



# Water Baptism Study Guide



Lake Region Bible Church, Round Lake, IL • Revised July 2019 • by Pastor Marcus Johnson

Some study questions are adapted from a handout by Dr. Greg Scharf (Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, Deerfield, IL). Unless otherwise indicated, all Scripture quotations are from the Holy Bible, English Standard Version® (ESV®), copyright © 2001 by Crossway Bibles, a publishing ministry of Good News Publishers. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

**Date:** \_\_\_\_\_ (Note: a copy of pages 1 through 5 will be kept for our church records)

**Your Full Name** (for Baptismal Certificate) \_\_\_\_\_

**Have you been baptized before?** (If yes, when, where, at what age, etc.): \_\_\_\_\_

## **Introduction**

*May God bless you to grow in your faith as you work through this study guide. Please read through pages 1 through 5 and answer the study questions. Feel free to ask for help if needed (pages 6 & 7 are optional reading). Thanks!*

**Baptism:** the Greek word for baptism (*baptisma*) means immersion or submersion. The Greek word for baptized (*baptizo*) means to be immersed, submerged, dipped, washed or made clean with water, and implies a permanent change, not just a one time act of being immersed (*you are cleansed from sin, belong to Christ, etc.*).

**Water Baptism:** Water baptism is an outward expression of our salvation, which comes by God's grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone. Being baptized in water, in and of itself, does not save us, but our saving faith is exercised in, and demonstrated by, the act of water baptism. It is a public profession of one's faith commitment to Christ and a celebratory acknowledgement of the church's acceptance of the believer into the fellowship of the believers (similar to the public commitment and celebration that takes place at a wedding ceremony of two believers).

**History:** During the New Testament days, many who were becoming Christians were Jews and God-fearing Gentiles who were well acquainted with the Old Testament, and were waiting for their Messiah to come. As God revealed the crucified and resurrected Christ to them, they were coming to faith in Jesus with a lot more understanding about the Lord and the Scriptures than many new converts today. They were often times baptized as they first put their faith in Jesus the Christ, therefore water baptism was directly linked with being saved, because of the immediate response involved. Once you believed that Jesus was the long awaited Messiah, you repented and put your faith in Christ by being baptized (*further explained on pages 6 & 7 under "Water Baptism in Church History"*).

This is similar to the way some believers use the "sinner's prayer" today. The prayer itself does not save you, but you are saved because you are putting your faith in Christ, and using the sinner's prayer to profess your faith (to acknowledge Jesus as Lord and to call on the Lord to be saved). Today, however, many churches will wait to baptize new believers until they have been instructed in the basic teachings of the gospel and have demonstrated a saving faith in Christ. In other words, the focus is not primarily on the timing of baptism (baptizing converts immediately), but rather on the readiness of those getting baptized (that they are in a similar place of understanding and faith as the new converts we read about in the NT).

**Theology:** In baptism, the water symbolizes the cleansing of our sin and the new creation we now are in Jesus Christ: we are now identified with Christ (permanently changed); we belong to Christ, we are not our own. Water baptism serves as a visual symbol of the invisible process of regeneration (spiritual birth) and conversion (becoming a Christian), in which we go down into the waters of judgment (e.g. God's judgment through the flood and the drowning of the Egyptians) and our old life is put to death, and we come up out of the water with a new life in Christ, having been regenerated by the Spirit, cleansed of our sins, and therefore saved from God's judgment (as Noah's family was saved from the flood or as the Israelites were saved by crossing the Red Sea). Baptism "*dramatizes the central truths of the Christian faith and strengthens the faith of the Christian*" (Professor Murray J. Harris). Baptisms are both a serious and joyful act of faith which should be performed within the fellowship of the church, and in obedience to, and as a witness of, the gospel.

**Baptism in the Spirit:** the Holy Spirit's work in us at the point of conversion, cleansing us of sin and uniting us into the body of Christ, and sealing us in Christ (protecting our salvation and assuring us of it); see 1Co 12:13 & Eph 1:13. All Christians have been baptized in the Spirit (which is part of becoming a Christian). Being "filled with the Spirit" is an on-going work of God in us, thru our daily walk with Jesus (Eph 5:18). Some believe in a separate "baptism of the Holy Spirit". Biblically speaking, however, we receive the Holy Spirit at conversion, and experience His power and presence in our lives to a greater degree as we walk by faith and live a surrendered life to God (which can include times when we "experience" the Holy Spirit in a more prominent manner). The issue is not "how much of the Holy Spirit do you have?", rather, "how much does the Holy Spirit have of you?" (how much of your life is surrendered to Christ by faith & empowered by the Spirit).

