

052 - One Baptism of the New Covenant - Ephesians 4:3-6 - 2015-07-26

Call to Worship: Hebrews 12:22-24 (excerpts)

You have come to the general assembly and church of the firstborn registered in heaven, to God the Judge of all, to Jesus the Mediator of the new covenant.

Scripture Reading: Jeremiah 31:31-34

Sermon: "One Baptism of the New Covenant" Ephesians 4:3-6

Benediction: Hebrews 9:15

INTRODUCTION

"the unity of the Spirit in the bonds of peace" Oh, how sweet that sounds!

The Psalms express it:

Psalm 133:1 Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity!

The Lord Jesus prayed for it:

John 17:20-21 "I do not pray for these alone, but also for those who will believe in Me through their word; (21) that they all may be one, as You, Father, are in Me, and I in You; that they also may be one in Us, that the world may believe that You sent Me.

His apostles pleaded with the churches to have it:

1 Corinthians 1:10 Now I plead with you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment.

Yet look at us!

If you look at the history just in America
William Screven

If you look at the young Baptist pastors and seminary students
Dr. Fred Malone tells his story
Dr. Jeff Johnson tells this is frequent

If you look at our own brief church history
-Smiths
-Crawfords
-Skinners

If you look at your friends elsewhere
for us, Castilles and Daniels
for you?

If you go downtown in this city, you will see the buildings of First Baptist Church, where some hundreds of people are gathered in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. Look across the street, and what do you see? the buildings of First Presbyterian Church. Inside is another gathering of people in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. Why are these two groups meeting separately, in separate organizations? Why does that situation remain the status quo year after year and century after century, bringing disgrace to the gospel and church of our Lord?

It is like that because four centuries ago, when the Lord God graciously brought a great Reformation to His church in Great Britain, the Presbyterians would not let go of infant sprinkling. They were delivered from domination by the Pope at Rome and His Roman Catholic system. They were granted wonderful insight into salvation by God's grace through faith in Jesus Christ. They climbed to heights in many areas of the Christian faith which we admire and today and wish to immitate. But they would not let go of the practice of sprinkling babies and acting like that is baptism. They even constructed some theological concepts to justify that practice. NOT that those points of theology came first, and demanded of them that they sprinkle babies. No, the corrupt system of baptizing babies, and then even of just sprinkling them and calling that baptism, was there first, and had been there a very long time. And so certain theological ideas were created to justify that practice. Many people objected, of course, protesting that the bible teaches us to immerse the disciples of Christ, not to sprinkle babies. Such people were called many names, all eventually consolidated in the name, "Baptist." The Presbyterians, however, would not give up their practice. Instead, they gave sermons, wrote essays, and published books, sometimes trying to vilify the Baptists, more often trying to justify theologically and scripturally their false practice of sprinkling babies.

The Presbyterian version of Covenant Theology contains at least two errors that the Presbyterians see as justification for the practice of sprinkling infants. This leaves them unable to seek the unity of the Spirit in the bonds of peace as to the church's one baptism.

The Baptist version of Covenant Theology corrects those errors, removing the supposed justification for that false practice. This equips us to the unity of the Spirit in the bonds of peace through the true practice of the church's one baptism.

TEXT

Ephesians 4:3-6

Ephesians 2:11-12 Therefore remember that you, once Gentiles in the flesh--who are called Uncircumcision by what is called the Circumcision made in the flesh by hands-- (12) that at that time you were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world.

BODY

- I. In Reformed Covenant Theology, both Presbyterians and Baptists recognize two covenants between God and men that characterize all of God's dealings with mankind (thought of either as underlying or overarching)
 - A. a Covenant of Works
 1. The terms of this covenant have been variously stated, but amount to this, essentially, "Obey Me and you will live; disobey Me and you will die."
 - a) Gen 2:17 of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die.
 - b) Deuteronomy 30:15-18a "See, I have set before you today life and good, death and evil, (16) in that I command you today to love the LORD your God, to walk in His ways, and to keep His commandments, His statutes, and His judgments, that you may live and multiply; and the LORD your God will bless you in the land which you go to possess. (17) But if your heart turns away so that you do not hear, and are drawn away, and worship other gods and serve them, (18) I announce to you today that you shall surely perish
 2. 1689 ch 20 par 1 The covenant of works
 - a) being broken by sin,
 - b) and made unprofitable unto life
 - B. a Covenant of Grace
 1. The terms of this covenant amount to this: "Believe in Christ and live."
 - a) John 3:16 For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.
 - b) Acts 16:30-31 And he brought them out and said, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" (31) So they said, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved, you and your household."
 2. 1689 ch 7 par 2 man having brought himself under the curse of the law by his fall, it pleased the Lord to make a covenant of grace, wherein he
 - a) freely offereth unto sinners life and salvation by Jesus Christ,
 - b) requiring of them faith in him, that they may be saved,

