

INTRO

Baptism is a central piece of the Christian faith. It's a sacrament, which is God's word with a visible sign of God's grace (says Luther). It's one of two sacraments for most Protestants (Holy Communion being the other), one of seven for Roman Catholics. But in any tradition, *something happens* when water and word come together in the name of the Triune God (the Holy Trinity – God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit). But what is it? And how should we practice it? And *why*?

Different denominations have different understandings of baptism, and what “happens” in the ritual. Many churches baptize infants. Others baptize only believers, or adults. Both use scripture to back up their traditions. But they all seem to think it's important, for lots of reasons. Maybe they desire baptism (for themselves or their kid) to save them from hell. Or because Grandma or Grandpa really wanted it done. Or to cover some religious bases, to dedicate a life to God, or maybe to enter into God's family in a new way.

This Crafted Conversation will look into the background and origins of baptism and ask, “What is baptism?” Then we'll talk about baptizing infants and baptizing adults or believers, and look to how they make their theological arguments.

We will also ask, “But what about..?” and think about the sometimes difficult questions about baptism. (Remember to tread tenderly in this section; we'll talk about the necessity of baptism, the tragic passing of unbaptized people, and the ways and places Jesus works for salvation in scripture.) Finally, we'll talk about how baptism can break a fear-based culture's messaging, in favor of promises that God has already won over sin and death, and we don't have to fear anything, anymore.

Whether you've put little or lots of thought into baptism before, this conversation will explore the meaning of water and word in this ancient Christian practice, and what it means for you today.

QUESTIONS TO PONDER

What was the last baptism you witnessed? What was it like? What do you know about your own baptism? Who were/are your Godparents or sponsors? Who performed the baptism? Were you an infant? Child? Adult? What does your faith community practice? Why? What reasons are there for baptizing babies vs. adults? Has anyone ever suggested that you (or someone you know) get re-baptized? Why? What does baptism *do*? How does your baptism inform or relate to your faith? Do you have children or relatives that you had (or encouraged) to be baptized? Why? What happens? Why was Jesus baptized?

BIBLE BASICS

- Read the accounts of Jesus' baptism (or not...) from **Matthew**, **Mark**, **Luke**, and **John**. What do you notice?
- **Mark 16:14-16** – Jesus says baptism is required. (But read the footnotes: is that authentic Jesus?)
- **Matthew 28:16-20** – Jesus talks judgment. The nations are judged by treatment of the “least.”
- **Romans 6:1-11** – The Apostle Paul says that we're baptized into Christ's death, so we can share in his life.
- **Acts** – Acts tells the story of the early church. Browse it for baptism stories (see chapters 2, 8, 9, 10, 16).

BAPTISM

Babies, Believers, & Freedom from Fear

a Brewed Theology
conversation starter*

ESSENTIAL READINGS and LISTENINGS

ORIGINS AND BACKGROUND OF BAPTISM (read or 24-minute listen)

This article and conversation from Enter the Bible explores John the Baptist's ministry at the Jordan, and whether it was a familiar practice or brand new thing. Professor Nicholas Schaser is hosted by Katie Langston and Kathryn Schifferdecker.

BAPTISM IN THE BIBLE: A Pattern

Trace the themes of God's activity in and through water with The Bible Project's Shara Drimalla. How does water (and baptism) feature in stories of Creation, Noah, Moses, Joshua, Isaiah, Jesus, and the church?

LUTHER ON BAPTISM (Small Catechism)

The Book of Concord holds some foundational theological ideas and writings of the Reformation. They still inform (if not dictate) a large swath of Mainline Protestant denominational theology. Luther's Small Catechism is here (linked above). For more, browse [Luther's Large Catechism](#) and [Smalcald Articles](#) on baptism, and the Augsburg Confession on [Justification](#), and [Baptism](#).

A BRIEF DEFENSE OF INFANT BAPTISM

Pastor and Blogger Kevin DeYoung writes for The Gospel Coalition about infant baptism. DeYoung offers a number of reasons (and resources) justifying the baptizing of babies.

IN FEAR WE TRUST

Author and Executive Coach James Lewis describes the ways fear influences us, and suggests ways to fend off fearful narratives in favor of resilient and hopeful ones. (Note his brief comments about religion's role.)

BAPTISM IS A "DEATH DAY." THAT'S A GOOD THING.

Pastor Frank Honeycutt writes for *Christian Century* calling for renewed focus on baptism as *dying* with Christ so that we can live in Christ, freeing us from fear. He offers some ways to emphasize this in churches.

CHRISTIAN DENOMINATIONS (in 12 minutes)

The YouTuber Redeemed Zoomer describes Christian denominations in a 12-minute video. Pay attention to the ways he describes baptism. Also pay attention to where you hear bias. What does he get, or miss?

SALVATION of INFANTS

A question that often arises in talks about baptism and salvation is that of infants – often, with concern or sorrow for the deceased. For reading on the church's old and developing views, see this Wikipedia article.

WHAT IS "ARMINIANISM"?

The nondenominational Got Questions Ministries lays out some theology of Arminianism, which emphasizes the roles and responsibility of humans in salvation. What might this have to do with baptism?

We at Brewed Theology claim no authorship or ownership of suggested readings, the links provided, or their host websites.

Links below connect to their original sources. If a link is broken, please contact your facilitator or report it to brewedtheology@gmail.com. Homework readings are proven (at least in our minds) to boost thoughtfulness and conversation. While not required, they are highly suggested.