

THE ST. JOHN'S LUTHERAN

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“AS LONG AS THEY’RE CHRISTIANS”

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Do Denominational Differences Really Matter?

Part II: Holy Baptism & Original Sin

In the November newsletter I began a series that explores some of the key denominational differences within Christianity. Part I, “An Infant Introduction,” birthed the discussion by beginning to compare the Lutheran (and Biblical) teaching of Holy Baptism with main stream American Evangelicalism. The article ended with the thesis: I contend, and will show in Scripture, that Holy Baptism is God’s action, and gracious gift intended for all of fallen mankind [babies included].

Let us now immerse ourselves in Scripture in order to drown the false teachings of the devil and so be sprinkled with the untainted drops of the Gospel. First, it is important to know that the Bible is like an unbroken ring, which means all of it is related. If you err on one doctrine it will affect others. In order to understand the Biblical teaching of Holy Baptism it is foundational to understand the Biblical teaching of original sin. As to say, why do we all need baptism?

Both sides of this discussion say that man was tempted by Satan in the garden and fell into sin thus losing his innocence for all generations (original sin). However, the degree of innocence that was lost is not agreed upon. The side that opposes that baptism washes away sin(s) and is for all nations, babies included, teaches that original sin inherited from Adam is only an inclination toward sin and only occurs when a person is old enough to choose to sin. Therefore, they believe that babies aren’t by nature condemned because they are unable to chose to sin. The *Southern Baptist Theological Seminary* states it as such: “*Through the temptation of Satan man transgressed the command of God, and fell from his original innocence whereby his posterity inherit a nature and an environment inclined toward sin. Therefore, as soon as they are capable of moral action, they become transgressors and are under condemnation.*” They reason that a cute little baby cannot be a sinner. While this may seem reasonable, is it really the teaching of Scripture? Is it committing actual sins that makes us sinful, or is it that we commit sins because we are sinful?

The Lutheran side, which upholds that baptism washes away sin(s) and is for all nations, babies included, teaches that through the fall of Adam all men are conceived in sin and born sinful. This original sin is real sin and is under God’s condemnation. Therefore, sin is a state that man is conceived in, not merely actions that a person does at ‘the age of discretion.’ The Augsburg Confession states it as such: “*Also they teach that since the fall of Adam all men begotten in the natural way are born with sin, that is, without the fear of God, without trust in God, and with concupiscence; and that this disease, or vice of origin, is truly sin, even now condemning and bringing eternal death upon those not born again through Baptism and the Holy Spirit.*”

So, which is the correct teaching of Scripture? Paul writes in Romans that man is sinful even before committing actual sins. “Nevertheless death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over those who had not sinned according to the likeness of the transgression of Adam.” Psalm 51:5 states, “Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me.” John 3:3 states that, “Unless one is born anew, he cannot see the kingdom of God.” Paul, in Romans 3:10 and following, quotes the Old Testament and says, “There is none righteous, no, not one; There is none who understands...” Paul further says in verse 23 that “all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God...” One must take the Word of God for what It says. *All* have sinned means *all*, and the word *all* includes children. When a father says that he took *all* of his children to their grandmother’s house, he does not mean only those old enough to reason and talk with their grandmother. *No one* is righteous means: *no one* is righteous, including babies.

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(As Long as They're Christians - continued from front page)

If Scripture says that *all* are sinners, even in the womb as babies, then that is exactly what it means. Scripture is chock-full of other examples of the consequences of original sin, saying that we are by nature children of wrath. Man is described as being born a slave to sin and an enemy of God. Scripture is very clear that all people are born sinful and are deaf, dumb, and blind to the Gospel. The idea that babies are not under God's condemnation as sinners until they reach an age of moral reason and commit actual sins is not found anywhere in Scripture. It is the intent of the author to be fair to both sides of the discussion, but there is simply no Scriptural proof that babies are born sinless or not under condemnation for original sin. The Bible says that all are sinful and are headed for hell apart from God's gracious washing away of sin(s) through faith.

To be continued....



¹ www.sbts.edu

² Triglot, Book of Concord, p.24, Electronic Version

³ A Comprehensive Explanation of Holy Baptism and the Lord's Supper, Johann Gerhard, p. 128

⁴ Romans 5:14

⁵ See also Ephesians 2:3 "among whom also we all once conducted ourselves in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, just as the others." and Luke 6:43-45 and Psalm 58:3

⁶ Galatians 4

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REFRIGERATOR NEEDED FOR YOUTH KITCHEN

The Youth kitchen, located in the old Assembly Hall, is in need of a refrigerator. The existing one is unable to cool to the proper temperature. If you can help, please notify the deaconess or a member of the YMT. Thank you!