

1 Dialogue between a Catholic (CATH) and Sectarian (SECT) on Infant Baptism

2 Conner and Brandon have been working together in a manufacturing warehouse for over two years.  
3 Sometimes they have lunch with a few others and discuss various topics. Since they all come from  
4 different backgrounds, they often discuss subjects where they differ but never in a confrontational way.  
5 Today, Brandon has told the group that his young son Blake is going to be baptized on Sunday. He invites  
6 the others and states there will be a little get together at his house afterwards. Brandon is Catholic and  
7 Conner is a self-proclaimed born-again Christian who attends church regularly and appears to live a  
8 good Christian life.

9  
10 **Conner:** So, Brandon, got a question for you. Why do Catholics baptize their babies? That's just pointless  
11 since babies don't know what is even going on, they can't repent as it says in Acts 2:38 and Mark 6:16.

12 **Brandon:** Well, Conner, first let me ask you a question. Where in the Bible does it *specifically* prohibit  
13 the baptism of babies?

14 **Conner:** Well, really I guess it never says *that* ...BUT...

15 **Brandon:** But, from what you have told us, my understanding is that you only follow what is plainly  
16 taught in the pages of Scripture. Right?

17 **Conner:** That belief is just a conclusion that follows from *ideas* that are clearly in Scripture. It's still a  
18 *biblical doctrine*.

19 **Brandon:** Conner, that is really a BIG difference. What is actually *biblical* or *clearly stated in the Bible* and  
20 what is a conclusion we draw from reading the Bible. Now we are both in the same boat. Since the Bible  
21 does not *explicitly* teach about the Baptism of infants, then we must make *our own decisions*. Catholics  
22 believe there are many strong indications that infant Baptism is correct.

23 **Conner:** And where is that? I have *never* heard or read any such thing in my 17 yrs. of being saved.

24 **Brandon:** Well, I can actually give you three very convincing reasons why we feel that way. First, I can  
25 give you a list from the Bible with chapters and verses but the most prevalent is from Acts 16, where  
26 Lydia from Thyatira near the Roman city of Philippi, was the very first convert to Christianity in Europe .  
27 She and all her household were baptized upon hearing St Paul. Now granted we do not know if any were  
28 infants or young children, but it is understood that all of them were baptized. I guess it's like you said  
29 earlier, it is not clearly *written* but the understanding is there.

30 **Conner:** That still does not justify baptizing babies

31 **Brandon:** Ok, the second reason is that Paul made a connection between Baptism and circumcision, the  
32 OT mark of the covenant between God and Abraham. A Hebrew male was circumcised 8 days after  
33 birth. Infants were as much a part of the covenant as the adults were. So, for us just as for the early  
34 Church, Baptism is the covenant seal that signifies the cleansing from sin, just like circumcision did.  
35 Infants are wholly saved by God's grace and third, we believe that the Holy Spirit descends upon that  
36 child and provides special graces and gifts to aid the child in his Christian development.

37 **Conner:** That is not possible. John 3:5 says, *You have to repent and be born again in order to receive*  
38 *salvation*.

39 **Brandon:** It doesn't exactly say that. It says that one "*must be born of water and the Spirit.*" Catholics  
40 and along with church fathers such as St Augustine and even many protestants (Lutherans, Anglicans)  
41 interpret this as a reference to Baptism, and a proof of the necessity of infant Baptism.

42 **Conner:** That does not make sense. *Water* here refers to the amniotic sac what a baby is born. Babies  
43 cannot be born again. Jesus is contracting natural with spiritual birth.

44 **Brandon:** Are you saying then that a baby cannot be saved and will go to Hell if he dies before the *age of*  
45 *reason*?

46 **Conner:** No, no. I would never say that. God is too merciful to let that happen to an innocent little baby.

47 **Brandon:** But you believe in Original Sin that is inherited by all the people from the Fall of Adam and  
48 Eve, right?

49 **Conner:** Well, yes. I do believe that. So what are trying to say?

50 **Brandon:** Once you say a baby can be saved, then clearly there is a justification for baptizing infants,  
51 since there are factors other than their own consent that enters into the question of their salvation. So  
52 you have arrived at a more **communal, covenantal view** of salvation as opposed to the **individual view**.  
53 The reality of Original Sin makes Baptism desirable as soon as possible, since it removes the punishment  
54 and guild due to sin and infuses sanctifying grace. This is why most Protestants through history,  
55 including Lutherans, Anglicans, Methodis, Reformed and Presbyterians, have baptized infants.