*{Example from 1 Corinthians 12:13: "For in one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—Jews or Greeks, slaves or free—and all were made to drink of one Spirit." – \*The same Greek construction (the verb baptizō plus en ["in"] plus ... pneuma, "Spirit") is used here as in the other six "baptism in the Holy Spirit" passages in the NT (Mt 3:11; Mk 1:8; Lk 3:16; Jn 1:33; Ac 1:5; 11:16), and here it seems clearly to refer to the cleansing and empowering work that the Holy Spirit does in a new convert at the point of conversion. Baptism is used metaphorically here to refer to the Spirit's work within the believer to unite him or her to the body of Christ, which is also the corporate body of believers. Water baptism is an outward symbol of this reality (cf. Rom 6:4; Gal 3:27). \*Taken from the ESV Study Bible}.*

### **Water Baptism as an Ordinance or a Sacrament:**

**Ordinance:** Something the church is ordained or commanded to do by Jesus Christ. Our church's Statement of Faith (SOF) affirms two ordinances: baptism and the Lord's Supper (Holy Communion).

**Sacrament:** \*Some Christians believe baptism is a sacrament, "the visible form of an invisible grace" or as a "sign of a sacred thing." Mysteriously, the sacraments are used by God to confirm divine promises to believers and are somehow the means by which the recipient enters into the truths they represent. The two primary sacraments are baptism and the Lord's Supper. \*See page 7 for source cited and expanded definition.

**Mode of Baptism:** This refers to when and how people should be baptized [as infants, as believers, by sprinkling of water, through immersion (or dipping) in water, etc.].

**Baptistic:** the belief that only believers should be baptized (and generally through immersion).

**Paedobaptism:** the practice of baptizing infants of Christian parents, as a way of welcoming them into the covenant community of God's people, and/or the means by which the child becomes a child of God.

**Our Statement of Faith (SOF):** Lake Region Bible Church is part of the Evangelical Free Church of America (EFCA). In our SOF, we define baptism as an "ordinance" (something Jesus ordained or commanded the church to do), which strengthens us as believers, but it does not save us (does not make us a Christian). Point #7 of our Statement of Faith says the following: "We believe that the true church comprises all who have been justified by God's grace through faith alone in Christ alone. They are united by the Holy Spirit in the body of Christ, of which He is the Head. The true church is manifest in local churches, whose membership should be composed only of believers. The Lord Jesus mandated two ordinances, baptism and the Lord's Supper, which visibly and tangibly express the gospel. Though they are not the means of salvation, when celebrated by the church in genuine faith, these ordinances confirm and nourish the believer."

**Our Practice of Water Baptism:** While our Statement of Faith does define the basic meaning of water baptism, it does not define the mode of baptism ("how" or "when" someone should be baptized, and to some degree, "why" we should be baptized is also left undefined). Our SOF leaves the "when, how, and why" to baptize up to each local church to decide. While Lake Region Bible Church does not require people to have been baptized as a believer in order to become a church member, we do practice a "Baptistic" mode of baptism only (baptism by immersion for believers only), as most, but not all, Free Churches do. *[Believers who have been baptized as infants (and not as believers), and who can articulate a biblical defense as to how this position is based on Scripture, are eligible for church membership. See pages 6 & 7 for more information on the different views].*

## Study Questions

### **Authority to Baptize**

By what authority and in what name does the church baptize?

- **Matthew 28:16-20** \_\_\_\_\_

<sup>16</sup> Now the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain to which Jesus had directed them. <sup>17</sup> And when they saw him they worshiped him, but some doubted. <sup>18</sup> And Jesus came and said to them, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. <sup>19</sup> 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, <sup>20</sup> teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age."

### **Significance of Baptism**

What does water baptism symbolize in each of these passages (i.e. being saved from God's judgment; our old life & sin being put to death with Christ; the washing/cleansing of our sins; our new life in Christ, etc.)?

- **Acts 22:16** \_\_\_\_\_

<sup>16</sup> And now why do you wait? Rise and be baptized and wash away your sins, calling on his name.

