

CAN I BAPTISE MY CHILD?

MEETING WITH THE TEACHING ELDER

Usually the teaching elder will meet with you to explain covenant baptism, and help you consider the following aspects of your own commitments:

YOUR PERSONAL RELATIONSHIP WITH JESUS CHRIST

It makes no sense to have your child baptised if you are not trusting and following Jesus Christ. If you are not a disciple of Jesus, you cannot make a credible commitment to disciple your children.

The ONLY basis for biblical baptism of a child is the Christian faith of the parents.

CHRISTIAN DISCIPLESHIP AND PARENTAL RESPONSIBILITY

Baptising your child is a public demonstration of your private desire that they, too, will one day trust in Christ. Your own example is going to be a vital element in the fulfilment of both your desires for them and your promises to God.

Whilst not ensuring your child's salvation, teaching and modelling the gospel will be some of the biggest influences in your child's life.

For this reason, your commitment to both family worship (reading the Bible and praying at home) and corporate worship (at church) will significantly affect your child's desire to follow Jesus Christ as Lord.

THE GREAT COMMISSION IS TO MAKE DISCIPLES BY BAPTISING AND TEACHING OBSERVANCE.

"Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age." Matt.28:19-20

WHAT HAPPENS AT A BAPTISM SERVICE FOR MY CHILD?

FAMILY COMES FORWARD

At an appropriate time in the worship service, parents and their child/ren are invited to come forward. Parents and the congregation are reminded of what God's Word has to say about baptism.

QUESTIONS ARE ASKED OF PARENT/S

After this, parents respond to the following questions, publicly professing their own faith, and making the following promises:

1. Do you trust in the righteousness of Christ alone for your salvation?
2. Do you promise to obey Him?
3. Our Lord has commanded us to teach those whom we baptise in His name. Do you promise to teach your child from the Scriptures how to trust in Christ as his/her Saviour, and to follow Him as Lord?
4. Do you promise to pray for your child, and to set him/her a godly example in your actions, that, by God's grace, he/she may be a faithful disciple of our Lord Jesus Christ all his/her days?
5. As part of your godly example, do you promise to be regular and diligent in meeting with God's people on the Lord's day?

QUESTION IS ASKED OF CONGREGATION

The sacrament of covenant baptism lays special responsibilities upon the covenant community.

1. Will you be faithful to your calling as members of Christ's church, so that, by God's grace, this child may grow up in the knowledge and love of Christ?

THE CHILD IS BAPTISED

The child is presented by the father or mother, and the minister baptises the child.

NORTH GEELONG PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

Making disciple-making disciples of Jesus

NGPC AND COVENANT BAPTISM

"Let the little children come to me" Matt.19:14

AT NGPC WE BELIEVE:

God covenants with believers, and their children. Children are members of the covenant community.

The sign of the covenant is baptism. It is biblical, on the faith of their parents, to baptise children as members of the covenant community.



AT NGPC WE DO NOT BELIEVE:

That all baptised children are, or will become, believers.

AT NGPC WE DO EXPECT:

All parents to teach, model, admonish and pray for their children, hoping and expecting that in the fullness of time, by grace, they will repent and believe the gospel.

What was signified at baptism becomes a reality when the conditions of the covenant are met (repentance and faith).

BIBLICAL BASIS FOR COVENANT BAPTISM

COVENANT SIGNS

Every covenant in the Bible has a sign:

- The covenant with Adam > tree of life [Gen.3:22]
- The covenant with Noah > rainbow [Gen.9:12]
- The covenant with Moses > circumcision [Gen.17:11]
- The New Covenant > baptism [Matt.28:19-20]

COVENANT SIGNS DO NOT EFFECT A RELATIONSHIP, THEY REFLECT A RELATIONSHIP

Abraham was already in a covenant with God when God commanded him to apply the sign of the covenant to both himself and his children [Gen.17:1-11]. Paul writes that circumcision was a sign of the righteousness that is had by faith, not a sign of faith [Rom.4:11]. In other words, the signs of the covenants are signs from God to his people, not a signs (of faith) from his people to God.

CHANGE OF THE SIGN WITH THE NEW COVENANT

Circumcision symbolised cutting off of the sinful nature. Baptism symbolises pouring out of the Holy Spirit. Circumcision signified regeneration (what God would do – when covenant conditions were met). Baptism signifies regeneration (what God will do – when covenant conditions are met). (Ezek.36:26-27; Joel 2:28-29; Acts 2:17-18)

THE CASE FOR BELIEVERS' CHILDREN

Every covenant includes the believers and their children. There are no exceptions:

- Adam and his seed [Rom.5:11,18];
- Noah and his family [Gen.9:9];
- Abraham and his family [Gen.17:12];
- And Peter makes it clear in Acts 2:39 *“...the promise is for you and for your children, and for all who are far off, everyone whom the Lord our God calls to himself.”*

However while every covenant includes believers and their children, we need to be careful that we distinguish between covenant membership, and election [salvation].

Our children are members of the covenant community. They enjoy many of the benefits of the covenant. They come to Church and hear the gospel. They join in worship. They hear the truth proclaimed, and see it modelled. They know about sin, grace, and most importantly about Jesus. But baptism does not mean that they are saved.

BIBLICAL BASIS FOR COVENANT BAPTISM

THE CASE FOR BELIEVERS' CHILDREN

There is no objection to infant baptism that Abraham could not have levelled against infant circumcision.

The plethora of examples of household baptisms is consistent with the rest of the Bible where God covenants with believers and their children [Acts.10;47-48; 16:31,34].

The absence of a contrary command (not to baptise children) is consistent with the rest of the Bible where God covenants with believers and their children.

The N.T. books are filled with explanations for why food laws, Sabbath days, and circumcision are no longer valid under the New Covenant, but there is not one word concerning the exclusion of children from the covenant or prohibition of its sign. It is hard to imagine Jews, whose children had been members of the covenant for thousands of years, all of a sudden excluding them from membership. The N.T. never gives an explanation or even mentions it!

IN SUMMARY

BAPTISM IS NOT A SIGN OF FAITH

Baptism is a sign and seal of what God has promised to do when the conditions of the covenant are met. The conditions of the covenant are as ever the same: repentance from sin, and faith in God's promises.

BAPTISM IS A SYMBOL AND A SIGN

Baptism symbolises the pouring out of the Holy Spirit, and both signifies and seals our union with Christ (and his salvific benefits) through the Holy Spirit. When the conditions of the covenant are met (repentance and faith), then what was symbolised becomes a reality.

BAPTISM IS A SIGN OF THE RIGHTEOUSNESS HAD BY FAITH

The signs of the covenants are signs from God to his people, not signs (of faith) from the people to God. At the heart of this is the covenant promise *“I will be your God – and you will be my people.”*

NGPC CATECHISM AND BAPTISM

- Q.126 What symbol is used in baptism?
A The sprinkling or pouring with water symbolising the pouring out of the Holy Spirit.
- Q.127 What does this signify as a seal of the covenant?
A That through the Holy Spirit we are joined to Christ and all his saving benefits through faith.
- Q.128 In what way is baptism as a seal of the covenant?
A Baptism is a seal of the righteousness that is had by faith.
- Q.129 In whose name are we baptised?
A We are baptised in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.
- Q.130 Who are to be baptised?
A Believers and their children are to be baptised.
- Q.131 To what does your baptism bind you?
A To be a true follower of Christ.

