

Goals

In the second portion of this book, we will compare our five basic beliefs with other Christian doctrines and theological beliefs. All but one of the lessons is arranged in pairs. During the first week, we will cover the doctrines and basic beliefs of other Christian denominations. This allows students to understand where other Christians are coming from and why they believe what they believe. In the corresponding second week, we will review our own doctrines in greater depth. The purpose of this is to help students compare and contrast the doctrines and understand that our basic beliefs are soundly rooted in the Bible. This way, we not only equip the students to preach to other Christians, but also help them stand firm in their own faith.

unit 2

Teacher Devotional

When was the last time we were moved by a baptism, a foot washing or a Holy Communion? During which Sabbath did we last feel spiritual rest? In which prayer did we last experience the warm movement of the Holy Spirit? Although our lives are filled with grace, we often forget the mercy of God when we allow church to become a routine. As we prepare for the following lessons, let us challenge ourselves to re-experience the conviction we had when we truly believed for the first time. Let us pray for the fullness of the Holy Spirit so that we may have true communion with the Lord; let us surrender to Christ on the Sabbath so that we can find true rest; let us preach the good news, so that we may have the joy of witnessing a new member becoming baptized into the Lord. Only when we find true convictions in our doctrines can we teach our children to do the same.

True Worshipers

“But the hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth.” (John 4:23a)

Lesson 4

The Doctrine of Baptism (1)

Listed Scriptures

Mt 3 ; Jn 3 ; Acts 2:37-39, 8:16, 26f, 10:48, 19:1-5; 1 Cor 6:11 ; Tit 3:5

Lesson Aim

To learn about other Christian methods of baptism and how they came about

Memory Verse

“So he commanded the chariot to stand still. And both Philip and the eunuch went down into the water, and he baptized him.” (Acts 8:36)

Bible Reading For This Week (for students and teachers)

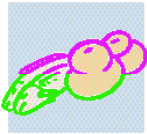
Acts 16-20

Note to teachers: This quarter’s lessons do not contain the Bible Background section since they pertain more to the history of our church.

W A R M U P



Why do some churches baptize by sprinkling, some by pouring, and others by immersion? How did these forms of baptism come about from the same scripture? What are the effects of baptism, and why would some denominations do away with the sacrament altogether?



Part 1

Effects of Baptism

To many churches, baptism is one of the two most important sacraments (along with the Holy Communion) because Jesus Christ specifically commands it in the great commission (Mt 28:18-20). Yet, there is a large range of beliefs on the effects of baptism. We will now examine some of the more common beliefs as outlined by Elder Hsieh in "Five Basic Doctrines."


A . The Lutheran Churches

The Lutheran and the Reformed Churches were the two major Protestant branches that resulted from the Protestant Reformation of the 16th century. The Lutheran view of baptism tends to be more conservative and continues to believe the Catholic idea of "mystery" behind the sacraments. The Lutherans believe that

- a. Baptism has the direct effects of remitting sins regeneration and renewal (Tit 3:5; Jn 3:5).
- b. Baptism unites a person with Christ (1 Pet 3:21).
- c. Baptism leads to salvation (Mk 16:16).

Our church also believes that baptism remits sins. However, regeneration and renewal do not come from water baptism alone. They are processes that take place in a person after one receives both the baptism of water and the baptism of the Holy Spirit (Tit 3:5). Also, baptism itself does not guarantee salvation. To be saved, we must preserve the state of cleanliness we gain from baptism.


B . The Reformed Churches

The Reformed Churches tend to believe in the symbolic interpretation of the sacraments, which claims:

- a. Baptism is a sign of God's sanctification (Eph 5:26, Tit 3:5).
- b. Baptism is a way to testify our faith before others.

The Bible clearly tells us that baptism is more than just a symbol or a sign. When Jesus Christ was crucified, both blood and water came out of His body (Jn 19:34). Thus, we are washed in both the water and the blood when we receive baptism in the name of Jesus Christ (1 Jn 5:6-7).


