (1 Cor 1:30), and is contrasted with the union had in Adam (1 Cor 15:22). Solidarity to Adam is death, but salvation comes by solidarity with the new Adam, Christ. (Francis Hall, *The Sacraments*, 8)

This union is accomplished by being baptized into Christ (Rom 6:3-5; Gal 3:26-29). To be baptized is to be united to the death, burial and resurrection of Christ. The εἰς indicates that this unification is the goal of the baptism. (Beasley-Murray, *Baptism in the New Testament*, 128)

Believers have been “Baptized into Christ Jesus” (ἐβαπτίσθημεν εἰς Χριστὸν Ἰησοῦν) which means by definition they have also been baptized “into his death” (εἰς τὸν θάνατον αὐτοῦ. It is not adequate to see Baptism here as only a symbol for the union, for Paul is saying that this “Baptism” results in the union, which is indicated by the resultive εἰς. The preposition indicates the act performs the union, which cannot be said of something that is merely symbolic.

Both verbs in Rom 6:3 are passive aorist, indicating the past finality of the events and the fact that in neither case was this baptism something they did, instead it was something done to them. They were unable in and of themselves to unite themselves to Christ. However, if union with Christ is the cause of Adams original sin being broken over a Christian, then being baptized into Christ is the means of operation by which this unification happens. (Francis Hall, *The Sacraments*, 9)

Part of the problem in Romans 5-6 is not just that all who are in Adam are slaves to sin, but also that understanding this bondage would be actual despair in the face of sin, which would lead to apathy about living an ethical life. Part of the solution must then be not just knowledge of being freed, but an actual assurance of being freed individually. Revivalism recognizes this, unconsciously or not, by substituting Baptism of the “altar call”⁵ or even the “sinners prayer”, where the person as an individual can pick a point in time for their initial salvation.

Instead, Paul reminds his readers of something they should know, that this point

⁵ Stanley K. Fowler, *More Than a Symbol: The British Baptist Recovery of Baptismal Sacramentalism*, Studies in Baptist History and Thought, vol. 2 (Carlisle: Paternoster Press, 2002), 251.

in time already happened in Baptism. The focus of the ἀγνοεῖτε ὅτι Romans 6:3 is not on the fact that they have been Baptized, but what their Baptism actually did. The clause ὅτι is explaining the nature of resultant connection between Baptism and unity in Christ, indicating that all the Roman Christians knew they had been baptized but could forget what that Baptism did to them. If Baptism was either an invisible event of the Spirit only or if water Baptism only symbolized and so did not guarantee union with Christ then Paul's statement here would not work. Under both of those conditions the Christian has no actual way of knowing if they are united to Christ anyway. Yet, for all Paul in Romans seems eager in responding to possible objections to his argument, he never responds to "how did I know I have really been united", which only makes sense if they had some definite event where they knew that unity to have taken place.

What about 1 Corinthians 10:2? This passage is at least a close enough construction (εἰς τὸν Μωϋσῆν ἐβαπτίσθησαν) to Romans 6:3 (ἐβαπτίσθημεν εἰς Χριστὸν). And some may take this as evidence that Romans 6 is being metaphorical. The key here is to understand what the point is and is not of Paul's argument. He is not intending to be anti-sacramental, but to remind the Christians at Corinth that they will still fall under divine judgment for idolatry.⁶ The usage is technically metaphorical because the Israelites did not at that time have a water initiation rite that could be called "Baptism". At the same time he is not pulling ideas from the Old Testament to make his point, as they never mention being "Baptized into Moses". Instead he is taking his Baptismal theology and using it to form an analogy to Israel for the sake of his argument. The metaphor is understood by first understanding Baptism into Christ, not attempting to understand Romans 6 based on Paul's usage here as primary.⁷ Therefore this is at best an unusual usage of "Baptism" for this specific occasion and only drawn analogously from a preexisting idea of the Christian rite of Baptism in water. This being the case, this example cannot be used to take Romans 6 as primarily a metaphorical idea and not primarily a sacramental one. In fact, the usage of Paul here indicates then that Baptism for him had a salvific effect, or the analogy he builds to create the language of salvation though baptism into Moses would make no sense to the Christian community at Corinth.

⁶ Craig S. Keener, *1-2 Corinthians*, New Cambridge Bible Commentary (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 84.

⁷ Beasley-Murray, *Baptism in the New Testament*, 185.

⁸ See above in "solves problem of Romans 5-6" section

⁹ Cranfield, *Romans 1-8*, 323.

¹⁰ James G. Dunn, *Romans 1-8*, vol. 38, Word Biblical Commentary, ed. Glenn W. Barker David A. Hubbard, Ralph P. Martin (Dallas, TX: Word Books, 1988), 341.

¹¹ Byrne, *Romans*, 201.

¹² See parallel in 6:13

¹³ Dunn, *Romans 1-8*, 342.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 344.

