

# **A REPLY TO TEACHING ON INFANT BAPTISM**

By Dessain Terry

## **INTRODUCTION**

Billions of people every year are victimized by religion. Millions of these victims are infants who are abused by religionists. These religionists practice this deceit to control families for power and/or money. Some sixty percent of so-called Christian religions practice infant baptism.

This reply is for those who wonder about the Biblical teaching on infant baptism. It is for those who are asking:

Does infant baptism save a person?

When a person later becomes a believer, does he have to be baptized again?

Is sprinkling or pouring just as pleasing to God as immersion?

Am I a member of a church I did not choose because of my infant baptism?

This reply is for those who are sincere in their practice of infant baptism. They may have inherited the practice by tradition. They may have accepted the teachings justifying it. Hopefully, they will reject the traditions of men. Hopefully, they will turn to obey the living God.

This reply is for all who really want to know what the Bible says about infant baptism.

## **REPLY ONE**

The Bible never teaches or commands infant baptism. It is amazing men will not leave it at that. Some admit the Bible does not teach or command infant baptism. Then, these attempt to justify it anyway.

One writer, who believes infants should be baptized, said the Bible makes no clear statement for or against infant baptism (J.O.Y. Mante in *Why Infant Baptism?*). It is true there is no commandment saying, "Thou shalt (or shall not) baptize infants."

However, the same writer contends the baptism in the Red Sea and under the cloud of the Israelites must have included the children (I Corinthians 10:1-2). If he can clearly conclude that from one verse, surely he can conclude that every person mentioned in the New Testament who was baptized was a believer. This one scripture, found in I Corinthians 10, has been misinterpreted to endorse infant baptism.

Not until the inspired apostle, Paul, wrote I Corinthians 10:1-2 did any Israelite understand that Israel passing through the Red Sea had anything at all to do with baptism. Neither Jew nor Greek thought Paul was discussing the baptism of individual men, women, or children.

They understood him to be speaking metaphorically or symbolically. The reason they knew this was the Holy Spirit's use of the word fathers. *"Moreover, brethren, I would not that ye should be ignorant, how that all our fathers were under the cloud, and all passed through the sea; and were all baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea"* (I Corinthians 10:1-2).

The word *fathers* in the Jewish and Greek mind in this case did not mean one's ancestors. It meant the Law of Moses, native customs and practices, tradition, national characteristics, the soil of Palestine, the language, or the constitution. As a summation of the idea, it meant the nation. It was a common word in Attic (Greek) prose to express inherited customs, habits, and institutions (*Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, Friedrich, editor, Volume V, page 1015, paragraph 3).

The Holy Spirit through Paul is arguing from the authority of Biblical history. The argument is not for baptism at all. It is to show that Israel came out of Egypt and across the Red Sea, but not all of Israel remained faithful (see verse 5 and the verses following). In these passages Christians are warned they could return to sin and lose their salvation. Just as all who were saved from Egypt could be lost, so all who are saved from sin can be lost. The '*fathers*' that are mentioned in these verses are a symbol of that nation. It is not a term describing individuals and certainly not infants being baptized.

Those who justify infant baptism on this basis make an even more basic error. They assume that what was commanded in the days of Moses is commanded for us today. Such is not the case. Christ brought all of that to an end.

*"For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth"* (Romans 10:4).

*"Wherefore remember, that ye being in time past Gentiles in the flesh, who are called Uncircumcision by that which is called the Circumcision in the flesh made by hands, that at that time ye 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: but now in Christ Jesus ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ. For he is our peace, who hath made both one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition between us; having abolished in his flesh the enmity, even the law of commandments contained in ordinances; for to make in himself of twain one new man so making peace"* (Ephesians 2:11-15).

Furthermore, such commandments and ordinances were for the Jews only until Christ came. Moses was speaking to the new Israelite nation just out of Egypt when he said:

*"For what **nation** is there so great, who hath God so nigh unto **them**, as the Lord **our** God is in all things that we call upon him for? And what nation is there so great, that hath statutes and judgments so righteous as all **this** law, which I set before **you** this day"* (Deuteronomy 4:7-8)?

