

Baptism – The Promise of Salvation is for ALL

The promise of salvation through baptism is for all. When the church was born, infants were included in baptism as well. Acts 2:38 says: “*Repent, and be baptised every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.*” And what does the very next verse, Acts 2:39, say? “*For the promise is to you and to your children and to all that are far off, every one whom the Lord our God calls to Him.*” The Greek word for children used here is “teknois” which includes children of any age, even infants. They were to be baptised with their parents. That way they would receive the Holy Spirit and the forgiveness of sins. They too would become members of God’s newly-born church!

So, when Paul wrote to the Ephesian church saying, “*Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right.*”² “*Honour your father and mother*” (this is the first commandment with a promise),³ “*that it may go well with you and that you may live long in the land*” (6:1-3), he wrote directly also to the “children” (teknois). Again, the word “teknois” includes also infants. Infants are members of God’s church. And yet only a few verses before in Ephesians 5:25-26, Paul says: “*Christ loved the church and gave Himself for it to make it holy by washing it clean with water by the Word.*” Christ’s baptism is for the church. Infants, then, should be baptised and so cleansed by the “washing of water by the Word.” In the same way, children are identified as members of the Colossian church (Colossians 3:20). And there too, membership in the church is given through baptism (Colossians 2:12, 19).

In Acts 26:22 Paul is brought before King Agrippa for a hearing. Paul describes his conversion on the Damascus road and his work to bring the gospel to the “small and great.” Both “small” and “great” in the Greek refer to age. That Acts 26:22 is a reference to children and infants is shown also by the phrase “mikroi kai megaloi” (small and great) itself. Wherever this phrase is used in Scripture, it refers to each and every one. No one is excluded, whether infant or adult. The usage of “small and great” emphasises all-inclusiveness. Where the phrase is used, all people (infants also) must be seen as in the realm and meaning of the passage.

John says in 1 John 2:12-13: “*I am writing to you, little children (teknia), because your sins are forgiven for His sake I write you, children (paidia), because you know the Father.*” John calls the people in the church “little children” (teknia). But then he addresses the little children per se using the Greek word “paidia.” “Paidia” was the same word used to describe the very small children brought to the arms of Jesus. Since John is writing to members of the church, he must consider children and infants as members too. Yet a man becomes a member of God’s Kingdom in John’s Gospel by being baptised (John 3:5-6). So again, infants and small children must have been baptised members of the church and not excluded as the opponents of infant baptism would have us believe. It is wrong, then, to deny infants their baptism when they are included in the other aspects of the church.

In Revelation 13:6-16 John mentions those who do not have their names in the book of life and uses the words “*both small and great.*” These are the same words Paul used before Agrippa. The words “small” and “great” do not commonly mean size in the Greek but age. And the phrase itself is all-inclusive. Revelation 19:5 refers to those who fear him, both “great and small”: “*And from the throne*

came a voice crying, Praise our God, all you His servants, you who fear Him, small and great.” Infants are among those saved in heaven as well as those lost in hell. Revelation 20:12, 15 tells of the “small and great” before the throne of God: *And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne, and the books were opened. Also another book was opened which is the book of life. And the dead were judged by what was written in the books, by what they had done.... and if any one's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire.*

So if the youngest are to be judged before God with some lost and others saved, then God's kingdom is on the line for even the littlest. And John has already explained how to enter the kingdom: “... *unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God,*” (John 3:5). This is God's means that He has entrusted to men whereby infants, too, may become members of God's family of faith.

Baptism, then, is the first step in an ongoing process of growth in the family of God, that family which includes the very young as well as the aged.

Baptism, as Peter said in Acts 2:38, is full of God's promises for the youngest. In baptism, they receive the full forgiveness of their sins, sins of which they are unconscious. And they receive the gift of the Holy Spirit who preserves them in the Lord Jesus. And God is always faithful in His promises. For this, parents can only rejoice and praise the Lord, a Lord who cares for all, even the tiniest of people!