Yet, again,⁸ for all Paul in Romans seems eager to respond to possible objections to his argument, he never responds to “but water Baptism doesn’t save you”. Only making sense if he was using the normal and common usage of the word in Christian experience as a water initiation rite. Not if he was suddenly using a metaphor or making a strong dichotomy between water and Spirit, or any other combination that could mean anything else then “water baptism united you to Christ and so unites you to his death.”

The Christian has in Baptism been crucified with Christ and died to sin (Rom 6:6), which results in freedom from sin’s bondage (Rom 6:7). This leads to Paul’s beginning of sanctification starting in 6:11. Paul uses in 6:11 the same verb as in 4:5 (λογίζεσθε). As in 4:5, the verb is used with the idea of estimating, or evaluating something. Due to this evaluation of being dead to sin and alive to God they should not allow sin to continue the dominance it had on them before their Baptism (6:12). The implication is that although sin still can “rule” (βασιλεύτω), but it cannot “rule” in the same manner that it did when they were united to Adam as in Romans 5. Baptism has set them free, but they must use that freedom to practice their righteousness and not willingly go back under the yoke of sin. However, these are the only two options, and there is no concept here of a person being completely free from any master.⁹

Instead, Paul sets up a dichotomy of slavery and sanctification in Romans 6:16-19, where his readers should become slaves to God instead of sin. 6:16 introduces this idea with the rhetorical question¹⁰ “do you not know that” (οὐκ οἴδατε ὅτι). This knowledge is not anything that should be considered deep or complex, but the reasonable idea that slaves oblige themselves to obey their masters.¹¹ In Paul’s mind there are only two masters, either “Sin” as a personified force, or God as intended by the phrase “ὑπακοήν ὑπακοῆς εἰς δικαιοσύνην”.¹² The εἰς connected to each master implies the bringing about¹³ of the state mentioned, either death or righteousness. Paul then thanks God, indicating ultimate source, that they became obedient (ὑπηκούσατε). The aorist connects back to 6:1-6 where the theology of being baptized into the death and resurrection to Christ were also aorist. Becoming a slave to righteousness was part of the transfer of loyalty to God that occurred in Baptism.¹⁴ This doesn’t mean the obedience is automatic and total in Baptism, for Paul still feels the need to exhort the readers to do this. However, they have truly been freed from sin in Baptism, and have become obedient to God, which involves a command to present their bodies to that obedience which they claimed in Baptism (6:19). It is in remembering their Baptism, and so acting on the grace given that freed them from the sin of Adam, that Paul argued the Christian was able to live a life that resulted in true holiness and sanctification (6:22).

Baptism in 1 Peter

1 Peter 3:20-22

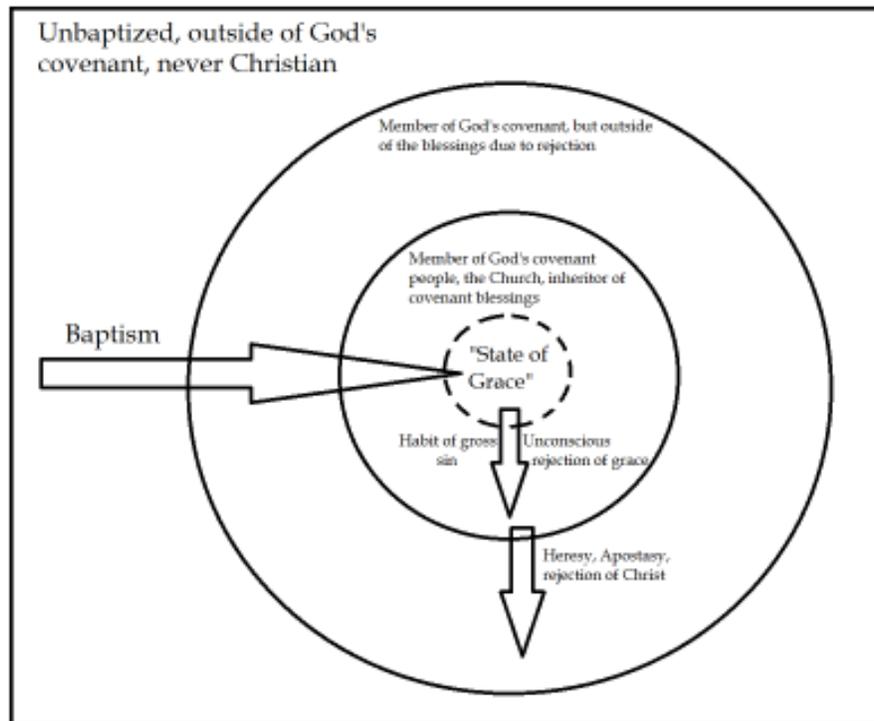
- ✘ Peter makes an analogy here between salvation during the days of Noah and salvation now
- ✘ Noah and his family were saved “through water”. Although Peter mentions the Ark, he connects the water with salvation, this is because of the water parallel with baptism
- ✘ The connection he is making is with the water, so the Baptism in view here is ritual water baptism
- ✘ This is the Baptism that Peter specifically says “now saves you”, in both cases he is referring to some saving event, the water of the flood by which Noah was saved through and now the water of Baptism which saves Christians
- ✘ It is not the power of the water itself of course, it is the power of Christ in Baptism that saves. This is the point behind his statement “not the washing of dirt from the body”. In other words, Christians are not saved because the water made them physically clean, but because through Baptism the person is made spiritually clean