C . The Baptist Churches

The Baptist Church stemmed from the Anglican Church at the beginning of the 17th century. As their name suggests, they place great emphasis on the baptism of their members. Baptists believe that:

- a. Baptism is a declaration of one's status as a disciple of Christ (Mt 28:19). Therefore, a person must first believe and become a disciple of Christ before he can receive baptism.
- b. Baptism is important because it demonstrates one's obedience toward God (Mk 6:12; Acts 2:38). Yet, the act of baptism is not directly related to one's salvation because no quantity or quality of physical water can remit a person's sins. However, if a person has a personal relationship with Christ, he will love the Lord and obey His command to become baptized. A person who is not baptized can still have a chance at receiving salvation, but cannot be counted as an obedient disciple of Christ.
- c. The renewal and regeneration of the Holy Spirit is symbolized in the ceremony of baptism (Tit 3:5).

Our church does not share the Baptist view for a number of reasons. First, baptism is not only a declaration of one's discipleship. Instead, it is an entrance into the discipleship of Christ. That is why Galatians 3:27 tells us that we are baptized into Christ when we receive baptism. Secondly, baptism has the explicit effect of remitting sins (Acts 2:38, 22:16). We cannot have salvation without baptism (1 Pet 3:21). Thirdly, baptism has the effect of spiritual regeneration and renewal. We are saved through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit (Tit 3:5), who is present during baptism.


D . The Presbyterian Churches

The Presbyterian Church was established in the United States in 1684. Since the American Civil War, there have been differences between the Northern and Southern Presbyterians. Therefore, there is no standard set of beliefs among all the Presbyterian divisions. Some Presbyterians believe:

- a. Baptism unites believers with Christ (Rom 6:4-6).
- b. Baptism has the effect of the remission of sins (Rom 6:6).
- c. Baptism has the effect of regeneration and renewal (Tit 3:5).
- d. Baptism leads to eternal life (Jn 3:6).

All of these beliefs are shared by the True Jesus Church. Other Presbyterians believe that baptism is only symbolic, and there is no real effect to the act.

E . The Seventh Day Adventists

The Seventh Day Adventist Church originated in America in 1846. Like True Jesus Church members, Seventh Day Adventists observe the Sabbath on Saturday (the seventh day). Seventh Day Adventists believe:

- a. Baptism does not have any effect on the remission of sin.
- b. Baptism is a way to follow the example of Christ. Those who have a chance should receive baptism in order to follow Christ. Nevertheless, those who are not baptized are not barred from heaven. For example, the robber crucified next to Christ was promised a place in heaven although he was never baptized (Lk 23:43).
- c. If a person has the chance to be baptized and deliberately refuses baptism, he disobeys the word of God and cannot enter heaven.

Our church does not agree with this view for a few reasons. First, the Bible tells us that baptism has the effect of the remitting sins (Acts 2:38, 22:16). Secondly, we cannot enter the kingdom of heaven without baptism (Jn 3:5; Tit 3:5). The reason why the robber was admitted to heaven without baptism was because Christ had not yet completed our salvation through death (Rom 4:25; 5:8-10; 1 Jn 5:6-7). Also, Jesus Christ's promise to the robber (Lk 23:43) was an isolated event and an individual act of mercy. Lastly, a person will not be denied salvation because of disobedience, but because he is not reborn through baptism.



Part 2

Methods of Baptism

A . Locations

Where a church performs baptism is closely related to its method of baptism. In the early days of the Roman Church, when the baptism of emersion was commonly practiced, baptism was conducted in baptisteries, or special halls or chapels adjacent to the church . Baptisteries evolved from small, circular buildings dedicated to the Roman gods. When Christianity became adopted as the Roman state religion in the 4th century, these buildings were enlarged to accommodate the large number of baptisms on Easter, the Pentecost and Epiphany. (Note: Baptism in the early church was originally performed only on three holidays: Easter, Pentecost and Epiphany. Epiphany is a festival that originated in the Eastern Church as a commemoration of Christ's birth. After the establishment of Christmas on December 25 in 354, the Roman Church began celebrating Epiphany on January 6. Now, the

Western Church uses it to commemorate the manifestation of Jesus Christ to the Gentiles (the Magi), while the Eastern Church uses it to commemorate the baptism of Jesus.)