56 **Conner:** Now wait a minute...surely you don't believe that Baptsim actually *does* anything, do you? It is  
57 *only* a symbol.

58 **Brandon:** People always seem to deny that matter can be a conveyor of grace and too often looks down  
59 on the idea of sacraments, which are physical, visible means whereby grace is conferred.

60 **Conner:** We don't believe in those things because they are not in the Bible. The Bible talks about the  
61 Spirit giving grace in John 6. He does not give *matter*. Catholics are always getting weird about *things*  
62 like statues, relics, rosary beads, the wafer of communion and holy water just to name a few. This  
63 usually leads to idolatry.

64 **Brandon:** Conner, I have to disagree with you. God himself took on flesh in Christ. Paul's handkerchiefs  
65 healed the sick, as did Peter's shadow, just like Baptism is said to regenerate sinners. Acts speaks of  
66 being baptized for the forgiveness of your sins and even in first Peter, it says Baptism now save you.  
67 Ananias told Paul to "*be baptized and wash away your sins*". In First Corinthians, Paul seems to imply a  
68 there is a very simple, healthy and natural connection between Baptism (washed), sanctification, and  
69 justification, where as many protestants separate theses. Titus says that "*he saved us...by the washing of*  
70 *regeneration*". I don't think you can get more proof from the Bible that that. Do you really think this is all  
71 *symbolic*?

72 **Conner:** Well, you have given me a lot to think about and I have some questions I want to ask my pastor.  
73 Can we talk again?

74 **Brandon:** Sure any time. If you are interested, I have some other information that might help. Just let  
75 me know. See you around.

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81

82 Fundamentalists often criticize the Catholic Church’s practice of baptizing infants. According to them, baptism is  
 83 for adults and older children, because it is to be administered only after one has undergone a “born again”  
 84 experience—that is, after one has “accepted Jesus Christ as his personal Lord and Savior.” At the instant of  
 85 acceptance, when he is “born again,” the adult becomes a Christian, and his salvation is assured forever. Baptism  
 86 follows, though it has no actual salvific value. In fact, one who dies before being baptized, but after “being saved,”  
 87 goes to heaven anyway.

88 As Fundamentalists see it, baptism is not a sacrament, but an ordinance. It does not in any way convey the grace it  
 89 symbolizes; rather, it is merely a public manifestation of the person’s conversion. Since only an adult or older child  
 90 can be converted, baptism is inappropriate for infants or for children who have not yet reached the age of reason  
 91 (generally considered to be age seven). Most Fundamentalists say that during the years before they reach the age  
 92 of reason infants and young children are automatically saved. Only once a person reaches the age of reason does  
 93 he need to “accept Jesus” in order to reach heaven.

94 Since the New Testament era, the Catholic Church has always understood baptism differently, teaching that it is a  
 95 sacrament which accomplishes several things, the first of which is the remission of sin, both original sin and actual  
 96 sin—only original sin in the case of infants and young children, since they are incapable of actual sin; and both  
 97 original and actual sin in the case of older persons.

98  
 99 Peter explained what happens at baptism when he said, “Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of  
 100 Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit” (Acts 2:38). But he did  
 101 not restrict this teaching to adults. He added, “For the promise is to you *and to your children* and to all that are far  
 102 off, every one whom the Lord our God calls to him” (2:39, emphasis added). We also read: “Rise and be baptized,  
 103 and wash away your sins, calling on his name” (Acts 22:16). These commands are universal, not restricted to  
 104 adults. Further, these commands make clear the necessary connection between baptism and salvation, a  
 105 connection explicitly stated in 1 Peter 3:21: “Baptism . . . now saves you, not as a removal of dirt from the body but  
 106 as an appeal to God for a clear conscience, through the resurrection of Jesus Christ.”