*"For **thou** art a holy people unto the Lord thy God: the Lord **thy** God hath chosen **thee** to be a **special people** unto himself, above **all people** that are upon the face of the earth. The Lord did not set his love upon **you**, nor choose you because **ye** were more in number than **any people**; for ye were the fewest of **all people**: but because the Lord loved **you**, and*

*because he would keep the oath which he had sworn unto **your** fathers, hath the Lord brought **you** out with a mighty hand, and redeemed **you** out of the house of bondmen, from the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt. Know therefore that the Lord **thy** God, he is God, the faithful God, which keepeth covenant and mercy with them that love him and keep his commandments to a thousand generations; and repayeth them that hate him to their face, to destroy them: he will not be slack to him that hateth him, he will repay him to his face" (Deuteronomy 7:6-10).*

The words in bold print in the two paragraphs above are to emphasize the point of how exclusive the Law of Moses was. The Law of Moses was for the Jews only and never for the Gentiles.

Also, a close look at I Corinthians 10:1-2 reveals those people baptized in the Red Sea were baptized "unto Moses." They were not baptized "into Christ." Salvation today is not in Moses but in Christ.

*"Be it known unto you all, and unto all the people of Israel, that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom ye crucified, whom God raised from the dead, even by him doth this man stand before you whole. This is the stone which was set at naught of you builders, which is become the head of the corner. Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved" (Acts 4:10-12).*

We live after Jesus' death, not prior to, as the Jewish nation in the Old Testament lived. When Jesus died he left a 'will' or a 'new covenant'. *"By so much was Jesus made a surety of a better testament."* Hebrews 7:22 *"And for this cause he is the mediator of the new testament, that by means of death, for the redemption of the transgressions that were under the first testament, they which are called might receive the promise of eternal inheritance. For where a testament is, there must also of necessity be the death of the testator. For a testament is of force after men are dead: otherwise it is of no strength at all while the testator liveth."* Hebrews 9:15-17 Today we have a hope and a promise that they of the Old Testament could not imagine. The forgiveness of sins to the faithful, *"This is the covenant that I will make with them after those day, saith the Lord, I will put my laws into their hearts, and in their minds will I write them; And their sins and iniquities will I remember no more."* Hebrews 10: 16-17. All this has been said to say this; we do not live under the Old Law today. No supposed commandments are binding on us today from the Old Testament.

Therefore, the only scripture, which supposedly mentions infant baptism, I Corinthians 10:1-2 really does not.

## REPLY TWO

The infants of Christians have never been eligible for baptism. It has been said by those who teach infant baptism, that since there is no clear Bible statement that children of Christians are allowed to grow up and become believers before they were baptized, they must have been baptized before they believed. It makes as much sense as saying I do not have money in my pocket, therefore I must have money in my pocket. With this reasoning, you can add anything you want to what the Bible says as long as the Bible does not mention it already. There are warnings against those who would do such things, *"For I testify unto every man*

*that heareth the words of the prophecy of this book, If any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in the is book: And if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the book of life, and out of the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book."* (Revelation 22:18-19).

J.O.Y. Mante in his booklet *Why Baptize Infants* tries to add such teachings to the Bible. He writes:

The requirement to believe and be baptized was only for adult heathens that the early Christians were attempting to evangelize, not for people who were already members of Christian families.

But, the Apostle Peter said just the opposite. He told the Jews on the day of Pentecost what to do to be saved. These were not adult heathens; yet they had to repent and be baptized (Acts 2:38). Then Peter added in the very next verse that if their children and the Gentiles were to be saved they would also have to repent and be baptized: "*For the promise is unto you and your children, and to all that are afar off . . .*" (Acts 2:39).

The New Testament accounts of baptism show that all who were baptized were believers. In Acts 2:41, they gladly received his word and were baptized. In Acts 8:36-37, a man desires baptism and the preacher tells him he may be baptized "*If thou believest....*"

In Acts 10:34-35 Peter states, "...*God is no respecter of persons: But in every nation, he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with him.*" Obviously, these people would be believers. "*He that believes and is baptized shall be saved,*" Jesus said in Mark 16:16.

So, the baptism of the infants of Christians is not mentioned in the Bible. It is because the baptism of believers excludes infants not yet able to believe.

### REPLY THREE

To say that infant baptism is implied in the scriptures is to misinterpret the scriptures.

There are eleven instances of baptism mentioned in the New Testament. Three are certainly whole households, and most probably, five in which the whole household was baptized.

Some argue there had to be infants in some of them of the households. Others argue, that possibly in the case of Cornelius (Acts 10), it was improbable that infants were present to hear Peter speak. The infants, if any, were elsewhere, and therefore, not affected by the event.

Both arguments are based on guesswork and have no solid foundation in scripture.

What is found in scripture are the requirements for baptism. Jesus says in Mark 16:16 that the candidate must be a believer. The Lord also says in Matthew 28:19-20 that those to be baptized had to have had the word preached to them. In other words, they had to hear, understand, and believe before they were baptized.

