

Name: _____



Advanced Bible Correspondence Course

Lesson 26: Baptism

Lords Day 26

Q.69. HOW ART THOU ADMONISHED AND ASSURED BY HOLY BAPTISM THAT THE ONE SACRIFICE OF CHRIST UPON THE CROSS IS OF REAL ADVANTAGE TO THEE? ANSWER: THUS: THAT CHRIST APPOINTED THIS EXTERNAL WASHING WITH WATER (A), ADDING THERETO THIS PROMISE (B), THAT I AM AS CERTAINLY WASHED BY HIS BLOOD AND SPIRIT FROM ALL THE POLLUTION OF MY SOUL, THAT IS, FROM ALL MY SINS (C), AS I AM WASHED EXTERNALLY WITH WATER, BY WHICH THE FILTHINESS OF THE BODY IS COMMONLY WASHED AWAY.

(A)MATTHEW 28:19; (B) MATTHEW 28:19; MARK 16:16, ACTS 2:38, JOHN 1:33, MATTHEW 3:11, ROMANS 6:3: (C) 1 PETER 3:21 MARK 1:4, LUKE 3:3.

Holy Baptism

Holy baptism is a sacrament, and therefore it is a sign. As such baptism depicts the spiritual cleansing by the blood and the Spirit of Christ. Baptism is also a seal. As such it confirms God's promises of the forgiveness of sins and everlasting life. To indicate what baptism does, the catechism expresses itself in strong words. It is as if the authors are afraid of us under estimating baptism. Therefore the verbs "admonish" and "assure" are used. "Admonish" here means to say with much emphasis. With much emphasis baptism teaches us: "the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin" (1 John 1:7). Baptism assures, that is: it confirms with a visible pledge that the gospel promise is true. The weak in faith just cannot believe that those rich promises also concern them. "Yes", the Lord says in baptism, it is as true as you see it happening before your eyes and as true as you feel the water." How does this then happen? Is the question asked in amazement?**Washing**

For this the catechism uses the word "washing." We must not then think of the sprinkling of water on the head, as we often see at baptism but of baptizing by immersion, as this usually took place in biblical times and still does sometimes. The person to be baptized was totally immersed in the water and then came up out of the water again. In this way the Lord Jesus was baptized by John in the river

Jordan. However, “sprinkling” can also be found in the Bible. In the time of the Old Testament, people and objects were cleansed and sanctified by sprinkling. In Ezekiel 36: 25 it says: “*I will sprinkle clean water upon you.*” In baptism it is not the amount of water that is important, but what the water signifies.

The answer to question 69 is that at the institution of baptism Christ added the promise: “You are as certainly washed by the blood and Spirit of Christ as you receive the water of baptism.” It is faith that matters! But we know this already from the Word of God, don’t we? Certainly, but in order to meet our weakness, the Lord once again let us see and feel the importance of the promise in holy baptism.

Q70. WHAT IS IT TO BE WASHED WITH THE BLOOD AND SPIRIT OF CHRIST? ANSWER: IT IS TO RECEIVE OF GOD THE REMISSION OF SINS FREELY, FOR THE SAKE OF CHRIST’S BLOOD WHICH HE SHED FOR US BY HIS SACRIFICE ON THE CROSS (A) AND ALSO TO BE RENEWED BY THE HOLY GHOST, AND SANCTIFIED TO BE MEMBERS OF CHRIST, THAT SO WE MAY MORE AND MORE DIE UNTO SIN, AND LEAD HOLY AND UNBLAMABLE LIVES (B).

(A) HEBREWS 12:24, 1 PETER 1:2, REVELATION 1:5, 7:14, ZECHARIAH 13:1, EZEKIEL 36:25; (B) JOHN 1:33, 3:5, 1 CORINTHIANS 6:11, 12:13, ROMANS 6:4, COLOSSIANS 2:12

Justification and sanctification

The previous answer tells us that the believer is strengthened in his faith and his polluted soul is as certainly washed by the blood and Spirit of Christ as the water washes the filthiness of his body away. “What must I understand by this?” is the next question to be discussed. The answer points to two benefits, two blessings: justification (=forgiveness of sins and reconciliation with God) and sanctification (= renewal of the heart by the Holy Ghost). This is clearly pictured by immersion. The apostle Paul makes this clear in Romans 6. Faith unites with Christ, that is to say, by faith the Christian is closely united with Christ. The Lord Jesus died and arose. By His death He merited the justification of sinners and His resurrection is the guarantee for regeneration and a new life for sinners. Baptism pictures this in this way: to be immersed in water points to dying with Christ, so that guilt will be washed away (justification) and the coming up out of the water points to being raised with Christ to a new life (sanctification). Because of the union with Christ through faith, God’s children are justified in Christ’s death and renewed through His resurrection. In summary: baptism pictures finding salvation in Christ. By “His blood” is meant the power of His merits.