Baptisteries were commonly built in the shape of octagons and were covered with a dome that represented heaven. Just as the number eight follows the "complete" number 7, the building suggested that the Christian lifestyle was supposed to follow baptism. Baptisteries were commonly located near the atrium (front court) of the church and were often large and richly decorated. However, after the 6th century they were gradually reduced to the status of small chapels inside churches. During the 10th century, baptisms were moved from baptisteries into the chapel as the church began practicing baptism by affusion (pouring liquid over the head) or sprinkling. People who adapted this idea were called the Anabaptists. Today, baptism locations differ. Baptism by aspersion (sprinkling) usually takes place in the chapel, where baptismal or holy water is contained in a basin called a font. Baptism by immersion can take place in lakes, rivers, bathtubs or even swimming pools.



B . "In the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit"

Christian churches either baptize in the name of Jesus Christ (Acts 19:5), the Trinity, or the "Father and of the Son and of and the Holy Spirit" (Mt 28:19). Our church does not baptize in the name of the Trinity because we believe that Jesus Christ is the true name of the "Father and of the Son and of and the Holy Spirit." The Father refers to our spiritual Heavenly Father and creator (Heb 12:9) and the source of Christ (Jn 3:17, 7:29). The only reason why the Son appeared in the flesh was to save His creation (Mt 1:18-21; Jn 1:14; 1 Tim 3:16). Therefore, all who saw Jesus Christ also saw God, and there was no other God in the universe that existed at the same time (Jn 1:18, 12:45, 14:9-11). Because Jesus Christ humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death on the cross, God highly exalted Him and gave Him the name above every name. The Lord even commanded that "at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father" (Phil 2:6-10). Since the Son was originally the Father (Jn 14:9) and is one with the Father (Jn 10:30), they have the same name. Since the Holy Spirit is the spirit of God and is one with both the Father and the Son, it is not a separate entity or a distinct member of the Trinity. Therefore, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, are assumed under the one name of Jesus Christ.



C. The Mode of Baptism

There are basically two Christian views regarding the mode of baptism: immersion and non-adherence to immersion (Ed. Elwell, Water A., *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*, Baker Book House, Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1984). Churches believe in immersion for three reasons. First, the word baptize, or baptizein, means “to immerse or dip.” Therefore, the command to baptize in the New Testament is a command to immerse, specifically in places with large supplies of water (Lk 3:3; Jn 3:23). Second, since the purpose of baptism is to be united with Christ in His death, burial and resurrection (Rom 6:4; Col 2:12), only complete submersion and emergence from water can signify the sacrament. Third, since the early church records baptism by immersion (usually three times, in the name of the Trinity), the example should be followed.

Non-immersionists point out that while the Greek word baptizein means “immerse,” it can also mean “to wash,” or “to purify with water” (for example, in Lk 11:38, where baptizein refers to the washing of hands). Moreover, there are places in the Bible such as Romans 6:6 (crucified with Christ) or Galatians 3:27 (clothed with Christ) that do not require baptism to signify the union with Christ in His death and resurrection. Lastly, although immersion was the main method of baptism in the early church, other modes such as pouring were permitted. Therefore, non-immersionists believe that baptism can be carried out in the forms of affusion (the pouring of liquid over head), aspersion (the sprinkling of holy water, as established in Ezek 36:25; Heb 9:10, 11-14, 10:22) or the traditional immersion.

Nonetheless, the biblical context of these verses do not support aspersion as a proper form of baptism. First, the Old Testament sprinkling of blood only atoned for the sin that had been committed. But the blood of Christ in the New Testament can wash away original sin through water baptism. Thus, the reference to sprinkling in the Old Testament cannot be mistaken for the baptism of the New Testament. Second, Ezekiel 36:25 refers to God’s promise to cleanse the Israelites of the sins they had committed. Hebrews 9:11-14 only uses the analogy of the Old Testament animal sacrifice to emphasize the atonement of the blood of Christ. It does not command baptism by sprinkling. Third, the description of “having our hearts sprinkled” in Hebrews 10:22 is another reference to the atoning blood, which is a purification and not a remission of our original sin. Moreover, it ends with “and our bodies washed.” If the word sprinkled should be taken at face value, then the word washed should also be interpreted literally. Finally, Hebrews 9:10 refers to the ceremonial cleansing before entrance into the tabernacle, which is a purification and has nothing to do with the atoning of sin.