- c) and promising to give unto all those that are ordained unto eternal life, his Holy spirit, to make them willing and able to believe

II. In the Presbyterian version of Covenant Theology, there are two faulty ideas regarding these two covenants that they claim justify baptism of infants

A. They say that when God made covenant with Abraham, the covenant He made with him was an administration of the Covenant of Grace

1. This faulty idea, that the covenant God made with Abraham, is essentially the Covenant of Grace, serves as the primary support for the Presbyterian practice of infant sprinkling; it goes like this:

- a) the Abrahamic Covenant and the New Covenant are essentially different administrations of the one Covenant of Grace
- b) since they are essentially the same covenant, then what is true of the one is true of the other, unless the bible specifically says otherwise
- c) since in the Abrahamic Covenant, infants received the sign of the covenant (circumcision), in the New Covenant, infants also should receive the sign (baptism)

2. This leads Presbyterians, for the most part, to see the covenant God made with Israel through Moses also as essentially the Covenant of Grace

- a) WCF chapter 7 This covenant of grace . . . was differently administered in the time of the law, and in the time of the gospel. . . There are not therefore two covenants of grace . . . but one and the same, under various dispensations.
- b) so they are confirmed in their false belief, thinking that the command to circumcise babies in the Mosaic Covenant confirms the command to do so in the Abrahamic Covenant, and so surely commands the covenant sign to be applied to babies in the New Covenant

B. They say that the covenant God made with Abraham had two aspects to it, in that there was the inner, spiritual substance of it, and the outward, physical administration of it

- 1. e.g. circumcision of the flesh and true saving faith
- 2. a person might be in the covenant of grace only as to the outward, physical administration of it, but he was still in
- 3. since there is both an inner and an outward administration of the Covenant of Grace, a person who is not part of the covenant inwardly, spiritually, can still be part of the covenant outwardly, physically
- 4. thus a person can be baptized even while an unbelieving infant, and be considered part of the New Covenant, even though he is not part of the covenant inwardly, spiritually

- III. In the Baptist version of Covenant Theology, we see what is needed to correct these two Presbyterian errors, and so remove the supposed rationale for baptism of infants
- A. God's dealing with Abraham by covenant was not an actual administration of the Covenant of Grace through Abraham
 - 1. the relationship of covenants made before the coming of Christ to the Covenant of Grace is that they contained promises of it, not actual administration of it
 - a) Eph 2:12 "the covenants of promise"
 - b) promises regarding Christ who was to come, all fulfilled in Jesus Christ
 - (1) in His life
 - (2) in His death, burial, and resurrection
 - (3) in His return, the resurrection, and eternal life
 - 2. therefore it is not essentially the same covenant as the New Covenant
 - 3. therefore its provision of putting the sign of the covenant on infants does not apply in the New Covenant
 - B. When God made covenant with Abraham, the fact that it was in two parts was to a greater degree than the Presbyterians say, and in a different sense
 - 1. He made two separate covenants, or at least one covenant with two distinct parts [I believe it is two separate covenants, but Baptists are not all agreed on that, so I don't want to be adamant about it.]
 - a) one of circumcision, which would be worked out in the Old Covenant
 - (1) Acts 7:8 [Stephen] Then He gave him the covenant of circumcision; and so Abraham begot Isaac and circumcised him on the eighth day; and Isaac begot Jacob, and Jacob begot the twelve patriarchs.
 - b) one of promise, which would be worked out in the New Covenant
 - (1) again Eph 2:12 "the covenants of promise"
 - 2. Not in the sense of inward and outward administration, but in the sense of different posterities
 - a) physical, by natural descent
 - (1) national Israel; Israel as a commonwealth
 - b) spiritual, by faith
 - (1) until Christ came, believing Jews within the commonwealth of Israel
 - (2) now, since Christ came all who believe, both Jew and Gentile, without regard to the old covenant commonwealth