107 Christ Calls All to Baptism

108 Opposition to infant baptism is not a new phenomenon. In the Middle Ages, some groups developed that rejected  
 109 infant baptism, e.g., the Waldenses and Catharists. Later, the Anabaptists (“re-baptizers”) echoed them, claiming  
 110 that infants are incapable of being baptized validly. But the historic Christian Church has always held that Christ’s  
 111 law applies to infants as well as adults, for Jesus said that no one can enter heaven unless he has been born again  
 112 of water and the Holy Spirit (John 3:5). His words can be taken to apply to anyone capable of belonging to his  
 113 kingdom. He asserted such even for children: “Let the children come to me, and do not hinder them; for to such  
 114 belongs the kingdom of heaven” (Matt. 19:14).

115 Now, Fundamentalists say this event does not apply to young children or infants since it implies the children to  
 116 which Christ was referring were able to approach him on their own. (Older translations have, “Suffer the little  
 117 children to come unto me,” which seems to suggest they could do so under their own power.) Fundamentalists  
 118 conclude the passage refers only to children old enough to walk, and, presumably, capable of sinning. But the text  
 119 in Luke 18:15 says, “Now they were bringing even *infants* to him” (Greek, *Prosepheron de auto kai ta brepha*). The  
 120 Greek word *brepha* means “infants”—children who are quite unable to approach Christ on their own and who  
 121 could not possibly make a conscious decision to “accept Jesus as their personal Lord and Savior.” And that is  
 122 precisely the problem. Fundamentalists refuse to permit the baptism of infants and young children, because they  
 123 are not yet capable of making such a conscious act. But notice what Jesus said: “to such as these [referring to the  
 124 infants and children who had been brought to him by their mothers] belongs the kingdom of heaven.” The Lord did  
 125 not require them to make a conscious decision. He says that they are precisely the kind of people who *can* come to  
 126 him and receive the kingdom.

127 **In Place of Circumcision** Furthermore, Paul notes that baptism has replaced circumcision (Col. 2:11–12). In that  
 128 passage, he refers to baptism as “the circumcision of Christ” and “the circumcision made without hands.” Of  
 129 course, usually only infants were circumcised under the Old Law; circumcision of adults was rare, since there were  
 130 few converts to Judaism. If Paul meant to exclude infants, he would not have chosen circumcision as a parallel for  
 131 baptism.

132 This comparison between who could receive baptism and circumcision is an appropriate one. In the Old  
 133 Testament, if a man wanted to become a Jew, he had to believe in the God of Israel and be circumcised. In the  
 134 New Testament, if one wants to become a Christian, one must believe in God and Jesus and be baptized. In the Old

135 Testament, those born into Jewish households could be circumcised in anticipation of the Jewish faith in which  
 136 they would be raised. Thus, in the New Testament, those born in Christian households can be baptized in  
 137 anticipation of the Christian faith in which they will be raised. The pattern is the same.

138 **Were Only Adults Baptized?** Fundamentalists are reluctant to admit that the Bible nowhere says baptism is to be  
 139 restricted to adults, but when pressed, they will. They just conclude that is what it should be taken as meaning,  
 140 even if the text does not explicitly support such a view. Naturally enough, the people whose baptisms we read  
 141 about in Scripture are adults, because they were converted as adults. This makes sense, because Christianity was  
 142 just beginning—there were no “cradle Christians.”

143 Even in the books of the New Testament that were written later in the first century, during the time when children  
 144 were raised in the first Christian homes, we never—not even once—find an example of a child raised in a Christian  
 145 home who is baptized only upon making a “decision for Christ.” Rather, it is always assumed that the children of  
 146 Christian homes are already Christians, that they have already been “baptized into Christ” (Rom. 6:3). If infant  
 147 baptism were not the rule, then we should have references to the children of Christian parents joining the Church  
 148 only after they had come to the age of reason, and there are no such records in the Bible.

149 Specific Biblical References?

150 But one might ask, does the Bible ever say that infants or young children can be baptized? The indications are  
 151 clear. In the New Testament we read that Lydia was converted by Paul’s preaching and that “She was baptized,  
 152 with her household” (Acts 16:15). The Philippian jailer whom Paul and Silas had converted to the faith was  
 153 baptized that night along with his household. We are told that “the same hour of the night . . . he was baptized,  
 154 with all his family” (Acts 16:33). And in his greetings to the Corinthians, Paul recalled that, “I did baptize also the  
 155 household of Stephanas” (1 Cor. 1:16).