Part 3 Qualifications



A. Qualifications of the Baptists

The New Testament does not give any examples of baptism except by ordained ministers. John 4:2 specifically states, “Though Jesus Himself did not baptize, but his disciples.” Therefore, baptism has traditionally been performed by those entrusted with the ministry within the Roman Catholic Church. Exceptions have been baptism by laymen in the absence of ministers. Some early Baptists also performed baptism on themselves. However, baptism belongs to the public ministry in most churches today.



B. Qualifications of the Baptism Candidates

For many churches, an absolute prerequisite before receiving baptism is a person’s declaration of faith and repentance. To ensure this, some denominations set a minimum age requirement (such as 12) before children can be baptized.



Part 4 Infant Baptism and Confirmation

Infant baptism, or paedobaptism, has been debated since early Christian history. It has been opposed by church authorities such as Origen for a number of reasons. First, there is no direct command or example from the Bible for infant baptism. Second, infants cannot confess their own sins and make the conscious decision to “repent and be baptized” (Acts 2:38). Third, parents who profess the faith of their children may have nominal faiths themselves. Thus, they would be unable to guide their children within the faith until they can pronounce a personal confession.

On the other hand, those who agree with paedobaptism argue that the Bible implies an encouragement of infant baptism. Old Testament types of baptism, such as the flood (Gen 8; 1 Pet 3:20-21), the crossing of the Red Sea (Ex 14), and circumcision (Gen 17) all include families instead of individuals. Since infants are part of the family unit, they should be eligible for the grace of baptism. In the New Testament, Christ’s ministry also includes children. Jesus Christ receives and blesses children (Mt 19: 3-14), becomes angry when the disciples rebuff children (Mk

10:14) and warns against those who lead the little ones astray (Mt 18:6). Moreover, in the Acts of the Apostles, believers are also baptized by the family (Acts 16:15, 33).

Churches that perform infant baptism often require confirmation of faith when the child matures. Confirmation is a rite by which a person's relationship with God is confirmed, or officially established. In the Roman Catholic Church, confirmation is seen as a sacrament. Confirmation candidates must be baptized and at least seven years old before they can proclaim their faith. During the confirmation, a bishop lays hands on the candidates and anoints their heads with chrism (a mixture of oil and balsam). As a result of the confirmation, the gifts of the Holy Spirit are thought to be bestowed on the person. In the Eastern Orthodox Churches, a priest administers confirmation. However, the child generally receives the three sacraments of baptism, confirmation and the first communion all in the same service.

After the Reformation, Protestants such as the Anglicans and Lutherans continued to see confirmation as a public profession of the faith into which one is baptized as an infant. Therefore, candidates must take classes on catechisms (basic beliefs) before confirmation. However, the Lutherans stopped viewing confirmation as a sacrament. Other Protestants who do not see confirmation as a sacrament sometimes use the term "confirmation" to describe the acceptance of baptized youth into the full membership of the church, including the privilege to receive the Holy Communion.

C H E C K F O R U N D E R S T A N D I N G



- 1 Why do some Christians believe that baptism does not remit sins?
- 2 What are the differences between affusion, aspersion and immersion? Why is immersion the most biblical?
- 3 Why do some churches baptize in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit? How come our church does not do so?
- 4 Why do some churches have a minimum age requirement?
- 5 What are some arguments against paedobaptism? Why then should infants be baptized?

L I F E A P P L I C A T I O N



Doctrine Comparison

Divide students into teams and ask each team to complete the two comparison charts. Have each team illustrate a section of the comparison chart on the poster board. Ask a volunteer from each team to explain their answers and drawings.

