

WESTMINSTER CONFESSION OF FAITH

SHORTER CATECHISM

LESSON # 46 (Q4LES7) - BAPTISM

1. **Prayer**
2. **Bible reading: Matthew 3:1 - 17**
3. **Review:** In our last lesson, we discussed Christ's sacraments, the sacraments of the New Testament. We learned that the sacraments are not effectual to salvation due to any virtue in them, or in the person that is administering them, but that only by the blessing of Christ, and the working of His Spirit in those, who by faith, receive them. A sacrament is a two sided oath, and Christ's sacraments are God's pledge of his covenant of grace to those who believe, and the believers pledge to be the Lord's, and to be true and faithful to Him. Christ's sacraments consist of two parts. First, outward signs, and second, the inward and spiritual grace thereby signified, whereby they are represented, sealed and applied to believers. The sacraments of the New Testament are Baptism, and the Lord's Supper.
4. **Introduction:** In this lesson, we will discuss SC questions 94 and 95. These two questions deal with the New Testament sacrament of baptism. Question 94 tells us what baptism is. Question 95 deals with to whom baptism is to be administered.
5. **Questions & Answers:**

Question 94: What is baptism?

Answer: Baptism is a sacrament, wherein the washing with water in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, doth signify and seal our ingrafting into Christ, and partaking of the benefits of the covenant of grace, and our engagement to be the Lord's.

Question 92: To whom is baptism to be administered?

Answer: Baptism is not to be administered to any that are out of the visible church, till they profess their faith in Jesus Christ, and obedience to him; but the infants of such as are members of the visible church are to be baptized.

6. **The SC, LC, and WCF**

- a. The WCF has an entire chapter, chapter 28, devoted to baptism, and we will use it in our discussion. The SC covers baptism in two questions, q 94 and q95. The LC covers the subject in three questions, q 165, 166, & 167. LC questions 165 and 166 are basically the same as SC q 94 & 95, and the LC answers, while expanded, are the essentially the same. The LC adds questions 167, which is a very interesting question, requires some thought, and which we will look at later.

7. Where are we?

- a. Before we begin our discussion of the sacrament of baptism, let's take a quick look at where we are and how we got here.
- b. We started down this road several weeks back by asking, in SC q 85, what God requires of us that we may escape His wrath and curse, due to us for sin. To escape his wrath and curse requires?????:
 - Faith in Jesus Christ
 - Repentance unto life
 - The diligent use of all the outward means whereby Christ communicates to us the benefits of redemption
- c. The outward means whereby Christ communicates to us the benefits of redemption are his ordinances. And His ordinances are?????:
 - The Word
 - The Sacraments
 - Prayer
- c. And Christ's sacraments are?????:
 - Baptism (Where we are today.)
 - The Lords Supper

8. What is Baptism?

- a. To understand baptism, we maybe, should take a look at what the word means. Would anyone like to take a crack at it?
- b. My New Webster's 20th Century Dictionary says of baptism:
 - "Any experience or ordeal that initiates, test, or purifies".
 - "A baptizing or being baptized; specifically, the ceremony or sacrament of admitting a person into Christianity or a specific Christian church by dipping

him in water or sprinkling water on him, as a symbol of washing away sin”.....Not to bad, depending on how you read it.

- c. It is worth noting that, Christianity wise, baptism means different things to different denominations.
- d. The WCF, c28p1 says: *“Baptism is a sacrament of the New Testament, ordained by Jesus Christ, not only for the solemn admission of the party baptized into the visible Church; but also, to be unto him a sign and seal of the covenant of grace, of his ingrafting into Christ, of regeneration, of remission of sins, and of his giving up unto God through Jesus Christ, to walk in newness of life.”*
- e. First, baptism is a sacrament. And what is a sacrament? SC q92 tells us that a sacrament is a holy ordinance instituted by Christ, wherein, by sensible signs, Christ, and the benefits of the new covenant are represented, sealed and applied to believers.
- f. How is this sacrament represented, or signified? What is the “sensible sign”?

- The representation is the washing with water. (**John 1:33** *“And I knew him not: but he that sent me to baptize with water, the same said unto me, Upon whom thou shalt see the Spirit descending, and remaining on him, the same is he which baptizeth with the Holy Ghost.”*)

- WCF, c28p2 says: *“The outward element to be used in this sacrament is water, wherewith the party is to be baptized, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, by a minister of the gospel, lawfully called thereunto.”*

- What does the washing with water signify?

The remission of sin by Christ’s own blood. (**Rev 1:5** *“And from Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness, and the first begotten of the dead, and the prince of the kings of the earth. Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood.”*)

- g. Baptism, being a sacrament, what is “sealed and applied”?

“our ingrafting into Christ, and partaking of the benefits of the covenant of grace.”

- h. The LC q165 says in part: *“to be a sign and seal of ingrafting into himself, of remission of sins by his blood, and regeneration by his Spirit; of adoption, and resurrection unto everlasting life; and whereby the parties baptized are solemnly admitted into the visible church, and enter into an open and professed engagement to be wholly and only the Lord’s.”*

- i. So baptism is the outward sign, the public representation, by the washing with water, and the seal of acceptance of our acceptance of Christ to be our savior, of our membership in Christ's visible church, and of God's application of the covenant of grace upon us.