In 1 Peter 3:20-22 Baptism is an integral part of God’s saving action, but is highly debated. Erickson (Baptist) says this verse actually denies baptism has any saving effect and is only a pledge of a good conscience to God. (*Christian Theology*, 1108) Whereas Pieper (Lutheran) quotes this verse as showing baptism is what calls forth faith and so is a means of regeneration. (*Christian Dogmatics*, 264)

Although Erickson makes a good point about the emphasis on the power of resurrection as saving in this passage, the promise of baptism cannot be ignored. Peter, if anything, would not be refuting a high view of baptism but a low one. He is saying baptism is not just removal of dirt, not just water. If it was just water it wouldn't be saving, but a sacrament is not just the sign but also a grace.

Peter outright says "Baptism now saves you", not as being water but as being through which you make an appeal to God. This appeal to God fits the paradigm seen of baptism being the act of repentant faith, through which the benefits and power of Christ's resurrection are given. If it were paraphrased in a more “Baptist-friendly” manner: "prayer now saves you- not the speaking of words, but asking God for a clean conscience- though the power of Christ's resurrection". If it were said this way Erickson would more likely accept the conclusion, so the problem is not the wording but the root concept of sacramentality, where he is unable to accept that God does anything through his material creation.

Baptismal Grace



What about the charge that says if baptism were necessary for salvation then how were people, like the thief on the cross, saved without it? And therefore is "not the indispensable condition which God regenerates sinful souls"¹⁵? This also is a straw man. No sacramental theology claims it is indispensably necessary for salvation. Reformed (Berkhof),¹⁶ Lutheran (Pieper)¹⁷ and Anglican (Thomas)¹⁸ all state in one-way or another that although there is spiritual salvific benefit in baptism, one can be saved without it under certain circumstances. "There is a persistent inability to see the difference between baptism as the normative means of the experience of personal salvation and the essential means."¹⁹ The key is "normative". Cases such as the thief on the cross and someone in the middle of the desert are cases that cannot be used to form the rule. Demarest likens it to a wedding, saying that like a wedding it does not create love or commitment but seals existing love or commitment.²⁰ Grenz also follows this analogy saying it is what the Holy Spirit uses to strengthen commitment, which is more along the lines of a Reformed view of sign and seal of salvation.²¹ This is a good

¹⁵ Common phrase

¹⁶ Berkhof, *Systematic Theology*, 618-9.

¹⁷ Pieper, *Christian Dogmatics*, 255.

¹⁸ Thomas, *Principles of Theology*, 362.

¹⁹ Fowler, *More Than a Symbol: The British Baptist Recovery of Baptismal Sacramentalism*, 170.

²⁰ Demarest, *The Cross and Salvation*, 306.

²¹ Stanley J. Grenz, *Theology for the Community of God* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000), 527.

analogy, but the pure symbolism seems to miss then the point. Two people are not married until the wedding. Yes, love and commitment are there, but the status of the couple is not "married" until the wedding rite is complete. So it is a sign and seal, but it is also for all intents and purposes the ritual that changes the status of the relationship, in the case of baptism between the human and divine.

God can work when he desires to and he is not bound to his sacraments anymore then his promises. Yet, most theologians would not then conclude God is "forced" to do as he promises or that his actions are then "automatic" or any other negative concepts usually leveled at Baptismal Sacramentalism. Seeing, as we don't know when grace is bestowed, "the symbolic and actual bestowment of grace are identical, as in the benefits are given as far as perception in concerned."²² So when baptism is viewed form the angle of first: not being a meritorious work, but still a work of divine grace given to a person who doesn't merit it and; and second: as the normal means of grace but not the essential which is faith itself, then these objections can be seen as much more weakened in their critique. It is also worth pointing out that "salvation" and being "saved" doesn't always mean Justification. Baptism is not primarily about getting into heaven, but about entering into the Christian life by being united to Christ, filled with the Spirit and freed from the power of sin. Baptism is more about Sanctification then Justification.

Infant Baptism

Q. Why then are infants baptized?

A. Infants are baptized so that they can share citizenship in the Covenant, membership in Christ, and redemption by God.

Q. How are the promises for infants made and carried out?

A. Promises are made for them by their parents and sponsors, who guarantee that the infants will be brought up within the Church, to know Christ and be able to follow him.

(Book of Common Prayer Catechism)

²² Fowler, *More Than a Symbol: The British Baptist Recovery of Baptismal Sacramentalism*, 211.