In Peter's Holy Spirit-directed sermon on Pentecost (Acts 2), Peter says in verse 38, that candidates for baptism need to repent and be baptized for the remission of their sins. So, the candidates for baptism must have been capable of sin, must have sinned, and must have been capable of repentance (turning away) from sin. They also must have been capable of submitting to baptism, as an act of personal will. It says, "be baptized": "be" indicating willingness; "baptized" meaning immersion done to someone by someone else indicating personal submission. Actually the Greek can be translated "allow yourself to willingly submit to someone immersing you." All of these acts are activities, which an infant cannot do. Therefore, infants may have been present when the Gospel was preached, but they were incapable of receiving and obeying the Gospel requirements. Only older children with capability would have willingly submitted themselves to baptism. There is **no possibility** whatsoever of infant baptism having occurred in any New Testament example of whole households coming to the Lord!

## REPLY FOUR

Infant baptism is not the New Testament equivalent of circumcision. Circumcision of the heart is the equivalent.

Those who argue for infant baptism contend it brings a child of a believing husband and wife into covenant relationship with God. They argue it is like circumcision, which brought Jewish children into the Abrahamic covenant to enjoy the benefits of being a part of God's people. Some argue this is necessary to save the infant's soul from hell should he die before adulthood. Others say infant baptism is necessary because the child is already holy and should be baptized because he is holy.

The holiness or sinfulness of infants will be dealt with in Reply 5 for now let us consider circumcision. Circumcision was a requirement of God to Abraham. Later, God required the Israelites use circumcision as a sign of their agreement to his covenant. Infant males were circumcised to bring them into a covenant relationship with God. Non-Jewish adult males converted to the Law of Moses were also circumcised. This was done to also bring them into the covenant relationship with God.

First of all, circumcision was commanded under a set of God's laws that are no longer required of men. See Reply 1.

Secondly, the Law of Moses was a "*shadow of the good things to come, and not the very image of those things . . .*" (Hebrews 10:1).

So, the reality of New Testament circumcision must be explained in New Testament terms and not Old Testament practice. Indeed, Paul states in Romans 2:28-29: "*For he is not a Jew, which is one outwardly; neither is that circumcision which is outward in the flesh: But he is a Jew, which is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter; whose praise is not of men, but of God.*"

Paul further writes in I Corinthians 7:17-19: "*But as God has distributed to every man, as the Lord hath called every one, so let him walk. And so ordain I in all the churches. Is any man called being circumcised? Let him not become uncircumcised. Is any called in*

*uncircumcision? Let him not be circumcised. Circumcision is nothing, and uncircumcision is nothing, but keeping the commandments of God."*

Paul also said in Galatians 5:6: *"For in Jesus Christ neither circumcision availeth anything, nor uncircumcision; but faith which worketh by love."*

Since circumcision in the Christian system is of the heart (mind, emotions, and will of man) and in the spirit, then this covenanting is the act of a free rational adult not a child.

Infant baptism is not the New Testament equivalent of circumcision. The circumcision of the heart is the New Testament equivalent.

## REPLY FIVE

*"But Jesus said, Suffer the little children, and forbid them not to come unto me: for to such belongeth the kingdom of heaven. Matthew 19:14." "...God made man upright; but they have sought out many inventions. Ecclesiastes 7:29"* According to these verses, all people have been and will be born sinless.

One of the most hideous doctrines of infant baptism condemns children to hell. It says that should a child die without having been baptized he will suffer eternal punishment with the devil and his angels.

The truth is those who teach such things are the ones in danger of hell.

There is no Biblical basis for this doctrine of eternal depravity— being born a sinner, condemned from birth. In fact, the Bible clearly teaches the opposite doctrine.

But some will say, "Didn't David write that he was born in sin?" Well, let us consider that passage: *"Behold, I was shapen in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me"* (Psalm 51:5).

David is certainly bemoaning the fact that as an adult he was a sinner. He says one reason he committed sin was the sinful influence into which he was born.

Notice, he does not say he was born a sinner. He says, he was *"shapen"* (formed) in iniquity. He does not say he was conceived a sinner, but was conceived during the time his mother was in sin, not him. In other words, the people who were around him after he was born tempted, influenced, and persuaded him to sin.

David's situation was like Adam and Eve's. They were created sinless. It was through the persuasion of the devil they chose to sin. So, it is with every individual. One is born innocent into the world, but it is a world made up of sinners. It is a world of sinners persuading others to sin with them.

