

# Objections to Infant Baptism

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From time to time, I will go with Lauren to some department store to shop for baby clothes, and one of the peculiarities of this area is that in all the baby-clothes departments, they have rack after rack of little white suits and little white dresses. If I were religiously ignorant, this would confuse me. Having been through the baby process before, I know that once you put a white outfit on a baby, five minutes later, it is no longer going to be white. Of course, these suits and dresses are intended not for everyday wear, but for use in the religious ceremony of infant baptism.

Many of the most prominent denominations in these parts teach and practice infant baptism, and the rationale behind the practice goes something like this: As Genesis 3 tells us, at the very beginning of the human race, Adam our father sinned. Many denominations teach that the guilt of this sin did not remain with Adam alone. Instead, all of Adam's descendants, every member of the human race, also inherited his sin. Thus, just as soon as a child is born, before that child has ever had the opportunity to know God's law and choose to violate it, that baby is still guilty in God's eyes because he is tainted by Adam's sin. If the baby were to die in his sinful state, God would condemn him to hell eternally. Obviously, none of us want our babies to go to hell, so the "solution" is to baptize them immediately after birth.

There is no doubt that many denominational creed books teach infant baptism, but that doesn't matter. The only thing that matters is whether the word of God teaches infant baptism, and the more we study the Scripture on the subject, the more we find that it is not a Biblical concept. Let's look this morning, then, at some objections to infant baptism.

## Unnecessary and Inappropriate.

The first Biblical criticism of infant baptism is that it is **UNNECESSARY**. As I said just a moment ago, the entire practice of infant baptism is based on the idea that all of us have inherited the original sin of Adam, but the idea of original, inherited sin is simply not found in Scripture. It is true that the sin of Adam does have an effect on us, but we learn what the effect of that sin was in Romans 5:12. Because Adam ate from the fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil, he gained the ability to discern between right and wrong, and he passed that ability on to his descendants. That's why animals can't sin. They aren't descended from Adam. However, the mere fact that we have the capacity to make an evil decision and sin does not condemn us by itself. After all, Christ was a descendant of Adam, and He was guiltless. Instead, our inheritance from Adam condemns us when we actually do make the evil choice, when we ourselves determine to sin. That's exactly what the text here says. Death spread to all men because all sinned. Adam's sin gave us the potential to sin, but we only become guilty in God's eyes when we turn that potential into reality by choosing to disobey. Because infants cannot choose to violate God's law, it is impossible for them to be tainted by sin.

The prophet Ezekiel makes this even more explicit in Ezekiel 18:20. Brethren, every time I read this passage, I marvel that the doctrine of original sin even exists, because the text could not be more clear. Who dies? The soul that sins. The son does not die because his father sinned, and the father does not die because his son sinned. If we choose to be righteous, we do not bear the iniquity and the guilt of anyone else. If we choose to be wicked, the fact that we have righteous parents or righteous children will not save us from God's wrath. We will still die because of our own sin. Now, if we are not going to be condemned by the sin of even our immediate blood fathers, how can we possibly be condemned by the sin of our ultimate father Adam? There is no way that can be. This passage leaves no room for original sin, and if there is no such thing as original sin, then there is absolutely no reason to baptize a pure and innocent baby.

Even if infant baptism were necessary, it would still be **INAPPROPRIATE**. As important as baptism is to God's plan of salvation, there are other steps that are every bit as essential that an infant cannot carry out. For example, look with me at Mark 16:15-16. Jesus could not be clearer here that a man must do more than simply be baptized to be saved. Instead, he must first believe, and then be baptized. Obviously, this doesn't mean that he must believe in Santa or the tooth fairy. Instead, he must believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, and that He has the power to save him from his sins. That belief is something that no infant can ever hold. As all of you are aware, I think that Zoë is the smartest, most wonderful little girl ever to live, but she doesn't have a clue what sin is, much less that she needs a Savior. Because of that, if I were to take her up to the baptistery after the sermon and dunk her, I'd only be getting her wet.

Those who practice infant baptism say that the faith of the parent can be imputed to the child. In other words, the child's baptism is effective because Mommy and Daddy believe for him. Not only is this idea not found anywhere in Scripture, it doesn't make lick of logical sense. If the faith of the baptizer can be imputed to the baptizee, why don't we start kidnapping people, believing for them, and baptizing them into Christ whether they like it or not? Does imputing only work for family members? If so, I'd like to assemble a posse of the larger, meaner brethren here, and go down to Virginia and forcibly baptize my brother. He's trained as a Green Beret, so jumping him might prove kind of hazardous, but for the sake of his soul, I'm willing to chance it. All levity aside, we recognize that that is a ridiculous notion. The

faith of one person cannot substitute for the faith of another. The only reason why someone would come up with the notion of imputed faith to begin with is because they had already developed infant baptism and needed to defend it.