- **I Peter 3:18-22** \_\_\_\_\_

*[Regarding the salvation of Noah's family from the flood/God's judgment and through the ark...]*

<sup>21</sup> Baptism, which corresponds to this, now saves you, not as a removal of dirt from the body but as an appeal to God for a good conscience, through the resurrection of Jesus Christ, <sup>22</sup> who has gone into heaven and is at the right hand of God, with angels, authorities, and powers having been subjected to him.

- **Romans 6:1-4** \_\_\_\_\_

<sup>1</sup> What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin that grace may abound? <sup>2</sup> By no means! How can we who died to sin still live in it? <sup>3</sup> Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? <sup>4</sup> We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life.

- **Galatians 3:23-29** \_\_\_\_\_

<sup>23</sup> Now before faith came, we were held captive under the law, imprisoned until the coming faith would be revealed. <sup>24</sup> So then, the law was our guardian until Christ came, in order that we might be justified by faith. <sup>25</sup> But now that faith has come, we are no longer under a guardian, <sup>26</sup> for in Christ Jesus you are all sons of God, through faith. <sup>27</sup> For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. <sup>28</sup> There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is no male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. <sup>29</sup> And if you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's offspring, heirs according to promise. *[See also Eph 4:22-24 & Col 3:1-14 with the image of taking off our dirty sin nature and putting on Christ].*

### **Baptismal Candidates**

#### **1. Who should be Baptized?**

- **Acts 2:36-41** \_\_\_\_\_

<sup>36</sup> Let all the house of Israel therefore know for certain that God has made him both Lord and Christ, this Jesus whom you crucified." <sup>37</sup> Now when they heard this they were cut to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, "Brothers, what shall we do?" <sup>38</sup> And Peter said to them, "Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit." <sup>39</sup> For 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." <sup>40</sup> And with many other words he bore witness and continued to exhort them, saying, "Save yourselves from this crooked generation." <sup>41</sup> So those who received his word were baptized, and there were added that day about three thousand souls.

- **Acts 18:8** \_\_\_\_\_

<sup>8</sup> Crispus, the ruler of the synagogue, believed in the Lord, together with his entire household. And many of the Corinthians hearing Paul believed and were baptized.

## 2. Do you believe the Gospel?

For questions #2 & #3: Because you are to be baptized in the name of the triune God (the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit), and because your baptism itself implies certain beliefs and saving faith, you must affirm the basic doctrinal truths of the Christian faith and your response to the gospel. A few of these questions will be asked before you are baptized, to give you the opportunity to publically affirm your own faith. You should have a basic understanding of these truths, and have responded by faith, if you are going to be baptized. You may not know some of the answers, or you may not be ready to get baptized at this time. We will help you work through your questions, and if needed, you can wait and get baptized later on. Please mark an "X" by each of your answers below.

**A. Doctrine of God and the Bible:** Do you believe that there is one God, the eternal, sovereign creator of all things? Do you believe that God is loving, holy, faithful & just; that He is one God who is eternally existent as three equal persons (Father, Son, & Holy Spirit); and that He has created all humans in His image, has chosen to redeem a people for Himself and will make all things new for His own eternal glory? Do you believe that the Bible is the \*inspired, infallible and inerrant written word of God, which reveals all that is necessary for salvation, and which should be trusted in all that it teaches, believed in all that it promises, and obeyed in all that it commands? (\*God-breathed, will not fail & is without error in the original writings)?

\_\_\_\_\_ Yes I believe this      \_\_\_\_\_ No I do not      \_\_\_\_\_ I don't know/Not sure

**B. Doctrine of Sin and Judgment:** Do you believe the following about sin and judgment? We are all sinners who have fallen short of God's glory (bearing the image of evil & shame, rather than the glorious image of God alone, etc.). Sin is both our fallen-corrupted nature & condition of separation & alienation from God (which we inherited from Adam's sin), as well as our willful disobedience of God's will. Sin is pride, unbelief, idolatry, and rebellion: the rejection or removal of God as the center of our lives. It includes our self-centeredness, not believing in and trusting God, loving the things of the world, rebellion, disobedience, immorality, lying, stealing, jealousy, lust, gossip, bitterness, un-forgiveness, pleasing man over God, living for pleasure & self, living life according to our own will & in our own strength & wisdom, and doing anything that is not done by faith. God, who is faithful & just, and to whom we are all held accountable, is greatly offended by our sin, cannot tolerate our sin in His presence, and will punish us for our sins by condemning us to the eternal torment of hell (which was prepared for the devil and his angels). We are lost in & in bondage to our sin, deserving of & headed for eternal judgment in hell, and cannot save ourselves.

