

Eternal Baptism Resource

What is Baptism?

We believe that baptism is an ordinance of the Lord, one of only two that the Lord gave to His church. The other one is partaking of the Lord's Supper until His return. We also believe that baptism is a sacrament in that it is a symbol of a spiritual reality, a visible sign of the supernatural work of God.

What we mean by "ordinance" is that the Lord Jesus commanded and ordained it in a way that would make it an ongoing practice of the church. We find this most explicitly in Matthew 28:19-20: "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you."

Therefore, "making disciples" must include promoting spiritual growth through willful submission to the revealed Word of God, and "baptizing them" into the visible church.

What we mean by "a sacrament" is not that baptism is a means of God's grace, but a visible sign and spiritual seal of a grace already received, as well as a promise of more in the future.

So baptism is a sacrament and ordinance of the Lord Jesus to be performed in making disciples until Christ returns at the end of the age.

One might say that we, at Eternal Church, baptize people in obedience to the expressed command of God, and as a communal (and visible) proclamation of God's supernatural and invisible work in our midst.

What is the History of Baptism?

Baptism was practiced before the founding of the New Testament church. The Jews of ancient times would baptize proselytes to signify the converts' "cleansed" nature. John the Baptist used baptism to prepare the way of the Lord, requiring *everyone*, not just Gentiles, to be baptized because *everyone* needs repentance.

However, John's baptism, signifying repentance, is not the same as Christian baptism, as seen in [Acts 18:24–26](#) and [19:1–7](#). Christian baptism has a deeper and more particular significance.

What is the New Testament Teaching on Baptism?

Eternal Church recognizes and affirms two modes of Baptism, called paedobaptism (infant baptism) and credobaptism (believers baptism). These two modes must be explained and distinguished so that individuals (and/or parents) can choose which mode best fits their biblical understanding and personal conviction. The reason we accept both is because we believe that a reasonable case could be made for either practice, or maybe both in the Bible. We will attach resources for you to explore on your own before you come to a decision.

Which Mode is the “Right” One?

What is important to note is that neither position has clear and distinct biblical support that would *exclude* the other view.

The Paedobaptist believes that baptism is a sign of the old covenant of circumcision and should therefore be extended to the entire family of a believer, including his or her children. There are scriptures in the New Testament that mention “entire households” being baptized, which can be found in Acts 16:15, Acts 16:33 and I Corinthians 1:16. These two are the pillars of the argument: circumcision-as-a-sign-of-covenant, and “households.” The weakness of the argument is that the New Testament never makes a direct correlation between baptism and physical Old Testament covenant of circumcision, and never mentions specifically infants among those being baptized in these households.

The Credobaptist believes that baptism is a sign of the individual's inward

faith placed upon Jesus Christ. Only the person who repents and believes upon the work of Christ should be baptized. The strength of this argument is that process can be clearly witnessed in almost all the New Testament examples which can be found, but not limited to: Matthew 28:19, Acts 2:41, Acts 8:12, Acts 18:8 and many others. Also, the sign of immersion baptism allows for a more clear vision of the illustration that Paul gives in Romans 6:3-5 that baptism symbolizes going down into His death, and being raised from death to new life. The weakness of this position is that it is still unclear if “households” only included those old enough to profess faith, and there is no particular example of a child who was born into a family of faith being baptized later.

Therefore both modes of baptism can only claim that their position is inferred rather than expressly stated in the Bible. Nowhere in the scripture does it state that the church should either include or exclude infants from baptism.

What is most important is that you choose the mode that best fits you and your family, and be able to give reason for your own position on the matter.

For further study please listen to this sermon on the credobaptist position by John MacArthur:

<https://www.ligonier.org/learn/series/baptism-debate/credobaptist-position>

And then this sermon on the paedobaptist position, by R.C. Sproul:

<https://www.ligonier.org/learn/series/baptism-debate/paedobaptist-position>

Conditions for Credobaptism

Only an individual committed to Christ, by grace through faith, may participate in the ceremony.

Individuals who have not placed their faith in Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord will be unable to be baptized, because they themselves have not received the Gospel, repented of their sin, and have sought identification with Christ in obedience. As a result, we must decline any requests to include an unbelieving individual in baptism.

Conditions for Paedobaptism

Only parents or legal guardians of the child who are committed to Christ may participate in the ceremony.

Parents or legal guardians who have not placed their faith in Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord will be unable to baptize their child, because they themselves have not received the Gospel, repented of their sin, and sought identification with Christ in the sign of the covenant. As such, the authentic occasion for initiating a covenant baptism is null, and we must decline any requests to include an unbelieving individual in baptism of their child.

As a parent or guardian, your devotion to God—or lack of it—will make a resounding impression on your child, and alert the witnessing community of faith that there is submission and agreement to living in covenant with God. We believe that unmarried parents or guardians living together do not set a Christ-following example. Therefore, unmarried parents will be advised to separate or wait until they are married to baptize their child.

A believing parent may baptize a child independently of an unbelieving spouse.

Single parents can baptize their children if they are living by faith in a covenant relationship with God.

Where is there Agreement in both positions?

- Baptism was appointed by Christ to be of permanent value in the Christian Church.
- Baptism is a rite of initiation into the visible church.
- There will be some who are baptized who will not, in fact, be saved.
- There will be some who are not baptized, who will, in fact, be saved.
- The inward position of trust will always be more important than any outward sign.
- One cannot fully claim inward trust and not follow through on what God reveals as a step of obedience when that information comes to light.

What Happens During the Actual Ceremony?

During the ceremony, the Pastor will ask the individuals (and/or parents/guardians to bring their children) to the platform.

Participants will be asked to answer the questions, "Why do you feel led at this time to be baptized?" Participants are encouraged to provide an answer to this question as a testimony of faith.

If it is an infant baptism, a parent of the one being baptized may speak a scripture over the child's life, and/or share their own testimony of faith.

Infant/Covenant Baptisms will occur in the worship center immediately after the short scripture/sacramental statements. For all adults and children undergoing full immersion baptism, this portion of the celebration will be held in a portable baptismal pool, during the worship service. The specific details of the flow of the worship service will be conveyed to you prior to the day of your baptism.

Okay, I'm Ready. What Do I Do?

- **Register online to be baptized at either the 9:00 a.m. or 11:00 a.m. service.**
- **Receive and review Eternal Church's Baptism Resource**
- **Decide which mode of baptism best fits your understanding of Scripture**
- **Schedule a meeting with a pastor or elder**
- **If credobaptism, the believer must be prepared to publicly answer the question, "Why do I feel led to be baptized at this time?"**
- **If paedobaptism, the believing parent(s) will be allowed to share a scripture over their child, and must agree to the vows that will be spoken to the congregation.**
- **On baptism Sunday, bring a towel and modest swim attire. The confessions of faith, public vows and infant baptism will take place during the worship service.**
- **The flow of the service and when you will change your clothes and get ready for the immersion baptism will be discussed when you meet with a pastor or elder.**