

**Reformed Baptist Distinctive
Ordinances of the Church: Baptism
1689 LBCF, Chapter 29**

June 14, 2024

Preliminary

Note 1: Baptism is a covenantal transaction or ceremony between God and the individual (Lord's Supper is a corporate ordinance)

Note 2: Baptism does not save; it does formalize salvation in a covenantal ceremony between God and individual

[1689, *Baptist Confession of Faith*, XXIX]:

- i. Baptism is an ordinance of the New Testament, ordained by Jesus Christ, to be unto the party baptized, a sign of his fellowship with him, in his death and resurrection; of his being engrafted into him;^a of remission of sins;^b and of giving up into God, through Jesus Christ, to live and walk in newness of life.^c
(a) Rom. 6:3-5; Col. 2:12; Gal. 3:27; (b) Mk 1:4; Act 22:16; (c) Rom. 6:4
- ii. Those who do actually profess repentance towards God, faith in and obedience to, our Lord Jesus Christ, are the only proper subjects of this ordinance.^a
(a) Mt 3:1-12; Mk 1:4-6; Lk 3:3-6; Mt. 28:19-20; Mk 16:15-16; Jn 4:1-2; 1 Cor 1:13-17; Act 2:37-41; 8:12-13, 36-38; 9:18; 10:47-48; 11:16; 15:9; 16:14-15, 31-34; 18:8; 19:3-5; 22:16; Rom 6:3-4; Gal 3:27; Col. 2:12; 1 Pt 3:21; Jer 31:31-34; Phil 3:3; Jn 1:12-13; Mt 21:43
- iii. The outward element to be used in this ordinance is water, wherein the party is to be baptized,^a in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.^b
(a) Mt 3:11; Act 8:36, 38; 22:16; (b) Mt 28:18-20
- iv. Immersion, or dipping of the person in water, is necessary to the due administration of this ordinance.^a
(a) 2 Kings 5:14; Ps 69:2; Isa 21:4; Mk 1:5, 8-9; Jn 3:23; Act 8:38; Rom. 6:4; Col 2:12; Mk 7:3-4; 10:38-39; Lk 12:50; 1 Cor. 10:1-2; Mt 3:11; Act 1:5, 8; 2:1-4, 17

1. Institution of Baptism

Matthew 28:18-20 = *All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. ¹⁹ Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, ²⁰ teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.*

Note: Baptism (and the Lord's Supper) is directly instituted by Christ as the Head of the Church... cf. *BCF*, 28.1

Foundational Focus: Christ's exaltation and universal authority as risen Lord (v.18)

Major Proposition: make disciple of all nations

Connecting activities:

- *Go(ing)* – motion of disciple making [evangelism]
- *Baptizing them* – an ongoing mandate (subject: those who are made disciples)
- The formula-Name: “*of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit*”
Greek: βαπτίζοντες αὐτοὺς εἰς τὸ ὄνομα τοῦ πατρὸς [καὶ] τοῦ υἱοῦ [καὶ] τοῦ ἁγίου πνεύματος,
- *Teaching them* – an ongoing occupation of every believer
Note: The teaching is the activity resulting from baptism, not that of qualifying for baptism
Beware: This is often reversed where doctrinal qualification is required before baptism is administered
- Lordly Promise: Christ abiding presence in the Church

- The mission of the Church as here defined is envisioned to be unaltered until the end (until the *Parousia*)
- It is the presence of Christ in His Church that guarantees the completion of this mission in the world.

[Sam Waldron, *1689 BCF*, loc. 355] – “The assertion of the Confession is that these ordinances are, in a qualified sense, perpetual. They were to be continued in the church after the apostles died and are only to cease with the end of the world. There is no hint of the cessation of baptism in the New Testament, but every indication of its continuation (Matt. 28:18-20; Rom. 6:3-4; 1 Cor. 1:13-17; Gal. 3:27; Eph. 4:5; Col. 2:12; 1 Peter 3:21). The Lord's Supper is also clearly to be continued till Christ's second coming (1 Cor. 11:26; Luke 22:14-20)... It also teaches that the ordinances not only point us back to the living authority of Christ, but forward to the actual return and presence of Christ. They are lifelines which remind us of the living Christ and his power.”

2. Terminology

Basic root: Gk. βάπτω (*baptō*) = always mean ‘to dip.’ cf. Lk 16:24; Jn 13:26; Rev 19:13

Verb: βαπτίζω (*baptizō*) = to dip, to immerse, to submerge

Passive: to drown, sink (as by drowning a man or sinking ship)

Lk 16:24 = βάψῃ (*bapsē*); Jn 13:26 = βάψω (*bapsō*); Rev 19:13 = βεβαμμένον (*bebammenon*)

Point: Christian baptism at its most basic act is in the mode of immersing

Conclusion: Without immersing, there is not even the beginning of Christian baptism

3. Believers Baptism

Note: Only those who make a credible personal profession of faith should be baptized... Act 2:38