\_\_\_\_\_ Yes I believe this      \_\_\_\_\_ No I do not      \_\_\_\_\_ I don't know/Not sure

### C. Doctrine of Christ and Salvation:

1. Do you believe that Jesus Christ is fully God and fully man: that He is God the son who has existed for eternity, the one through whom the Father created all things; and that He became a man, was born of a virgin, was tempted in every way we are but did not sin; and that through His righteous life, death on the cross, resurrection from the dead, ascension to heaven, and by His second coming, has and will ultimately conquer Satan, sin, and death, and will reign in glory with His saints forever and ever?

\_\_\_\_\_ Yes I believe this      \_\_\_\_\_ No I do not      \_\_\_\_\_ I don't know/Not sure

2. Do you believe the following about Jesus Christ: Jesus is a descendant of Adam, Abraham, King David, and a Jewish virgin named Mary, meaning that Christ is: 1) the second Adam through whom comes the resurrection of the dead; 2) Abraham's seed through whom all nations/peoples will be blessed; 3) the Davidic-King who will reign for eternity; and 4) Israel's Messiah, born of a Jewish virgin in Bethlehem? Do you believe Christ is the long awaited Messiah of Israel that God promised (through the Old Testament prophets) would come to save His people and reign for eternity? Messiah (or the Christ) means the "anointed one", and the Old Testament Scriptures prophesied that God would send His anointed servant to redeem Israel (God's people) and be her king (this is Jesus, who was anointed by the Holy Spirit at His baptism). In other words, to believe in Jesus Christ means we know Him as "Lord and Savior" and as Israel's Messiah, understood in light of the Old Testament. Salvation is from the Jews: the Jewish Messiah.

\_\_\_\_\_ Yes I believe this      \_\_\_\_\_ No I do not      \_\_\_\_\_ I don't know/Not sure

3. Do you believe that Jesus Christ died on a cross, rose from the dead, ascended to heaven, and is coming back? Do you believe that Christ lived a sinless life of perfect obedience to and trust in God the Father even unto death on a cross, that He died on the cross as the all sufficient sacrifice for our sins, that He rose bodily from the dead and appeared to the apostles and over 500 believers, that He ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of God the Father (interceding for us now), and that He will return one day in power and great glory as judge of the living and the dead, to save those who are waiting for Him?

Yes I believe this     No I do not     I don't know/Not sure

4. Do you confess that you are a sinner, and that your only hope for salvation comes by God's grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone? [Salvation includes: 1) Becoming a Christian, born again, a new person in Christ, saved from God's wrath, receiving the forgiveness of our sins, being justified (declared righteous), adopted into God's family (the church), and delivered from sin's and Satan's powers; 2) Being sanctified (made holy, conformed into Christ-likeness) as we are empowered by the spirit to live godly lives in united fellowship as the body of Christ and as His gospel witnesses to the whole world; and 3) Being glorified, receiving the fullness of eternal life in Christ with resurrected-imperishable bodies, saved from this perishing-fallen world and the eternal punishment of hell, and living in united-fellowship with God as His people, welcomed into the joy of the new heaven & earth and into the security & glory of His eternal kingdom].

Yes I believe this     No I do not     I don't know/Not sure

### 3. Have you obeyed the Gospel?

#### A. Becoming a Christian (a new person in Christ):

**John 1:**<sup>12</sup> But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God,<sup>13</sup> who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God.

**Acts 20:**<sup>20</sup> . . . I did not shrink from declaring to you anything that was profitable, and teaching you in public and from house to house,<sup>21</sup> testifying both to Jews and to Greeks of repentance toward God and of faith in our Lord Jesus Christ.

Have you put your faith in the person of Jesus Christ [turning to God in repentance (turning away from sin & from living life on your terms, and turning to God by faith) and believing in Christ as Lord and Savior]?

Yes by God's grace     No     I don't know/Not sure     No, but I am ready to

#### B. Discipleship (following Jesus):

**Mark 8:**<sup>4</sup> And calling the crowd to him with his disciples, he said to them, "If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me."<sup>35</sup> For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake and the gospel's will save it.

**Romans 8:**<sup>5</sup> For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit set their minds on the things of the Spirit.<sup>6</sup> For to set the mind on the flesh is death, but to set the mind on the Spirit is life and peace.