156 In all these cases, whole households or families were baptized. This means more than just the spouse; the children  
 157 too were included. If the text of Acts referred simply to the Philippian jailer and his wife, then we would read that  
 158 “he and his wife were baptized,” but we do not. Thus his children must have been baptized as well. The same  
 159 applies to the other cases of household baptism in Scripture.

160 Granted, we do not know the exact age of the children; they may have been past the age of reason, rather than  
 161 infants. Then again, they could have been babes in arms. More probably, there were both younger and older  
 162 children. Certainly there were children younger than the age of reason in some of the households that were  
 163 baptized. Furthermore, given the New Testament pattern of household baptism, if there were to be exceptions to  
 164 this rule (such as infants), they would be explicit.

165 Catholics From the First

166 The present Catholic attitude accords perfectly with early Christian practices. Origen, for instance, wrote in the  
 167 third century that “according to the usage of the Church, baptism is given even to infants” (*Holilies on Leviticus*,  
 168 8:3:11 [A.D. 244]). The Council of Carthage, in 253, condemned the opinion that baptism should be withheld from  
 169 infants until the eighth day after birth. Later, Augustine taught, “The custom of Mother Church in baptizing infants  
 170 is certainly not to be scorned . . . nor is it to be believed that its tradition is anything except apostolic” (*Literal*  
 171 *Interpretation of Genesis* 10:23:39 [A.D. 408]).

172 No Cry of “Invention!”

173 None of the Fathers or councils of the Church was claiming that the practice was contrary to Scripture or tradition.  
 174 They agreed that the practice of baptizing infants was the customary and appropriate practice since the days of the  
 175 early Church; the only uncertainty seemed to be when—exactly—an infant should be baptized. Further evidence  
 176 that infant baptism was the accepted practice in the early Church is the fact that if infant baptism had been  
 177 opposed to the religious practices of the first believers, why do we have no record of early Christian writers  
 178 condemning it?

179 But Fundamentalists try to ignore the historical writings from the early Church which clearly indicate the legitimacy  
 180 of infant baptism. They attempt to sidestep appeals to history by saying baptism requires faith and, since children  
 181 are incapable of having faith, they cannot be baptized. It is true that Christ prescribed instruction and actual faith  
 182 for adult converts (Matt. 28:19–20), but his general law on the necessity of baptism (John 3:5) puts no restriction  
 183 on the subjects of baptism. Although infants are included in the law he establishes, requirements of that law that  
 184 are impossible to meet because of their age are not applicable to them. The same was true of circumcision; faith in  
 185 the Lord was necessary for an adult convert to receive it, but it was not necessary for the children of believers.  
 186 Furthermore, the Bible never says, “Faith in Christ is necessary for salvation except for infants”; it simply says,  
 187 “Faith in Christ is necessary for salvation.” Yet Fundamentalists must admit there is an exception for infants unless

188 they wish to condemn instantaneously all infants to hell. Therefore, the Fundamentalist himself makes an  
 189 exception for infants regarding the necessity of faith for salvation.  
 190 It becomes apparent, then, that the Fundamentalist position on infant baptism is not really a consequence of the  
 191 Bible's strictures, but of the demands of Fundamentalism's idea of salvation. In reality, the Bible indicates that  
 192 infants are to be baptized, that they too are meant to inherit the kingdom of heaven. Further, the witness of the  
 193 earliest Christian practices and writings must once and for all silence those who criticize the Catholic Church's  
 194 teaching on infant baptism. The Catholic Church is merely continuing the tradition established by the first  
 195 Christians, who heeded the words of Christ: "Let the children come to me, and do not hinder them; for to such  
 196 belongs the kingdom of God" (Luke 18:16).

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197  
 198 NIHIL OBSTAT: I have concluded that the materials  
 199 presented in this work are free of doctrinal or moral errors.  
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205 <https://www.aboutcatholics.com/beliefs/a-simple-defense-of-infant-baptism/>  
 206

207 Among non-Catholic Christians infant baptism can range from being a puzzling practice to being  
 208 downright heretical.