- Acts 2:41 = *those who gladly received the word were baptized... three thousand souls were added to them*
 - The ones baptized were those who received the Word
 - Those baptized were deemed added to the community (Church membership)

- Galatians 3:27 = as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ
 - ‘as many of you’ connects to the previous ‘you are all sons of God through faith’ (v.26)
 - ‘have put on Christ’ = identified with Christ in a visible, or declarative way of baptism

Point: Baptism is confirmatory sign/seal to an already existing faith... Act 2:41; 9:18; 8:36ff; 10:47f; 16:31-34

- It is the consequence of the Lord having opened an individual’s heart to give heed to the gospel... Act 16:14, 15

Implication: Baptism is the initiating/covenanting ordinance of confessed discipleship

- All disciples of Christ are assumed to be baptized... It is the first act of obedient discipleship
- Baptism identifies the disciple with Christ and His saving death-resurrection
- Baptism incorporates the baptized into the church and unites with its faith

[C.H. Spurgeon, “*A Good Confession – Baptism*” *Autobiography*: 160] – “Baptism is the mark of distinction between the Church and the world. It very beautifully sets forth the death of the baptized person to the world. Professedly, he is no longer of the world; he is buried to it, and he rises again to a new life. No symbol could be more significant. In the immersion of a believer, there seems to me to be a wondrous setting forth of the burial of the Christian to all the world in the burial of Christ Jesus.”

[ibid. 165] – “If any ask, Why was I thus baptized? – I answer, because I believed it to be an ordinance of Christ, very specially joined by Him with faith in His name. “He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved.” I had no superstitious idea that baptism would save me, for I was saved. I did not seek to have sin washed away by water, for I believed that my sins were forgiven me through faith in Christ Jesus. Yet I regarded baptism as the token to the believer of cleansing, the emblem of his burial with his Lord, and the outward avowal of his new birth. I did not trust in *it*; but, because I trusted in Jesus as my Savior, I felt bound to obey Him as my Lord, and follow the example which He set us in Jordan, in His own baptism.”

4. Significance of Baptism

(a) Baptism of repentance

Mk 1:4; Lk 3:3 = preaching a *baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins*

Definition: Secondary = ‘a turning from sin’; Primary = ‘to change/renewing (of) one’s mind’ – cf. Lk 3:8-14; Act 3:19

- It is the summation of the preaching of the gospel...
- It is an outward sign of repentance... its reference point is forgiveness... Act 2:38

(b) The confession of Christ’s Lordship... Act 2:38; Rom 10:9, 10; 1 Cor 12:3

- It implies the beginning of committed fellowship with, and allegiance to Christ... Act 2:38-42
 - It is the public testimony of the individual that he or she has become Christ’s property...
Mt 28:19; Act 19:5 = the expression “in the name” of someone being used commercially for the transfer property
- Point: it is a public declaration of his or her submission and faithfulness to Christ’s commandments and will.

(c) It symbolizes admittance into God’s family

Note: It is the outward sign of believer’s new birth into God’s family... Jn 3:5

- It is a mark of his or her entry into the membership of Christ’s body... 1 Cor 12:13

(d) It symbolizes entry into all the benefits of Christ’s death and resurrection... Rom 6:3-4

- Baptism is a *picture* of a Christian’s cleansing from sin through Christ’s death... Act 2:38; 22:16; Heb 10:22
 - It is symbolical burial of believers ‘old life’ and renunciation of their old relationship to sin... Rom 6:3-4. 11, 12
- Point: It symbolizes the end of our service of sin, and the beginning of our committed service to God... Rom 6:16, 17

5. Validity of Baptism

Issue: What constitutes a valid baptism in terms of administrator?

Note: There are invalid baptisms... cf. Acts 19:1ff

Question 1: What if there are no lawfully ordained ministers present to administer the baptism?

Answer: [1689 BCF, XXVIII.2] – “These holy appointments are to be ministered by those only who are qualified and thereunto called, according to the commission of Christ”... Mt 24:45-51; Lk 12:41-44; 1 Cor 4:1; Titus 1:5-7

[Waldron, loc. 357] – “The elders may delegate the actual performance of the ordinances to a faithful brother, but they cannot delegate the responsibility. They remain the stewards of God and as such are the ones responsible for their stewardship (note: 1689 BCF 26:11). If a local church has no elders, the safe and wise course would be to seek the oversight of other pastors and another church and under their direction to celebrate baptism and the Lord’s Supper.”

[John Owen, *Works*, vol. XVI, 79f.] – “The first duty of a church without elders is to seek a pastor or pastors, not to seek the administration of the ordinances.”

Question 2: What if the baptizing minister was later discovered to be false?

Answer: John 4:1-2 = The disciples baptizing were doing so on behalf of Christ [Note: Judas among them]

- The gospel-message provided the basis of valid baptism... Act 19:1ff
- The prior claim of the gospel over the baptism; who baptized is not the all-important issue

Point: The ultimate question is ‘in whose name’ the baptism is validly administered – whose disciples the parties are?

Conclusion: Only baptized Christians should partake in the Lord’s Table [next topic]