Are you following Jesus Christ by faith, in the power of the Holy Spirit, through obedience to His word, in the fellowship of His Church, and for His glory, and do you intend to do so as long as you live or until Jesus Christ returns?

Yes by God's grace     No     I don't know/Not sure     No, but I am ready to

## **A Historical-Theological Summary of Water Baptism**

*If you would like to know more about water baptism, read pages 6 & 7 (this is optional). For any children being baptized, the parents may decide whether to go over these sections with them now, or to wait until they are older.*

**A Theological Summary of Water Baptism:** The following two paragraphs are excerpts taken from *Evangelical Convictions: A Theological Exposition of the Statement of Faith of the Evangelical Free Church of America* (pp. 171-175).

Baptism is an act by which a person publicly calls upon the name of Jesus as Lord and Savior. From the perspective of the person being baptized, baptism is the subjective response to the objective truth of the gospel. It is the biblically prescribed public action that corresponds to a personal response of faith to the gospel ... Baptism has, from the beginning, been seen as the point of entry into the visible body of Christ ... Baptism was the point at which a person was publicly recognized as a Christian ... Becoming a Christian is very personal, but it is never private, for being adopted as a child of God means being a part of a family – a very visible and tangible family embodied in a local church. Baptism is the initial means by which we are recognized by that family and are welcomed into that family to enjoy its privileges and to bear its responsibilities. The responsibility of the church, then, toward those who come to be baptized is to affirm those who offer a credible profession of faith ... Baptism is something *we* do, and baptism is something *the church* does, but, most importantly baptism is also something that *God* does ... And in baptism, our promise is but a response to the prior promise of God.

Baptism is the picture of a promise, the visible sign of an invisible grace. In baptism, God's promise in the gospel is made personal to the one who is baptized as it is displayed before our eyes. This symbolic act displays God uniting us to Christ in his death and resurrection, washing our sins away and clothing us with new garments of righteousness. Baptism in the name of the triune God depicts our union with Christ, and through our union with Christ, we are brought into the new age of the Spirit. In that sense, Christian baptism is not a baptism of *preparation*, like that of John the Baptist, looking forward to what was to come; it is a baptism of *participation* – picturing our present participation in Christ, and so our participation in the new age of and by the Spirit ... Baptism is a visible form of the gospel, but not just the gospel proclaimed. Baptism also displays the gospel being believed and received. In one symbolic act, baptism unites God's grace displayed, human faith exercised, and the church celebrating them both by publicly welcoming a new believer into the global body of Christ, the family of God.

**Water Baptism in Church History** [*adapted from Introduction to the History of Christianity, edited by Tim Dowley*]

*Note: It is helpful in general to understand the other perspectives within Christianity on baptism and the history behind it, for multiple reasons. This challenges you to think through your own beliefs in light of other perspectives, and to think through why you do or do not agree with them. This can also bring you to a greater respect for these other positions and the people who hold them, and for what you can learn from them, even as you respectfully disagree with them. Example: Some of us who practice believer's baptism would do well to learn from the "covenant" and "community" emphasis and theology more faithfully articulated, at times, by those who practice infant baptism (while at the same time maintaining the emphasis needed for the individual response called for in the gospel, as salvation is both personal and corporate – we are individually saved yet also adopted into the corporate body of believers, the church).*

**Instructions for Baptismal Candidates:** In the early NT Church, baptisms were performed soon after conversion. But as the church grew and started reaching non-Jewish people (who did not have a faith background in the Old Testament), an intensive preparation process was developed for baptismal candidates. "By the fourth century, the clergy had taken over the instruction of converts (\*catechumens), and the bishop had become personally responsible for the concentrated teaching and discipline immediately before baptism. (Here lay the origins of Lent; from the second century baptisms normally took place at Easter" [i.e. the instructions for baptismal candidates took place during Lent, which is the seven weeks prior to Easter] (p. 118).

