

Lesson 4I: Questions 99, 100, and 101

Last lesson introduced baptism as Christ's ordinance for those professing repentance and faith. Questions 99-101 now ask:

- What about believers' children?
- How should baptism be administered?
- What obligations follow it?

Christ determines baptism's subjects and administration. He calls the baptized into committed fellowship with His people.

99-101

Question 99: Are Believers' Infants to Be Baptized?

Q. Are the infants of such as are professing believers to be baptized?

A. The infants of such as are professing believers are not to be baptized, because there is neither command or example in the holy scriptures, or certain consequence from them to baptize such.

The catechism asks whether infant baptism is authorized by command, example, or necessary inference. Both confessions recognize that Scripture teaches through necessary conclusions as well as explicit statements (**WCF §1.6; 2LBCF §1.6**). But a possible inference is not a necessary one. Consider the governing principle:

Every word of God proves true; he is a shield to those who take refuge in him. Do not add to his words, lest he rebuke you and you be found a liar. (Proverbs 30:5-6, ESV)

This does not directly settle baptism's subjects. It establishes that the church must receive biblical authorization rather than supply it. The question is whether covenant continuity necessarily authorizes infant baptism. This warns against adding to God's words. The Reformed Baptist position is that infant baptism is adding to God's Word by misinterpreting (primarily) the Abrahamic covenants and drawing too close a connection between 2 things:

1. "Mixed multitude" in OT Israel → "Mixed multitude" in NT Church
2. Circumcision in OT Israel → Baptism in NT Church

FIRST, consider Christ's commission:

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, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age." (Matthew 28:19-20, ESV)

At Pentecost, that commission takes visible form:

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?" 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. 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." And with many other words he bore witness and continued to exhort them, saying, "Save yourselves from this crooked generation." So those who received his word were baptized, and there were added that day about three thousand souls. (Acts 2:37-41, ESV)

Those receiving Peter's message are baptized and added to the church. The same relationship appears in Samaria:

But when they believed Philip as he preached good news about the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women. (Acts 8:12, ESV)

At Corinth also, hearing, believing, and baptism belong together.

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. (Acts 18:8, ESV)

These accounts do more than *omit* infants; they *positively identify* baptism's subjects. The church baptizes upon a credible profession of repentance and faith, not certain knowledge of regeneration, God's work of giving spiritual life. We cannot see the heart. The confession accordingly identifies professed repentance, faith, and obedience as baptism's qualifications (**2LBCF §29.2**).

SECOND, consider the New Covenant's constitution. A covenant is a relationship established by God with promises and obligations. Jeremiah announces a covenant distinguished from the covenant made when God brought Israel out of Egypt:

"Behold, the days are coming, declares the LORD, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah, not like the covenant that I made with their fathers on the day when I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt, my covenant that they broke, though I was their husband, declares the LORD. For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, declares the LORD: I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts. And I will be their God, and they shall be my people. And no longer shall each one teach his neighbor and each his brother, saying, 'Know the LORD,' for they shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest, declares the LORD. For I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more." (Jeremiah 31:31-34, ESV)

Hebrews identifies this as the covenant mediated by Christ (**Hebrews 8:8-12**). Its members know the Lord, receive forgiveness, and have His law written within them.

The Mosaic covenant governed a nation containing *believers and unbelievers*. The earlier Abrahamic covenant included promises fulfilled in Christ and arrangements for Abraham's *physical descendants*. We must distinguish these covenants without denying their relationship. Abraham's saving blessing reaches the nations through Christ and is received by faith (**Galatians 3:7-9, 14, 16**).

Neither covenant therefore establishes physical descent as the basis of New Covenant membership. In its saving reality, this covenant comprises those who know God. Believer's baptism, or *credobaptism*, follows that constitution. The visible church receives professing believers imperfectly; false professions do not change the covenant's nature.

THIRD, consider the Presbyterian case for *paedobaptism*, infant baptism. Presbyterians affirm salvation by grace through faith and distinguish the outward sign from regeneration. Their argument concerns covenant inclusion, not salvation guaranteed by ancestry.

1. God commanded circumcision for Abraham's male descendants, including infants (**Genesis 17:7-14**). Presbyterians reason that believers' children retain covenant standing and should receive the New Covenant sign. Baptists affirm continuity in God's saving promise but deny that circumcision's recipients transfer automatically to baptism. Circumcision marked Abraham's household and subsequently Israel's national life, but neither of those guaranteed admission into the Covenant of Grace, for which baptism is the covenant sign.
2. Peter's promise to his hearers and their children is therefore significant, not irrelevant. Yet **Acts 2:39** also extends the promise to those far off and identifies its recipients by the Lord's calling. The passage offers hope for succeeding generations without commanding their baptism apart from faith. **Verse 41** identifies the baptized as those receiving the message.
3. **Colossians 2:11-12** connects baptism with spiritual circumcision and union with Christ. Its emphasis is the inward work accomplished in Christ and resurrection with Him through faith, not an explicit one-for-one replacement of infant circumcision by infant baptism. Old Testament physical circumcision marked admission of a male child into the Mosaic Covenant. New Testament baptism represents spiritual circumcision and admission of a believer into the Covenant of Grace. They do have similar meanings, but circumcision is the shadow that points to baptism; they are not simply equivalent.
4. The holiness of believers' children likewise indicates a special relationship and privilege within a Christian household (**1 Corinthians 7:14**). It does not establish baptismal eligibility. Remember that the unbelieving spouse is also described as sanctified without thereby becoming a professing believer (and most Presbyterians won't baptize an unbelieving spouse, which I believe is an inconsistency in their theology of baptism).