CHART # 1	Basic Belief on Baptism
Lutherans	
Reformed	
Baptist	
Presbyterian	
Seventh Day Adventists	
True Jesus Church	

CHART # 2	Baptism Methods			Baptist Qualification	Baptism Qualification	Infant Baptism
	Location	In name of...	How (mode)			
Common Christian Beliefs						
TJC Belief						

Testimony

The following testimony may be used as a classroom example of the efficacy of baptism because it demonstrates that baptism is truly a washing by the blood of Christ. Students may also be able to relate to the testimony because the main character is a high school student.

In June 1991, 14-year old Grace suddenly felt tired and became pale. When her father drove her to the hospital, the doctors found that she had aplastic anemia, a life-threatening disease that suppresses the production of red blood cells in the bone marrow. Although treatment was available, its success rate was 10% to 20%.

Nevertheless, Grace remained in the medical center for treatment. Meanwhile, a bone marrow match test was conducted on family members just in case the treatment failed. However, after six weeks at the medical center, Grace's condition did not improve. Her family consulted the world's leading medical authority in bone marrow transplants, but he could only give a 50% success rate. Since Grace had always been very healthy, her family thought that perhaps God was trying to use her illness to call them back to Him. There had been no church when Grace's dad arrived in the United States. Therefore, even though he was a church member, the rest of the family was not baptized. But because of Grace's illness, the family prayed to God for His forgiveness and resolved to receive baptism.

Despite the doctors' reservations on Grace's condition, the family decided to attend a spiritual convocation in Elizabeth Church. At the convocation, Grace's family learned that the church had been fasting and praying for them before they arrived. With the intercession of many brothers and sisters, Grace's family received showers of blessings. Grace's mom received the Holy Spirit during the first day of fasting prayer. Grace also received the Holy Spirit the second day. During the baptism, both Grace and her mom saw the vision of the blood of Jesus Christ. After the baptism, the paleness in Grace's face and the coldness in her hands disappeared. The next morning, Grace returned home for her weekly blood transfusions. Miraculously, her blood count had increased! God had restored her bone marrow production of red blood cells. Having seen God's power, Grace stopped taking the prescribed medicine. Instead, her family prayed harder, knowing that many brothers and sisters in Christ were doing the same. The family continued their morning fasting prayer for three months. Thank God, Grace's blood count increased until she completely recovered.

By the love of God, Grace was able to lead a healthy, active life after baptism. She was able to participate in numerous spiritual convocations and seminars, visit many churches abroad, and attend college in Washington, D.C. Grace's testimony not only demonstrates the almighty power of the Lord, but also shows us the importance of baptizing into the name of Jesus Christ and becoming God's children. May all the glory be to God in heaven. Amen.

REFLECTION & PRAYER



"Then those who gladly received his word were baptized; and that day about three thousand souls were added to them" (Acts 2:41). On that joyous day in Acts, three thousand were baptized. But do we ever stop to think about how many of the three thousand were saved at the end? Baptism is only the beginning of our walk of faith. It marks the start of a lifelong journey of renewal and cleansing. May the Lord protect and guide us as we continue to grow in spirit and walk toward our heavenly home.

Lesson 5

The Doctrine of Baptism (2)

Listed Scriptures

Mk 16:14-20 ; Acts 22:1-21 ; Rom 6:1-14 ; Gal 3:26-29 ; Col 2:11-13 ; 1 Pet 3:20-21

Lesson Aim

- 1) To review our church's doctrine of baptism and its implications
- 2) To confirm why our doctrine of baptism is based on the Bible

Memory Verse

"Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us, though the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit." (Tit 3:5)

Bible Reading For This Week (for students and teachers)

Acts 21-26

Note to teachers: This quarter's lessons do not contain the Bible Background section since they pertain more to the history of our church.

WARM UP



As second or third generation True Jesus Church members, many of our students may not remember their own baptisms as infants. Therefore, it may be difficult for them to understand baptism on a personal level. In order for the students to get a first-hand account of baptism, ask them to recount the last baptism they attended. What were some of the things they observed? How did they feel? Why can baptism be a life-changing event?