**Mode of Baptism:** How early infant baptism surfaced within church history is debated. "The doctrine of original sin [we are born sinners, in bondage to sin and incapable of doing God's will without God's grace], which Augustine set out, made it vital for the church to believe in the absolute necessity of baptism for salvation (Augustine was a theologian; who lived from 354 to 430 A.D.). People took this to imply that unbaptized infants who died went to hell, or at least to 'limbo' on the borders of hell ... During [the second 500 year period of Christianity] western Europe came to be regarded as 'Christendom' – a Christian society. As a result virtually all baptisms were of infants" (p. 265). The practice of infant baptism was continued by the Reformers (c.1500's) as well (with their covenant-community theology of the church - see next section below). The Reformers like Martin Luther and John Calvin were used by God to restore the theology of the gospel and the church back more in line with Holy Scripture. Centuries later, however, the practice of believer's baptism would surface again, driven by various "Baptists" groups, who came to see the church as "a gathered community" not a Christian society, and that "only the baptism of believers fitted such a view" (p. 265).

In Summary: Believer's baptism was the dominant position in the early church, while the practice of infant baptism has dominated much of western church history after the 400's A.D. During the last few hundred years, however, the percentage of Christians practicing believer's baptism has greatly increased.

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*Note: the following is taken from chapter 49 of Systematic Theology by Wayne Grudem, which defines the "paedobaptist" view (a common view of water baptism among Evangelicals who do not hold to a "baptistic" theology). With that, some, but not all, who practice infant baptism would view water baptism as a sacrament rather than an ordinance (see definition of sacrament below). Regardless, many who practice infant baptism also emphasize the personal response of faith to the gospel needed for salvation.*

**The Protestant Paedobaptist View:** Baptism is rightly administered to *all infant children of believing parents*. This is a common view in many Protestant groups (especially Lutheran, Episcopalian, Methodist, Presbyterian and Reformed churches). This view is sometimes known as the covenant argument for paedobaptism. It is called a "covenant" argument because it depends on seeing infants born to believers as part of the "covenant community" of God's people. The word "paedobaptism" means the practice of baptizing infants (the prefix *paido-* means "child" and is derived from the Greek word *pais*, "child") ... The argument that infants of believers should be baptized depends primarily on the following three points [based on the arguments put forth by Louis Berkhof (a Reformed theologian from the 20th century)]:

- a. Infants were Circumcised in the Old Covenant: In the Old Testament, circumcision was the outward sign of entrance into the covenant community or the community of God's people. Circumcision was administered to all Israelite [male] children when they were eight days old.
- b. Baptism is Parallel to Circumcision: In the New Testament, the outward sign of entrance into the "covenant community" is baptism. Therefore, baptism is the New Testament counterpart to circumcision. It follows that baptism should be administered to all infant children of believing parents. To deny them this benefit is to deprive them of a privilege and benefit that is rightfully theirs – the *sign* of belonging to the community of God's people, the "covenant community." [The parallel between circumcision and baptism is seen quite clearly in Colossians 2:11-12].
- c. Household Baptisms: Further support for the practice of baptizing infants is found in the "household baptisms" reported in Acts and the epistles ... [see Acts 16:15, 33; 1 Cor 1:16]. It is also claimed that Acts 2:39, which declares that the promised blessing of the gospel is "to you and to your children," supports this practice.
- d. Sacramental View of Baptism (*an additional point that Louis Berkhof does not include*): Some who practice infant baptism also view water baptism as a sacrament (not an ordinance). \*Sacrament: ... the sacred practices of the church. Augustine spoke of these acts as "the visible form of an invisible grace" or as a "sign of a sacred thing." Mysteriously, the sacraments are used by God to confirm divine promises to believers and are somehow the means by which the recipient enters into the truths they represent. The two primary sacraments are baptism and the Lord's Supper. The lesser sacraments in the Roman Catholic tradition include confirmation, penance, matrimony, ordination (orders) and extreme unction. Protestant theology emphasizes the need for faith in order for a sacrament to have meaning.  
*\*Taken from the Pocket Dictionary of Theological Terms, by Grenz, Guretzki, and Nordling.*

**Baptistic Response to the Paedobaptist View:** Grudem gives the following response based on a "Baptistic" view of water baptism (starting on page 976). Here's a brief-adapted summary:

- a. Circumcision in the OT (unlike baptism in the NT) was not restricted to people who had true inward spiritual life, which makes this comparison problematic;
- b. the New Testament does not talk about a "covenant community" made up of believers and their unbelieving children;
- c. the Household baptisms in the NT also speak of the word of God being preached to and received by the whole household, or the whole household coming to faith; and
- d. Remember what baptism is a sign of (and what it does and does not do): it is a sign of being born again (becoming a Christian), it does not save us and it is not a sign of a promise for children of believers who might one day be saved.