209 Here we discuss why infant baptism is a good thing and why the Catholic Church does it.

### 210 **Rules for Baptism in the Bible**

211 The Bible contains many "rules and regulations" concerning baptism.

212 All of these "rules and regulations" in the Bible regarding baptism are for adults since that in the entire  
 213 Bible the people that are speaking and interacting are an adult, or they are people that are old enough  
 214 to have a comprehension level of an adult. To better rephrase the latter part of the last statement; all of  
 215 the Biblical figures, which are adults, are of the age of reason; they are able to discern what is right and  
 216 what is wrong.

217 Not only are these people old enough to have an adult comprehension level and be of the age of reason,  
 218 but also they are old enough to have been able to sin against God several times throughout their lives.  
 219 Since they are of the age of reason they are somewhat able to at least recognize that they have sinned.  
 220 Therefore, when called, it will be necessary for each person to examine their conscience and repent; and  
 221 then be baptized when Jesus and His disciples call them to convert to Christianity. Not only were they to  
 222 repent and be baptized, but they also had to convert for the Messiah had come!

### 223 **The Bible does not contain anything *against* the baptism of infants.**

224 Since these "rules and regulations" are written for adults that are recorded from adults' interactions  
 225 with Jesus and the Apostles in the New Testament they cannot apply in exactly the same way the same  
 226 to infants who live under different circumstances.

### 227 **Infants and Original Sin**

228 Infants are new to the world and the only sin they have against them is the [Original Sin](#). An infant is not  
 229 old enough to be able to sin against God for they have not even come close to the age of reason. In  
 230 order to read the Scriptures one must have some sort of adult comprehension and reading level to  
 231 obtain a basic understanding.

232 Now, someone might come back with the argument that infants also are not old enough, or of the age  
 233 of reason, to have faith in Jesus Christ. In light of that argument one should keep in mind two key points:  
 234 one must have a comprehension like that of the people of the New Testament to fall under the same  
 235 criteria for Biblical adult baptism and that Jesus was sent by the Father so that anyone who obeys Him  
 236 and does the will of the Father will be saved (Cf. John 3:16-18, John 6:40).

237 Anyone includes all people. It means that the Kingdom of God is open to all people who meet the above  
 238 stated criteria, which includes infants for they are people just as we are people and one's grandparents  
 239 are people.

240 Since the Kingdom of God is open to anyone who seeks and believes in Christ and since baptism is a  
 241 necessity for entrance into the Kingdom (Cf. John 3:5) and since infants do not have the same  
 242 comprehension level as adults nor have they reached the age of reason then the provisions for infant  
 243 baptism must be different than the ones for adult conversion and baptism.

244 However, this does not mean that infants do not get the same effects as an adult baptism because it is  
 245 still the act of baptism.

246 The Bible tells us in John 21:25 that there are many things that Jesus did, but are not contained in the  
 247 Scriptures. Recall that in order to read the Scriptures one must have some sort of adult comprehension  
 248 level (Cf. Paragraph 2).

249 Infant Baptism was Passed Down

250 Ponder the following question: why would the Scriptures instruct someone how to be baptized as an  
 251 infant if they had already passed that stage of their life? Second Thessalonians 2:15 says, "Therefore,  
 252 brothers, stand firm and hold to the teachings we passed on to you, EITHER by word of mouth [oral  
 253 statement] OR by letter [letter of ours]," emphasis added.

254 This verse also shows that there are some things that are not written and that things handed down (i.e.  
 255 tradition) are just as good as those that are written.

256 Infant baptism is one of the traditions that was handed down, but not recorded in the Scriptures.

257 Jesus handed it down to His disciples as one of the unwritten events (Cf. John 21:25) for the disciples to  
 258 practice and hand on to their successors. It was passed down as a tradition carried out by the disciples  
 259 as instructions on how to baptize infants.

260 ***Infant baptism is a tradition and practice of the early Church that is just as valid then, now and will be***  
 261 ***forever.***

262

263 <https://nwcatholic.org/voices/cal-christiansen/why-does-the-catholic-church-baptize-babies>

264 **Why does the Catholic Church baptize infants?**

265 A friend of mine who is a member of another church told me that in his church, they only baptize older  
 266 youth and adults who can consciously decide for themselves if they want to be baptized and accept faith  
 267 in Jesus. Doesn't baptizing infants "force" our faith upon them and take away their right to choose?