The idea that a person is born a sinner and inherits the sins of generations before him is foreign to scripture. Note what Ezekiel says in Ezekiel 18:19-20: *"Yet say ye, Why? doth not the son bear the iniquity of the father? When the son hath done that which is lawful and right,*

*and hath kept all my statutes, and hath done them, he shall surely live. The soul that sinneth, it shall die. The son shall not bear the iniquity of the father, neither shall the father bear the iniquity of the son: the righteousness of the righteous shall be upon him, and the wickedness of the wicked shall be upon him."*

The Bible teaches all people are born sinless. Well then, should infants be baptized because they are holy? In reply, I ask, why?

Baptism is not administered because someone is holy. It is administered because of sin. Baptism is for the remission of sins (Acts 2:38). Since infants do not have sins, they do not need baptism.

## REPLY SIX

The belief that the early church fathers taught infant baptism is a misinterpretation of statements, which actually show their disapproval of infant baptism.

Those who would baptize infants admit the "early church fathers," those who wrote in the second century never mentioned infant baptism. So the false teachers argue, "Since the teaching of infant baptism is not found in the teachings of the early church fathers, they must have taught it." This is the same illogic they use to prove that the Bible taught infant baptism. This is self-deception and irrational thinking! (See Reply 2.)

The second century writers, Justin Martyr and Irenaeus, also the works *The Epistle of Barnabas*, *The Shepherd of Hermas*, *The Epistle of Polycarp to the Philippians*, and the epistles of Ignatius and of Clement of Rome do not mention infant baptism.

Those who teach infant baptism argue: since it was not mentioned by these writers, infant baptism must have been so widely accepted there was no need for them to mention it.

Someone else can argue just as well: since these writers did not mention infant baptism then it must not have been practiced or even been considered for practice by the second century Christians. Neither argument is very logical because it assumes something not in evidence. This reasoning could be applied this way: "Since faith in Jesus Christ was so widely accepted among the Christians, there was no need for these writers to ever mention it. So, they never did." The fact is that faith in Jesus Christ was widely accepted among the Christians. These second century writers wrote about it. If infant baptism had been widely accepted among the second century Christians, they in all probability would have written about it as well. The fact is —they did not!

We do not know why they did not mention it. It could be they did not believe in it, practice it, or even know about it.

However, some scholars (so called) argue that Irenaeus mentions infant baptism in one of his remarks. It reads, concerning Jesus, "For he came to save all by himself; all I say, who through

him are born again unto God-infants, and little children, and boys and old men." They argue that Irenaeus' phrase "born again" implies baptism. They fail to recognize Irenaeus' use of hyperbole (exaggeration in the service of truth). He uses it to say that through Jesus everyone can be saved. In the book of Romans we read of a new life made by baptism. Notice these words, "Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. Romans 6:5" So the writings of Irenaeus when put in context agree with the bible.

The earliest explicit mention of infant baptism is found in Tertullian's *De Baptismo* written in A.D. 202. He says, "Therefore, according to every one's conditions and disposition, and also their age, the delaying of baptism is more profitable, especially in the case of little children. For what need is there that the godfathers should be brought into danger? Because they may either fail of their promises by death, or a child may deceive them proving of a wicked disposition. Our Lord says indeed, '*Do not forbid them to come to me,*' therefore let them come when they understand, when they are instructed whither they are to come. Let them become Christians when they are able to know Christ. Why should their innocent age make haste to the forgiveness of sin?" Tertullian is clearly opposed to infant baptism.

Yet, what do the teachers of infant baptism say about this? "It is to be noted that he does not oppose the baptism of infants on the ground of its being an innovation [something new, a change from accepted practice], and not of apostolic origin, but on the ground of its not being profitable or expedient. If he could have spoken of it as an innovation, it is quite certain from the nature of the case, and from his frequent use of this argument in other matters, that he would have done so. If it was a frequent practice at that time, it must have been regarded as legitimately involved in apostolic teaching and tradition" (*Cyclopedia of Biblical, Theological, and Ecclesiastical Literature* by John McClintock and James Strong, Baker Book House).

Notice again the argument of "since Tertullian did not say it, he must have said it." (See Reply 2.)

It could be that the people to whom he was writing had clearly rejected the authority of the Apostles by their unbiblical practice. So, Tertullian tries to persuade them. He uses an argument they might accept: that there is no benefit to the children to baptize them. But instead of arguing from what Tertullian did or did not say, let us look at what he did say.