IV. APPLICATION

- A. Seek more information on this if you need it, or are interested
 - 1. from me
 - 2. from books, especially *The Distinctiveness of Baptist Covenant Theology* by Pascal Denault
 - 3. from this September's Founders Conference SW
 - a) Denault
 - b) Johnson
- B. Take care in all contact with Presbyterianism
- C. Understand the double reason not to go over
 - 1. It is not what the Lord commands in the bible
 - 2. There isn't even reason in the Presbyterian Covenant theology formulations
- D. If the Presbyterians are determined not to seek the unity of the Spirit in the bonds of peace as to the church's one baptism, let us enjoy our unity all the more, seeing how precious it is
- E. Let us thank the Lord for His grace toward us, that we may understand this

CONCLUSION

The Presbyterian version of Covenant Theology contains at least two errors that the Presbyterians see as justification for the practice of sprinkling infants. This leaves them unable to seek the unity of the Spirit in the bonds of peace as to the church's one baptism.

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The Lord God has long dealt with us sinners by making covenants with us
He made covenants with Abraham
He made a covenant with the nation of Israel through Moses
He has made The New Covenant through Jesus Christ

The physical provisions of the Abrahamic and Mosaic covenant do not apply in the New Covenant

Gal 4:24 For these are two covenants

1. the one from Mount Sinai and corresponds to Jerusalem which now is
 - a. and is in bondage with
 - b. her children
 - i. born according to the flesh
2. [the other from Mount Zion (Heb 12:18) and corresponds to] Jerusalem above
 - a. free, which is the mother of
 - b. us all; children of the free
 - i. children of promise
 - ii. born according to the Spirit

Carroll:

On Galatians 4:24

Here is an important matter: The ablest debater that I ever read after was the great Presbyterian, N. L. Rice, and here let the reader note just what Rice said about the covenant and how the covenant puts the infants in the church. A certain man was once quoting Rice to me on that and he said, "The Old Testament put the children in with the parents; and now if it put them in, how are you going to put them out?" I said, "Here is

the passage, 'Cast out the bondwoman and her son.' " That casts the covenant out and infant membership. It is true that the children come in the new covenant; it is true that we baptize every child in the new covenant, but he is a regenerated child – a spiritual child – and nobody in the world can answer that. And yet I never heard a pedobaptist make an argument that he did not bring in the relation that the children bore to the old covenant, viz.: that they were in the covenant. That is their first and, indeed, their only respectable argument.

A certain Baptist wrote a book with this title: Baptists the only Pedo baptists, i.e., the Baptists are the only denomination that really baptize children. They baptize every spiritual child if he is only converted, and if his spiritual childhood is only an hour old. The Baptists baptize him, and others don't do that; they baptize the goats – those that are not children. He makes a very fine argument, and if we just understand him, he is hitting the nail on the head. The Baptists don't baptize anything but children, but they belong to spiritual Israel, and they often baptize them the very day they are new born. They don't wait eight days.

Westminster Confession

Church

The visible Church, which is also catholic or universal under the Gospel (not confined to one nation, as before under the law), consists of all those throughout the world that profess the true religion;[\[2\]](#) and of their children:

Baptism

Not only those that do actually profess faith in and obedience unto Christ,[\[11\]](#) but also the infants of one, or both, believing parents, are to be baptized

Covenant

V. This covenant was differently administered in the time of the law, and in the time of the Gospel:[\[9\]](#) under the law it was administered by promises, prophecies, sacrifices, circumcision, the paschal lamb, and other types and ordinances delivered to the people of the Jews, all foreshadowing Christ to come;[\[10\]](#) which were, for that time, sufficient and efficacious, through the operation of the Spirit, to instruct and build up the elect in faith in the promised Messiah,[\[11\]](#) by whom they had full remission of sins, and eternal salvation; and is called the Old Testament.[\[12\]](#)

VI. Under the Gospel, when Christ, the substance,[\[13\]](#) was exhibited, the ordinances in which this covenant is dispensed are the preaching of the Word, and the administration of the sacraments of Baptism and the Lord's Supper:[\[14\]](#) which, though fewer in number, and administered with more simplicity, and less outward glory, yet, in them, it is held forth in more fullness, evidence, and spiritual efficacy,[\[15\]](#) to all nations, both Jews and Gentiles;[\[16\]](#) and is called the New Testament.[\[17\]](#) There are not therefore two covenants of grace, differing in substance, but one and the same, under various dispensations.[\[18\]](#)

- F. Neither of these covenants amounts to God bringing in the actual Covenant of Grace at that time
1. the one covenant with Abraham *promised* the Covenant of Grace, but did not actually bring it in yet
 2. the second covenant with Abraham amounted to an administration of the Covenant of Works