Nor, for that matter, can an infant take the equally important step of repentance. This is quite evident from Peter's famous words in Acts 2:38. He wanted those devout Jews on the day of Pentecost to be baptized, no doubt, but he told them that before he would baptize them, they would have to repent. They had to acknowledge that their sinful behavior was wrong, not because they had gotten caught, but because it violated God's law. Once again, even though Zoë has outgrown the infant stage, I guarantee you that she is incapable of Biblical repentance. She doesn't know that there is such a thing as an abstract rule, nor does she grasp that violating such a rule would make her guilty. She is as innocent of sin as a puppy dog. How could she possibly repent? Indeed, this requirement of repentance highlights another problem with the doctrine of original sin. I don't have to be baptized into Christ because of the sin of Adam. How could I repent of what someone else did? Instead, I need only be baptized when I become conscious of my own sin.

### **Ineffective and Unscriptural.**

As if that were not enough, infant baptism is also **INEFFECTIVE**. This problem is created because of the way that infant baptism is typically performed. It does not involve what we in the Lord's church think of as baptism. The infant is not immersed in water. Instead, infant "baptism" is performed by sprinkling or pouring water on him.

Baptism in the Scripture, on the other hand, clearly involved immersion. We see this first of all in the language of Scripture itself. Our verb "to baptize" is what linguists call a transliteration. It is taken directly from the language in which the Bible was originally written, Koine Greek, and rewritten in English letters instead of Greek ones. The Greek word that has been transliterated is *baptizo*, and that verb never means "to sprinkle" or "to pour". It only means "to immerse". Every time the Bible says someone was baptized, the original Greek text says he was immersed. The only reason why we have all this confusion in our Bibles is that the English king James, who authorized the King James translation of the Scripture, believed in sprinkling for infant baptism. When the translators came to him with a draft that talked repeatedly about immersion, he made them go back and replace "immerse" with "baptize" to confuse the issue.

However, despite King James' best efforts, even our English Bibles point to a baptism that is not sprinkling or pouring. Look, for instance, at John 3:23. This passage is about the baptism of John, not the baptism of Christ, but the physical act in both cases is the same. If John were just sprinkling a few drops of water on sinners' heads, or if he were just pouring out a dipperful, why did he have to go to a place on the Jordan where there was "much water"? The Jordan continues to flow all year long. John could have sprinkled or poured anywhere along its length. The only reason he had to go where there was much water, to a place that we might call a swimming hole, was because he was immersing people.

We see a similar situation in Acts 8:36, 38-39. As the text tells us earlier, the eunuch here is traveling down a desert road. His home in Ethiopia is many days off yet. It strains credulity to imagine that this man is traveling through the desert without supplies of water. Philip could have poured some of that water on him right there in the chariot. And yet, they leave the chariot, go down into some water by the side of the road, and come up out of the water as part of the baptismal process. That wasn't necessary for sprinkling or pouring, but it was necessary for immersion. Soul-saving Bible baptism always involves immersion, and because infant baptism uses sprinkling or pouring, it cannot save.

Finally, infant baptism is **UNSCRIPTURAL**. There are churches in England that have records of infant baptisms stretching back for centuries, but one place where there is no record whatsoever of infant baptism is the word of God. Infant baptism is never commanded by God, we never see an example of its practice, and there is nothing in Scripture that logically implies that the early church baptized infants. Of course, advocates of infant baptism will deny this. They will justify their practice by pointing to Scriptures like 1 Corinthians 1:16. The argument goes that because Paul baptized a household, he must have baptized the infants that were a part of that household. Sadly, there's a huge logical problem with that. We can't conclude that Paul baptized infants as part of a household because not every household contains infants. For example, our directory tells me that Jesse and Goldie Fugett established their household on August 13<sup>th</sup>, 1945, which is incredible to think about. However, that household has not contained infants for many decades. If Paul were to baptize Jesse's entire household, he could do that without baptizing a single infant. We can suppose all we want to about the household of Stephanas, but their example proves nothing about infant baptism.

We run into similar problems with the supposed proof of Acts 16:32-34. Yes, Paul baptized the entire family of the Philippian jailer. However, the text also tells us that Paul taught the entire family the word of the Lord before he baptized them. Nobody bothers to attempt to teach infants before baptizing them, because no infant can understand the gospel. If Paul is baptizing infants, why is he teaching them first? Likewise, the next verse tells us that after this mass baptism, the entire household is rejoicing. I've never been to a christening ceremony, but I was present at Zoë's first bath, and let me tell you, friends—when the nurse poured water on Zoë's head, Zoë did not rejoice. Instead, she screamed her little red head off. If the jailer's whole household is rejoicing instead of screaming, I find it hard to imagine that the household included infants. These examples that supposedly establish infant baptism actually establish nothing.