5. Household baptisms deserve consideration, but their accounts do not establish everyone's age. Lydia's household and Stephanas's household supply no necessary inference of infant baptism ([Acts 16:14-15](#); [1 Corinthians 1:16](#)). In the jailer's household, the apostolic word is addressed to everyone present before baptism ([Acts 16:30-34](#)). We should neither invent infants nor assert their absence.

Believers' children enjoy Scripture, prayer, Christian example, and gospel instruction. We should nurture them toward personal faith. These privileges do not authorize baptism apart from a credible profession.

Question 100: How Is Baptism Rightly Administered?

Q. How is Baptism rightly administered?

- A. Baptism is rightly administered by immersion, or dipping the whole body of the party in water, into the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, according to Christ's institution, and the practice of the apostles, and not by sprinkling or pouring of water, or dipping some part of the body, after the tradition of men.

Christ determines not only who receives baptism but how it is administered. The confession likewise identifies immersion as necessary to its proper administration ([2LBCF §29.4](#)). This conviction rests upon a cumulative argument from language, narrative, and theological significance.

FIRST, βαπτίζω (*baptizō*) ordinarily means to dip or immerse, though context must govern its interpretation. The narratives fit this meaning. Jesus comes up from the water, and John baptizes where water is plentiful ([Matthew 3:16](#); [John 3:23](#)). These describe John's preparatory baptism, not the risen Christ's full institution. [John 4:1-2](#) also records baptism administered by Jesus' disciples during His ministry.

In Christian baptism, Philip and the eunuch enter and leave the water ([Acts 8:38-39](#)). This alone does not prove immersion: both enter, but only one is baptized. Together, however, the language and narrative details support immersion.

SECOND, immersion fittingly portrays the saving realities baptism signifies. Paul's central concern in Romans 6 is why those united to Christ must no longer live under sin's dominion:

Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? 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. (Romans 6:3-4, ESV)

Immersion fittingly portrays the believer's burial and resurrection with Him.

Colossians develops the same relationship:

In him also you were circumcised with a circumcision made without hands, by putting off the body of the flesh, by the circumcision of Christ, having been buried with him in baptism, in which you were also raised with him through faith in the powerful working of God, who raised him from the dead. (Colossians 2:11-12, ESV)

Spiritual circumcision, burial with Christ, and resurrection through faith belong together. These passages primarily explain saving realities, but their imagery also reinforces immersion.

Water does not produce these blessings. Baptism neither regenerates nor justifies; salvation is by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone. Nevertheless, Christ appointed baptism to identify His disciples publicly and signify their fellowship with Him ([2LBCF §29.1](#)).

THIRD, Christ commands baptism in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, as we read earlier ([Matthew 28:19-20](#)). The one divine name and three Persons confess the Triune God: the Father purposes salvation, the Son accomplishes it, and the Spirit applies it.

The church may not redesign Christ's ordinance. We can recognize other Christians' sincere faith while maintaining that immersion, not sprinkling or pouring, is its appointed administration.

Question 101: What Is the Duty of Those Rightly Baptized?

Q. What is the duty of such who are rightly baptized?

A. It is the duty of such who are rightly baptized to give up themselves to some particular and orderly church of Jesus Christ, that they may walk in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless.

Baptism is a public profession of discipleship. At Pentecost, those baptized were added to the church. Luke immediately describes their continuing life together:

And they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers. (Acts 2:42, ESV)

Baptism leads into shared devotion to teaching, fellowship, breaking bread, and prayer. Belonging to Christ's universal church does not remove our obligation to an identifiable congregation ordered by His Word ([2LBCF §26.5-6, 12](#)). Acts also distinguishes those who remained outside from believers being added to the Lord, showing a recognizable community rather than an undefined religious association ([Acts 5:13-14](#)). Paul likewise sought to join the disciples in Jerusalem ([Acts 9:26](#)).

Membership means more than registering a name. We commit ourselves to gather for worship, receive biblical instruction, participate in Christ's ordinances, pray, and care for one another. We contribute to the congregation's spiritual health through service, generosity, encouragement, and loving correction. As living stones built together into a spiritual house, believers offer worship through Jesus Christ ([1 Peter 2:5](#)).

We also accept legitimate biblical oversight and accountability. Elders must lead under Christ's Word, not exercise unlimited personal authority ([Hebrews 13:17](#); [1 Peter 5:2-3](#)). Membership obliges neither blind obedience nor passive attendance. It calls for active, discerning faithfulness to Christ alongside His people.

"Blameless" means sincere, persevering obedience, not sinlessness. Zechariah and Elizabeth illustrate such faithfulness in their Old Covenant setting ([Luke 1:6](#)); the passage does not directly establish church membership. Membership itself neither regenerates nor justifies. It is an obligation flowing from grace: Christ's people should share His household's worship, responsibilities, and care.

Conclusion

Baptism publicly identifies professing believers with Christ and His people. We receive it by immersion in the Triune name and follow it with committed participation in a particular church.

99. Baptism belongs to those professing repentance and faith; believers' infants lack the biblical authorization required to receive it.

100. Baptism is administered by immersion in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

101. The baptized should commit themselves to a particular, orderly church and walk faithfully in Christ's commands.

So take these three considerations with you this week:

- **Examine your obedience.** If you profess faith but have not received baptism as Christ instituted it, speak with the elders.
- **Nurture your children toward faith.** Teach Scripture, pray with them, and direct them to Christ rather than resting in family privilege.
- **Practice your membership.** Gather faithfully, receive instruction, and seek one concrete way to serve or encourage another member.

Baptism declares our allegiance; it does not accomplish our redemption.

Christ is our all-sufficient salvation.