



Baptism

Introduction

Opening Prayer: Merciful Father in heaven, we confess that we are by nature sinful and have disobeyed you in our thoughts, words, and actions. We do not deserve to be called your children. Therefore, we thank you for the blessing of baptism by which you offer and grant the forgiveness of sins, life, and salvation. Be with us now and bless us as we study the blessing of baptism, which you have given to us. Amen.

The word “baptize” is a Greek verb that refers to using water in various ways: immerse, wash, pour, or sprinkle. The word “baptize” literally just means to apply water. That water can be applied by sprinkling, immersing, or pouring, usually in some act of washing. The word “baptize” does not specify the amount or manner of applying the water.

Lesson Aim: What is baptism?

Part One

Read Acts 8:26-39.

This is a unique and amazing account of Jesus’ disciple, Philip.

- 1) Why was this important Ethiopian official in Jerusalem?
- 2) What does that tell you about this man and his relationship with God? Did he have one?

This man was already a believer. He believed in God, but he didn’t understand everything that the Bible says. His faith could be strengthened. He needed help with understanding.

- 3) What are we told that Philip told this man?

Though the Ethiopian did already believe in God, he did not yet believe in Jesus as the promised savior.

- 4) What did the Ethiopian do once he came to faith in Jesus as his Savior?

Ethiopia is in Africa. The water along the road from Ethiopia to Jerusalem was not a river or a lake. It was likely a puddle. Philip baptized the Ethiopian in a puddle.

The Ethiopian was an adult who already believed. Why did Philip baptize him, and why did the Ethiopian want to be baptized? That’s what we’ll answer next.

Read Matthew 28:19-20.

- 5) What did Jesus tell his disciples to go and do?

This command still applies to us today. This command of Jesus does not end with baptizing, but continues with teaching.

- 6) Which nations did Jesus tell us to baptize?
- 7) Does Jesus put any limit on the gender, race or age of people who are baptized?

There is nothing conditional about baptism. No if you’re old enough, when you’re ready to take the next step or make the decision. Baptism is commanded by Jesus, and believers obey Jesus’ command.

KEY POINT 1 - Baptism is commanded by God. Believers want to obey God’s commands.

What I’ve learned so far:

Part Two

Read Acts 2:38-39.

- 1) As Peter is preaching at Pentecost, he re-announces the command to be baptized. What two things does Peter say baptism gives us?
- 2) Peter says that the promise of baptism is intended for whom?

Read Acts 16:25-34.

Paul and his assistant, Silas, are locked in stocks in the most secure cell in a prison. But because of a miraculous earthquake, Paul, Silas, and all the other prisoners have been set free. When the jailor saw this he was going to kill himself, because otherwise he would be tortured by his government for his failure of letting the prisoners escape.

- 3) But what did Paul say to him?

All the others, who were justly imprisoned for crimes they had committed, stayed in prison. But Paul and Silas had not committed any crime, so the jailor let them go. Paul and Silas had been praying and singing hymns all night, and the jailor had heard them. The jailor believed that God had set them free from prison.

- 4) What did the jailor ask Paul and Silas?
- 5) Paul and Silas were presented with a fantastic opportunity to share Jesus when the jailer asked them that question. What did they answer him?
- 6) What did the jailor and his household do as a response to what Paul and Silas had told them?
- 7) The jailor and his entire household were baptized. List all the different people you think were likely part of the jailor's household:

Read Mark 10:13-16.

- 8) To whom does Jesus say the kingdom of God belongs?
- 9) How does Jesus feel about little children?

Jesus says that little children can and do believe in him. Faith is a miracle that only God can work in any person of any age.

Read Psalm 51:5-6.

- 10) From what moment in our lives are we sinful?

Yet, David says that we can learn about God even before we're born.

Read Genesis 8:21.

- 11) In God's promise to Noah, what does he say about the natural inclination of the human heart?