Not automatic

However, time and again we also read about the Holy Ghost. This Sacrament does not function automatically. Baptism itself does not save. No, for to be saved it is necessary that the Holy Ghost apply these benefits to the heart. The benefits have not only been acquired by Christ, but they must also be applied to us personally by the Holy Ghost. He does this when He works faith in Christ in our hearts.

The Holy Scripture calls Christ the Head of His Church. His Church is His body. In Colossian 1:18 we read: *And He is the Head of the Body, the Church*. Just like a body has members or limbs, likewise Christ's body has members. These are sanctified, that is, separated from the world. This is also shown visibly in baptism. He, who will believingly be present at the administration of baptism, will have a view of the immense privileges which have been granted him by grace.

More and more

Let us now take notice of the words "more and more" in the answer. We do not find these words when the forgiveness of sins is dealt with. The forgiveness of sins is absolute, perfect. All sins are forgiven: those of the past, of the present, and of the future as well. The assurance of this forgiveness and its comfort, which we feel in our heart, is dependent on the strength of faith. The stronger the faith, the greater the assurance and comfort.

But this is different with sanctification. The old man, that corrupt existence of a Christian, does not die at once on the day when the believer is justified. No, this is a process which last an entire lifetime. The old man dies a slow and painful death. Sin does not let go of us so easily! On the contrary the new man, that new life, must grow and become stronger. That is also a process that lasts an entire lifetime. As a matter of fact this causes strife, a continuous strife between the old man and the new man. But also in baptism the believer has a pledge that, by God's grace, the new man shall have the victory. Jesus arose and has been victorious, and God's children are in Him more than conquerors.

Q.71. WHERE HAS CHRIST PROMISED US, THAT HE WILL AS CERTAINLY WASH US BY HIS BLOOD AND SPIRIT, AS WE ARE WASHED WITH THE WATER OF BAPTISM?

ANSWER: IN THE INSTITUTION OF BAPTISM, WHICH IS THUS EXPRESSED: "GO YE THEREFORE, AND TEACH ALL NATIONS, BAPTIZING THEM IN THE NAME OF THE FATHER, AND OF THE SON, AND OF THE HOLY GHOST" (A); "HE THAT BELIEVETH, AND IS BAPTIZED, SHALL BE SAVED; BUT HE THAT BELIEVETH NOT SHALL BE DAMNED" (B). THIS PROMISE IS ALSO REPEATED, WHERE THE SCRIPTURE CALLS BAPTISM THE WASHING OF REGENERATION AND THE WASHING AWAY OF SINS (C).

(A)MATTHEW 28:19; (B) MARK 16:16; (C) TITUS 3:5; ACTS 22:16.

Based on the Word of God

We should always keep in mind that all what we say concerning religion must be based on the Word of God. Otherwise it has no authority. In the course of church history many statements have been made or even doctrines have been promulgated which were not founded on God's Word, but on tradition or on the authority of a man. It is dangerous to base our hope for eternity on them. So whatever we say in this respect must be found in Scripture or immediately derived from it. Isaiah also said this: *"To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them"* (Isaiah 8:20). Thus one of the three

pillars of the Reformation was: Sola Scriptura, which means: Scripture only. The authors of the Heidelberg Catechism also built on this pillar. It is as if they say here: Now we have already said many nice things about holy baptism, but can we also find these things in the Scriptures? Otherwise they have no value on which to base our faith. In using them, we would then be building on sandy ground.

Instituted by Christ

In the first place, the answer makes it clear for us that baptism is not an institution of man. Then it would not be a sacrament. But baptism finds its basis in the command of Christ. It was the last command which the departing Christ gave to His apostles: *“Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost”* (Matthew 28:19). **Infant**

baptism

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second test in the answer indicates that for adults Holy Baptism is a seal of grace received. If baptism were not a seal upon the Word, it could not be a sacrament either. Nor could faith be strengthened by it. It goes without saying that faith can only be strengthened if one has it. Faith is mentioned first in the text and afterwards baptism. Confession of faith is connected with baptism. All this is necessary to be saved. For the Bible says: *“For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation”* Romans 10:10. Baptism is also a sign of the purifying blood and the power of the Spirit Who renews the heart. The expressions “the washing of regeneration” and “washing away of sins” remind us of these. What a rich gospel preaching it is which tells us here that the forgiveness and the renewing are so perfect, that not the least trace of sin remains. Then a man is again the man as the Lord intended him to be. In infant baptism there is yet no mention of grace received, but it rests on the same promise. The Lord is willing to grant grace. We will speak more about this later.

Questions:

- *Where in the Bible does it say that baptism by sprinkling has the same value as baptism by immersion?*

- *What is justification?*

- *What is sanctification?*

- *Where do we find that Christ instituted Holy Baptism?*

Evaluator:_____