268 **A:** In our North American culture, personal choice and autonomy are important values. Anything that  
 269 might lessen our personal freedoms and choices can be viewed in a negative light. Choosing our career  
 270 path, what college we will attend, where we will live and raise a family, etc., are all important choices  
 271 that we are largely free to make. This sense of personal autonomy and choice can influence how we  
 272 view and practice our Catholic faith, so that, for instance, infant baptism is seen as something that  
 273 diminishes personal autonomy and is therefore negative. As we'll see, this certainly is not the case.

274 To begin with, many non-Catholic Christians have quite a different idea of what baptism accomplishes  
 275 and signifies. For many of these Christians, what is essential for salvation is accepting Jesus as one's Lord  
 276 and Savior, something only an individual who has attained the age of reason can do. Baptism is seen as  
 277 an external sign of this faith commitment but not something essential for salvation in and of itself.

278 For Catholics, the moment that someone becomes a Christian is not when a personal assent is made,  
 279 but rather at the moment of baptism. Baptism within the Catholic tradition is not an exterior sign  
 280 reflecting the faith in Jesus that a believer has assented to earlier, but rather the moment when faith in  
 281 Christ begins and when someone actually becomes a Christian, a disciple of Jesus. Baptism is an  
 282 essential component of salvation, and it is important for us that everyone, including babies, is given this  
 283 tremendous gift.

284 There are two very important reasons why the Catholic Church baptizes infants. **The first is because we**  
 285 **always have! Two key biblical texts can help us here.** Acts of the Apostles tells us about the baptism of  
 286 Lydia and her entire household: "After she and her household had been baptized, she offered us an  
 287 invitation." (Acts 16:15) Other passages in Acts and in St. Paul's epistles also reference whole  
 288 households being baptized. This most certainly would have meant infants if they were present.  
 289 Catholic tradition has a lot to say about infant baptism as well. The great St. Augustine, for instance,  
 290 wrote: "The custom of Mother Church in baptizing infants is certainly not to be scorned, nor is it to be  
 291 regarded in any way as superfluous, nor is it to be believed that its tradition is anything except  
 292 apostolic."

293 **The second reason we baptize infants is for their own holistic development.** A human person is a  
 294 composite of body, mind and spirit; all three must be properly cared for and nurtured. The gift of  
 295 baptism is the most important way that an infant receives the proper spiritual nourishment in order to  
 296 get them started on the right foot. The Catechism of the Catholic Church is clear on this point: "Christian  
 297 parents will recognize that this practice [of infant baptism] also accords with their role as nurturers of  
 298 the life that God has entrusted to them." (CCC 1251)  
 299 Baptism removes original sin, makes the baptized a child of God and a member of the family of the  
 300 church, and gets their life started as a Christian. These are all spiritual goods that a child needs right  
 301 from the start, like food, water and love, in order to become the person that God created them to be.  
 302

303 <https://www.simplycatholic.com/why-baptize-babies/>

304 **Why Does the Church Baptize Babies?**

305 The Catholic Church has been baptizing babies ever since Christ commanded His apostles to baptize all  
 306 people in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit (see Mt 28:18-20). This has always been the  
 307 practice of the Orthodox churches and of many Protestant denominations as well.

308 Parents bring their babies to the waters of baptism by professing a belief in Christ on behalf of the child  
 309 and promising to raise him or her in the faith. For adults who are to be baptized, the Church also  
 310 requires them to profess their faith in Christ.

311 Because baptism confers saving grace, the earlier a person comes to baptism, the better.

312 In infant baptism, then, though the child is too young to have faith, the parents extend their faith on the  
 313 child's behalf.

314 On what basis does the Church believe that the faith of one person may be effective on behalf of  
 315 someone else? The Scriptures are full of examples in which Jesus extends healing grace to people based  
 316 on the faith of others.

317 For example, Jesus forgives the sins of the paralytic based on the faith of those who brought him (see Mt  
 318 9:2; Mk 2:3-5). Jesus heals the centurion's servant based on the faith of the centurion (Mt 8:5-13). Jesus  
 319 exorcises the child's unclean spirit based on the father's faith (Mk 9:22-25).

320 We might also note that in the Old Testament, God spares the firstborn child's life during the Passover  
 321 based on the parent's faith (see Ex 12:24-28).