9. Whom is to be baptized?

- a. Both the LC and SC approach this from a negative direction, stating who may not be baptized. The LC q166 says, in part: *"Baptism is not to be administered to any that are out of the visible church, and so strangers from the covenant of promise, till they profess their faith in Christ, and obedience to him,"* (Acts 8:36 - 37 ⁽³⁶⁾*And as they went their way, they came unto a certain water: and the eunuch said, See, here is water; what doth hinder me to be baptized? (37) And Philip said, If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest. And he answered and said, I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God."*)
- b. By reverse logic, we can presume that, if non-believers are not to be baptized, then only believers are to be baptized. The WCF addresses this matter indirectly, as we shall see in a moment.
- c. Are children to be baptized?

Both the LC and the SC state that the children **of believers** are to be baptized.

- d. The WCF, c28p4 says in part: *"Not only those that do actually profess faith in and obedience unto Christ, but also the infants of one or both believing parents, are to be baptized."* This points out that those who have faith are to be baptized, as well as their children. (Mark 10: 13 – 16 ⁽¹³⁾*And they brought young children to him, that he should touch them: and his disciples rebuked those that brought them. (14) But when Jesus saw it, he was much displeased, and said unto them, Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not: for of such is the kingdom of God. (15) Verily I say unto you, Whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child, he shall not enter therein. (16) And he took them up in his arms, put his hands upon them, and blessed them."*)
- e. Also, both the WCF and the LC make it clear that infants of whom only one parent is a believer, are to be baptized. (1 Cor 7:14 *"For the unbelieving husband is sanctified by the wife, and the unbelieving wife is sanctified by the husband: else were your children unclean; but now are they holy."*)
- f. Children are a part of God's covenant, and it's promise. (Acts 2:39 *"The promise is to you and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call."*)

- g. If you wish to follow the subject of child baptism further, TV has extensive write-up on it.

10. When and where of baptism.

- a. Is baptism necessary for salvation? **(Acts 10: 2, 4, 22, 31, 45, 47 This is the story of Cornelius, the centurion, who found favor in God's eyes before he was baptized. {see 45 & 47}).**
- b. Are all who are baptized saved? **(Acts 8:13, 17 – 21 “⁽¹⁷⁾Then they laid their hands on them, and they received the Holy Ghost: ⁽¹⁸⁾And when Simon saw that through laying on of the apostles' hands the Holy Ghost was given, he offered them money, ⁽¹⁹⁾Saying, Give me also this power, that on whomsoever I lay hands, he may receive the Holy Ghost. ⁽²⁰⁾But Peter said unto him, Thy money perish with thee, because thou hast thought that the gift of God may be purchased with money. ⁽²¹⁾Thou hast neither part nor lot in this matter: for thy heart is not right in the sight of God.”)**
- c. The WCF, c28p5 says: **“Although it be a great sin to contemn or neglect this ordinance, yet *grace and salvation are not so inseparably annexed unto it, as that no person can be regenerated or saved without it; or, that all that are baptized are undoubtedly regenerated.*”**
- c. When are those believers who are baptized, saved?

Baptism is the outward sign, the public representation, by the washing with water, of acceptance of our acceptance of Christ to be our savior, of our membership in Christ's visible church, and of God's application of the covenant of grace upon us. Grace and salvation are applied to believers by the Holy Spirit the moment they believe, the moment they are justified.

The WCF, c28p6 says: *“The efficacy of baptism is not tied to that moment of time wherein it is administered; yet notwithstanding, by the right use of this ordinance, the grace promised is not only offered, but really exhibited and conferred, by the Holy Ghost, to such (whether of age or infants) as that grace belongeth unto, according to the counsel of God's own will, in His appointed time.”*

11. Improvement of baptism

- a. LC q167 asks a question which is not addressed elsewhere, in the WCF or SC. It is an interesting question. LC q 167 asks: *“How is baptism “to be improved?”*
- b. It answers first by stating that improvement of baptism is a: *“needful but much neglected duty of improving our baptism, is to be performed by us all our life long, especially in the time of temptation, and when we are present at the*

administration of it to others:...”. It then lists a number of ways by which we must improve our baptism. These include:

- By serious and thankful consideration of the nature of it, and of the ends for which Christ instituted it
 - For the privileges and benefits conferred and sealed thereby, and our solemn vow made therein.
 - By being humbled for our sinful defilement, our falling short of, and walking contrary to, the grace of baptism, and our engagements
 - By growing up to assurance of pardon of sin, and of all other blessings sealed to us in that sacrament.
 - By drawing strength from the death and resurrection of Christ, into whom we are baptized.
 - for the mortifying of sin, and quickening of grace
 - by endeavoring to live by faith, to have our conversation in holiness and righteousness, as those that have therein given up their names to Christ;
 - to walk in brotherly love, as being baptized by the same Spirit into one body.
- c. Improvement in baptism appears to be a serious application of our faith, which will result in our sanctification (growth in Christ)

12. Summary

- a. Baptism is the first of Christ’s sacraments. It is an outward expression or demonstration of our faith in Christ. By washing with water in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, we signify and seal our ingrafting into Christ, our partaking of the benefits of the covenant of grace, and our engagement to be the Lord’s. Only members of the visible church, and their children are to be baptized. Those wishing to be baptized must profess their faith in Christ, and obedience to Him.