



## SUMMIT church

### BABY DEDICATION OR INFANT BAPTISM

As a parent and a believer in Christ, it is of the utmost importance for you to make an informed decision about whether to dedicate or baptize your infant. At Summit, we want to support and nurture your child's spiritual development in our community alongside of you, and so believe we should provide summaries of the arguments for both positions. Below you will find a series of excerpts from a longer, more in-depth explanation, which we encourage you to read as you are able.

Whenever there is a disagreement amongst Christians, we must ask the question: How close does a particular issue lie to the center of the Christian faith? Is the gospel at stake?

It is the judgment of the Leaders of Summit Church that the question as to who is eligible to receive the sign of belonging to the covenant community is a matter of Christian liberty, as it does not pertain to the essence of salvation and of the Christian faith itself. Therefore, it is our desire not to bind consciences where Scriptures has left them free: "each should be fully convinced in his own mind" (Romans 14:5).

#### Position 1: For Infant Baptism (Reformed perspective, Wesley)

"...To Paul, the faith of one or more parents has a sanctifying effect on the whole family - a believer's children are in fact called "holy" quite apart from consideration of their own personal faith (1 Corinthians 7:14). The baptism of believers' children would appear to be an appropriate recognition of the special status these children have: they are in the church rather than outside it - within, so to speak, the fold of God's special grace until (and unless) they exclude themselves from the covenant and its community. Baptism neither presumes nor guarantees their personal salvation—infant baptism stresses the position of the child within the covenant community and the hope that the child will ratify by confession of faith what was signified by his or her earlier baptism...

...This does not mean that everyone who is in covenant with God is saved. In fact, certainly many who are in covenant with God are not saved (like the Israelites who died in the wilderness after the exile, and Judas Iscariot who betrayed Jesus). Those who are in covenant with God are in a special relationship with him, whereby he is extra patient and merciful to them. We believe that the Bible teaches that baptism is the New Testament sign of God's covenant with his people, just as circumcision was the sign of his covenant with his people in the Old Testament (Col. 2:11-12)...

...In addition, we examine the baptism of Lydia's household in Acts 16:14-15. There Paul says that Lydia believed, and that her household was baptized. This does not mean that there were necessarily infants in Lydia's household. What is significant is that Luke mentions the baptism of the household without reference to the household's faith. That is, his assumption seems to have been that Lydia's faith was sufficient reason to justify baptizing everyone in her household, whether or not they also believed. Her belief, as head of her household, brought her entire household into covenant with God, and therefore it was appropriate to apply the sign of the covenant to the household. It is on this basis that we believe infants should be baptized...

...By scripture, Wesley points out that there is no mandate forbidding the baptism of children or infants. On the contrary, since God directed circumcision for eight-day-old infants (Gen. 17), and baptism was given "in the room" of circumcision, scripture appears to allow it. Wesley finds additional scriptural support in Jesus Christ's command to his disciples that they not refrain from bringing children and infants to Him (Luke 18:15-16)..."

## Position 2: Believer's Baptism

"...Baptism is accompanied by instruction: "make disciples, ... baptizing them" (Matthew 28:19). Infants are not in a position to receive disciple-making instruction...

According to the NT formula, "repent and be baptized" (Acts 2:38), repentance precedes baptism. Infants are not able to repent. This connection between belief and baptism is reinforced in many other passages, such as Acts 2:41, Acts 8:12, Acts 10:47-48, Acts 16:14-15, Acts 16:32-33, and 1 Cor. 1:16...

...Since baptism is intended to symbolize union with Christ and spiritual regeneration, some parents prefer to wait until their children confess Christ as Lord before applying the sign of regeneration (Romans 10:9; 6:3-6; Titus 3:5). As a recognition that their children are born into a community of faith and as their parental commitment to raise those children to know and embrace that faith at an early age, parents who prefer believer baptism present their infants to the Lord through the act of baby dedication. Baby dedication stresses the role of the parents in raising the child in the tradition of the Christian faith and the instruction that will quickly usher the child into the household of faith...

...Many Christians understand Scripture to teach that only professing believers qualify for Baptism. There is sound reasoning for this position too, and it comes primarily from the following understanding of scripture.

1. Baptism is an act of obedience to the command of Christ, fulfilled by individuals who have submitted themselves to His sovereignty.
2. Baptism symbolizes the spiritual cleansing through divine forgiveness and the newness of life experienced by believers by virtue of their identification with Christ in His death and resurrection.
3. Baptism provides an opportunity for believers to make a formal profession of their faith before the church.

*"Although the old covenant practice of infant circumcision is sometimes given as a rationale for infant Baptism, the biblical definition of the functions of circumcision and Baptism shows that those two institutions fulfilled different purposes in their respective covenants. The equation is never made in the Bible between the circumcision of male infants, in the old covenant, and the Baptism of born-again believers, much less of infants, in the new covenant." (W.C.A.)*

If you understand the scriptures this way-- infant dedication is the ceremony that is most appropriate for your child. While very similar to a baptism in content, it concentrates more on the family's public commitment to pray for and rear the child according to the scriptures teaching and in the community of faith..."

## Summit's Position

Summit believes that liberty of conscience be honored. Whether parents opt for infant baptism or baby dedication, Summit commits itself to help parents raise their children in the instruction and discipline of the Lord.