

## Why Were You Baptized? (Reason #3)

There seems to be considerable confusion in our day regarding baptism. Many things that have been taught about baptism are simply not in the Bible. For that reason, it is safe to say that the confusion is the fault of man, not God.

### **Reason #3: My parents had me baptized when I was a baby.**

On one occasion a young man told me that he had been baptized as a baby. Curious, I ask why. He told me that it was the way the parents' in his church devoted their children to Christ.

I truly admire parents who wish to devote their children to Christ, and I appreciate that they wish to make their desire known. But why choose baptism to express their desire?

I have read other reasons for baptizing infants. Some of the reasoning sounds noble and some of the reasoning is confusing. I have found no parallel in the Bible. In fact, I have found something in Scripture quite contrary to this practice.

The prophet Jeremiah wrote about a 'new covenant' that would replace the existing covenant God had with the nation of Israel. In his words...

**“They will not teach again, each man his neighbor and each man his brother, saying, ‘Know the Lord,’ for they will all know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them,” declares the Lord, “for I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin I will remember no more.” —Jeremiah 31:34**

(You can read the entire text beginning in verse 31.)

The earlier covenant God made was with the physical nation of Israel. When an Israelite couple had a child, that child was automatically part of a covenant relationship with God. Of course, that child knew nothing of God and *had to be taught*. So, birth occurred *before* instruction.

However, Jeremiah's prophecy was about a *new covenant*. Under the new covenant a person would already have knowledge of God, at least the basic knowledge of His forgiving character.

Jesus fulfilled Jeremiah's prophecy ushering in the new covenant which assured forgiveness of sins through the blood (sacrifice) of Christ. The entire book of Hebrews examines the new covenant which resulted in Christianity. The new covenant is *better* than the old covenant and it made the old covenant obsolete. (Hebrews 8).

One stark difference between the two covenants is relevant to infant baptism:

- ◆ *Old Covenant*: A child was physically born into a covenant relationship with God, then had to be taught about God. So, teaching about God *followed* physical birth.
- ◆ *New Covenant*: A person is taught about God and then enters into a covenant relationship through a spiritual birth. So, teaching about God *precedes* spiritual birth.

Which covenant practice does infant baptism more closely resemble? If you wish to be a part of the *new covenant*, it cannot start as an infant, or even as a toddler.

Whatever reasons people offer for baptizing infants, Jeremiah said that in the new covenant, **“they will all know me, from the least of them to the greatest of them.”** All examples of baptism in the New Testament involve adults who were first taught the gospel, then baptized.

If you were baptized only as an infant, it may have been for noble reasons, but it must not be confused with the 'one baptism' that the Apostle Paul wrote about in Ephesians 4. The new covenant is better; the old is obsolete.

(Reason #4 next week.)