322 Given these examples, then, we must ask ourselves: If God is willing to effect spiritual and physical cures  
 323 for children based upon the faith of their parents, how much more will He give the grace of baptism to  
 324 children based upon the faith of their parents?

### 325 **Why Infants Need Baptism**

326 Why do children need baptismal grace for salvation? Because they inherit original sin from the moment  
 327 of conception.

328 The psalmist laments: "Indeed, in guilt was I born, and in sin my mother conceived me" (Ps 51:7).

329 The Book of Job observes: "Man that is born of woman is of few days, and full of trouble. ... Who can  
 330 bring a clean thing out of an unclean? There is not one" (Job 14:1,4, RSV).

331 The apostle Paul tells us that “through one person sin entered the world, and through sin, death” (Rom  
 332 5:12). He does not say that this sin is manifested only when the person reaches the age of reason.  
 333 Rather, he writes, before baptism “we were by nature children of wrath, like the rest” (Eph 2:3).  
 334 Because babies are born with original sin, they need baptism to cleanse them, so that they may become  
 335 adopted sons and daughters of God and receive the grace of the Holy Spirit. Jesus said that the kingdom  
 336 of God also belongs to children (see Mt 18:4; Mk 10:14). He never put an age limit upon those eligible to  
 337 receive His grace (Lk 18:15-17; Mt 18:2-5).

338 When St. Paul addresses the “holy ones” of the Church (see Eph 1:1; Col 1:2), these include the children,  
 339 whom he addresses specifically in Ephesians 6:1 and Colossians 3:20. Children become “holy ones” of  
 340 the Church and members of the body of Christ only through baptism.

341 **Infant Baptism in the Early Church**

342 The Scriptures also demonstrate that the early Church baptized babies. In the Book of Acts, for example,  
 343 St. Peter preached to the crowd:  
 344 “Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins;  
 345 and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. For the promise is to you and to your children and to all  
 346 that are far off, whomever the Lord our God will call” (Acts 2:38-39).

347 When St. Peter said the promise of baptism is for children, the word “children” (from the Greek teknon)  
 348 also includes infants. This same word, teknon, is used later in Acts 21:21 to describe the circumcision of  
 349 eight-day-old infants.

350 The Greek word for “household,” oikos, refers to all the members of a family, adults as well as infants  
 351 and children. The Book of Acts speaks of whole households being baptized, so any infants and children  
 352 who belonged to these households would have been included.

353 St. Paul baptizes Lydia with “her household” (16:15); the entire household of Cornelius (see 10:48;  
 354 11:14); the Philippian jailer “and all his family” (16:33); and the “household of Stephanus” (1 Cor 1:16).  
 355 In none of these accounts is there ever any indication that infants and children are excluded from  
 356 baptism.

357 **Baptism and Circumcision**

358 Finally, in any discussion of infant baptism we should remember the correlation between the Old  
 359 Covenant and the New Covenant.

360 Under the Old Covenant, babies were circumcised when they were eight days old (see Gn 17:12; Lv  
 361 12:3). This was the sign by which they entered into the covenant.

362 St. Paul actually calls baptism the “new circumcision” when he writes:  
 363 “In him you were also circumcised with a circumcision not administered by hand, by stripping off the  
 364 carnal body, with the circumcision of Christ. You were buried with him in baptism, in which you were  
 365 also raised with him through faith in the power of God, who raised him from the dead” (Col 2:11-12).  
 366 Since baptism is the new circumcision of the New Covenant, baptism is for babies as well as adults, just  
 367 as circumcision in the Old Covenant was for babies as well as adults.

368 God did not make his New Covenant narrower than the Old Covenant. From the perspective of the first  
 369 Christians — Jews who had been part of the Old Covenant — it would have been unthinkable to exclude  
 370 infants and children from God’s New Covenant. The little ones had always been part of God’s covenant  
 371 family.

372 A covenant that excluded children would have been inferior to the original covenant. In reality, the  
 373 grace of Jesus Christ and the New Covenant surpasses that of the Old Covenant (see Rom 5:15), to  
 374 include not only infants, but Gentiles as well.

375 God continues to extend His covenantal grace through the generations, then — not only to adults but to  
 376 children as well, through the Church who offers His sacrament of baptism.

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 378 *This article is adapted from his book “The Biblical Basis for the Catholic Faith” (Our Sunday Visitor, 2005).*



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