1. Tertullian said people should be baptized only if their "condition, disposition, and age" require it.
2. Godfathers may fail to teach the children what to do to be saved.
3. The older child may decide of his own free will not to be a Christian.
4. Children should become Christians when they understand and when they are instructed why they should become Christians.
5. Children should become Christians when they are able to know Christ.
6. Children are innocent.



## 7. Baptism is for the forgiveness of sins which children do not have.

Any one of Tertullian's reasons is enough to show infant baptism is wrong. Yet, he states several reasons. Tertullian clearly opposed infant baptisms on the basis of the Apostles' teaching. He clearly showed that infant baptism was new and innovative. More importantly, he taught it was wrong.

Infant baptism is so completely wrong. It is foreign to the Bible. It was unknown by the earliest Christians. Its advocates contradicted each other and themselves. To try to justify such nonsense by saying that early church fathers believed in it is false as has been shown they did not believe in it.

## REPLY SEVEN

Infant baptism in the Roman and Protestant churches is a practice contradictory to other practice. *The Cyclopedia of Biblical, Theological, and Ecclesiastical Literature* by McClintock and Strong, Volume VII, page 576 says, "Notwithstanding the apostle's direction, 'Let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup' (I Corinthians 11:28) which so clearly points to a mature age when man is capable of self-examination as a requisite to those who approach the Lord's table, we find infants admitted to holy communion as early as the third century...."

"This practice of infant communion was undoubtedly connected with infant baptism, and as a reason for it, Augustine lays down the principle that, unless we partake of the Supper of the Lord, to which no one can be regularly admitted who is not baptized, we can have no life in us (John 6:53); and this, he maintains, applies as well to children as to men . . . The same reasons are given by his contemporary, Innocent I, bishop of Rome (416). . .

This was in the fifth century. "Still in the twelfth century, we find Radulphus Ardens saying . . . that it is prescribed that children should receive communion, at least with the cup, soon after being baptized, so that 'they might not be in danger of dying without that necessary sacrament....'" Then in the sixteenth century, "The Council of Trent" (of the Roman Catholic Church) "condemns the principle of the necessity of infant communion, saying that the practice arose in the circumstances of the early ages, and that the fathers had sufficient grounds for introducing it in their days, without its being made a necessity of salvation; wherefore, the usage could lawfully be altered and dropped...."

"In the Greek church" (which still upholds infant communion) "we find passages of some theologians, which in their exposition of the doctrine of baptism would seem to imply that they rejected this necessity of infant communion based on John 6:53.

"The Roman Church and all Protestant churches now agree in rejecting infant communion...."

All of the above shows the inconsistency of churches over the centuries. On one hand, they say all people must partake of the communion upon the same basis all people must undergo baptism. On the other hand, they make an exception. Infants who are baptized do not have

to partake of the communion. The point is: the same reasons for allowing infants not to partake of the communion will allow infants not to be baptized.

If infants need not partake of the communion like adult believers, they need not be baptized like adult believers. If baptized infants need not partake of the communion, baptized adults need not partake of the communion.

The fact is that both infant baptism and infant communion are unnecessary for the same reason. The Bible does not authorize either one.

## FINAL REPLY

What does the Bible teach about infants, adults, and baptism?

1. Ezekiel 18:19-20 clearly teaches all children are born sinless and do not inherit anyone's sin. It is the soul who actually sins who shall die. Jesus confirms this innocence when he called for the little children to come to him and said about them, "Of such is the kingdom of heaven" (Matthew 19:14).
2. It has **always been adults** who are capable of faith, repentance, and voluntary submission to baptism (Mark 16:15-16 and Acts 2:38).
3. Baptism as taught by the Bible has always been immersion not the sprinkling or pouring which is practiced in most infant baptisms. The word baptism is a word made up by the English translators of the Bible who did not want to admit it means immersion. The original Greek word in the Bible is baptizo, which means to immerse, dip, and plunge. However, one does not have to be a Greek scholar to understand this. A close review of Acts 8:38 shows Philip going down into the water with the Ethiopian and there baptizing him. This going down into the water would have been unnecessary if sprinkling or pouring were the practice.

Please understand. Your infants and children are in no danger of condemnation by God. They are innocent of all sin. Only people consciously capable of choosing a life of righteousness or a life of sin need to review their salvation. Do not let anyone use infant baptism as a means of deceiving you into their religious power for their own ungodly motives. Please understand. If you were "baptized" as an infant, you need to be baptized as an adult for the remission of your sins. Your infant baptism does you no good in the eyes of God.

Do this and God will add you to his church. You will not need to be concerned with being a member of any church whose membership is determined by men (Acts 2:47). Understanding these things, I urge you to obey God rather than men.

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