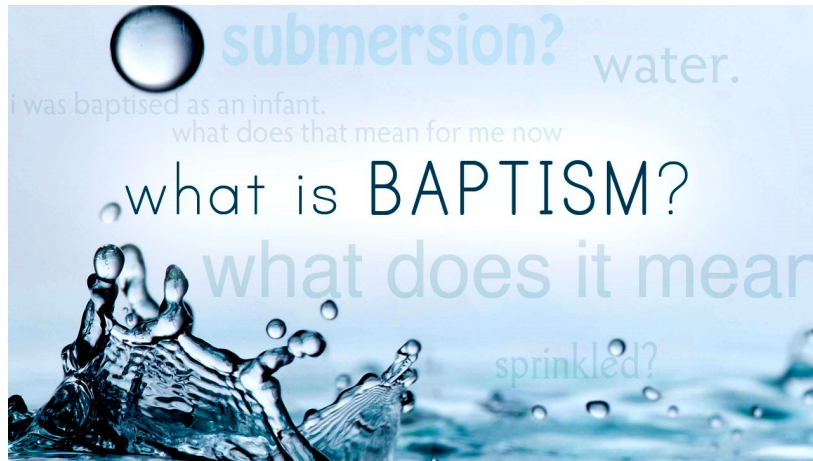
Read Romans 3:23.

12) In baptism, God forgives sins. Who has sinned?

13) Who needs forgiveness?

KEY POINT 2 - Baptism is for all, because all are sinful, and all can believe.

What I've learned so far:



Part Three

Study pages 297-310 in the Catechism and answer the following questions in your own words.

- 1) Who instituted baptism? (Who told us to do it?)
- 2) Why is baptism not just the use of plain water?
- 3) What does Jesus' command to baptize "all nations" mean?
- 4) Why do we baptize children?

Helpful Passages

Mark 16:15-16

- 5) Is baptism necessary for salvation?

Luke 1:41-44

Jesus' mother, Mary, visits her cousin, Elizabeth. Elizabeth's son is John the Baptist, who is still in the womb. As an infant, John the Baptist sensed the presence of the mother of his Lord and leaped for joy. Such recognition seems miraculous, but it also shows faith. Faith is a miracle, and can even be given to unborn children.

Even though little children cannot understand their baptism, God can act in them when they are baptized. God can put saving faith into their hearts and take away their guilt too. Baptism is effective only because God has commanded it and stands behind it. The power in baptism does not lie with the person doing the baptism (any Christian can baptize) or the place where the baptism is performed (it doesn't have to be in a church). The power lies in God's words that create and strengthen faith.

The baptism of infants was the practice of the Christian church throughout its earliest history. It wasn't until the last couple hundred years that people began to wait until after the babies are older. The people Jesus taught about baptism baptized infants. The people Jesus' disciples taught about baptism baptized infants.

Main point—Baptism is an act that Jesus commands us to do to all nations, using water together with his Word.

Final considerations:

1) Agree or disagree: Water that has been used for a baptism should not be poured down the drain after the baptism, because it is special water.

True or False:

- 2) ___ The word "baptize" means "to put completely under water."
- 3) ___ Baptism is still good even if the word of God is left out of it.
- 4) ___ True faith in Jesus is not the same as mental understanding about Jesus.
- 5) ___ Babies are too young to understand baptism.
- 6) ___ Babies are too young to believe in Jesus.
- 7) ___ An unbaptized person can be saved.
- 8) ___ Baptism was instituted, or begun, by John the Baptist.
- 9) ___ Being baptized in a Lutheran church makes you a Lutheran.

- 10) We should remember that baptism is ___ .
- A. using water to symbolize the washing away of sins.
 - B. special "holy water" blessed in a church ceremony.
 - C. water plus the word of God, used according to God's command.

- 11) The Lord Jesus commanded us to baptize ___ .
- A. by applying water in any manner, as long as we do so with God's word.
 - B. by sprinkling or pouring water on the person at least three times.
 - C. by immersing people completely so that the whole body is cleansed.

- 12) One thing we should remember about infants who are baptized is that they ___ .
- A. cannot really believe in Jesus, since they are not old enough.
 - B. are not sinful yet, but will need baptism later on in life.
 - C. are included in Christ's command, are sinful, and can believe in Jesus.

- 13) The idea that small children can truly trust in Jesus as their Savior is ___ .
- A. something we cannot be sure about.
 - B. clearly taught in the Bible and is a result of God's power in the heart.
 - C. impossible, since people must be able to understand before that can believe.

- 14) Baptism is ___ .
- A. a church ceremony that shows obedience and makes a person a church member.
 - B. a means by which God forgives sins and works faith in the heart.
 - C. only a sign or symbol that a person is now a believer.



What I've learned about baptism:

Commit to Memory:

- *What is Baptism?* (with *What is that word of God?*)
- Matthew 28:19-20
 - Psalm 51:5
- Baptism—Acts 8