

# **ILLINOIS LUTHERAN CONFERENCE**

## **Topical Bulletin, August 2023**

This month's subject for consideration deals with one of the two Sacraments instituted by God Himself, in which there are certain visible means connected with His Word, by which God offers, gives, and seals unto us the forgiveness of sins which Jesus Christ has earned for us. Our topic is: **Holy Baptism**.

**Holy Baptism** will be considered in the order in which Luther's Small Catechism addresses the subject. However, additional passages from the Holy Bible will be referenced to supply us with insights as only God's Word can.

The 1943 C.P.H. edition of Luther's Small Catechism says: "[I. THE NATURE OF BAPTISM] *What is Baptism?* Baptism is not simple water only, but it is the water comprehended in God's command and connected with God's word. *Which is that word of God?* Christ, our Lord, says in the last chapter of Matthew: Go ye and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost."

**"And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world. Amen." (Matthew 28:18-20)**

*Comment: The Lord Jesus Christ COMMANDS His disciples, His followers, to TEACH ALL NATIONS; that is, as the Greek original wording reveals: to train, discipline, and instruct. The method of such teaching is by BAPTIZING ALL NATIONS – that's ALL people, both young and old, male and female – in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Additionally, those baptized individuals are to be TAUGHT ALL THINGS which Jesus Christ has commanded His disciples; for, "All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, throughly furnished unto all good works." (2 Timothy 3:16-17)*

*Realize that to BAPTIZE means to apply water by washing, pouring, sprinkling, or immersing, as the original New Testament Greek wording makes clear. "And when they come from the market, except they wash, they eat not. And many other things there be, which they have received to hold, as the washing of cups, and pots, brasen vessels, and of tables." (Mark 7:4) "Wash" and "washing" are English translations of the Greek "baptizo" and "baptismos" respectively, the same words being rendered elsewhere in the Holy Bible in English as "baptize" and "baptism"— "John did baptize in the wilderness, and preach the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins." (Mark 1:4)*

*Take it to heart that it's not the amount of water or the method of application involved that makes Holy Baptism valid; rather, it is the Word of God connected with the water in accord with God's command that makes the Sacrament valid and beneficial. Christians are people who are, "born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever." (1 Peter 1:23) "Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water." (Hebrews 10:22) "And now why tarriest thou? arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord." (Acts 22:16)*

*Baptism is not simple water only, because in Baptism water is used by a special command of God— the water is applied in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost, thereby being connected with God’s Word. Furthermore, Jesus Christ is God who instituted Holy Baptism, “For in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily.” (Colossians 2:9) Accordingly, Holy Baptism is quite important.*

**“Let a man so account of us, as of the ministers of Christ, and stewards of the mysteries of God. Moreover it is required in stewards, that a man be found faithful.” (1 Corinthians 4:1-2)**

**“Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God.” (2 Corinthians 5:20)**

**“Let all things be done decently and in order.” (1 Corinthians 14:40)**

*Comment: In accord with Holy Scripture, the Christian Church on earth normally administers Holy Baptism through the called ministers of Jesus Christ. But, in cases of emergency, when a pastor is unavailable, any Christian should baptize; for, Holy Writ says to all Christians: “ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light: Which in time past were not a people, but are now the people of God: which had not obtained mercy, but now have obtained mercy.” (1 Peter 2:9-10)*

**“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)**

*Comment: Note that the underlined words in the above Bible verse imply that by Holy Baptism the baptized individual is received into communion with the Triune God, the one true God who is three distinct Persons, “For there are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost: and these three are one.” (1 John 5:7) “And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth.” (John 1:14) “For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ.” (Galatians 3:26-27) Observe that it is persons – human beings of all ages, all nations – who are to be baptized, being gifted with faith in Christ Jesus. Baptism is NOT to be administered to pets, ships, or any other non-human objects.*

Luther’s Small Catechism says: “*What distinction is to be made in baptizing?* (A.) Those who can receive instruction are to be baptized after they have been instructed in the principal doctrines of the Christian religion. (B.) Little children should be baptized when they are brought to Baptism by those who have authority over them.”

As we proceed with this Topical Bulletin, we will consider the Baptism of adults and little children in more depth, with Scripture references.

**“Ye men of Israel, hear these words; Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of God among you by miracles and wonders and signs, which God did by him in the midst of you, as ye yourselves also know: Him, being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain: Whom God hath raised up, having loosed the pains of**

death: because it was not possible that he should be holden of it. For David speaketh concerning him, I foresaw the Lord always before my face, for he is on my right hand, that I should not be moved: Therefore did my heart rejoice, and my tongue was glad; moreover also my flesh shall rest in hope: Because thou wilt not leave my soul in hell, neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption. Thou hast made known to me the ways of life; thou shalt make me full of joy with thy countenance. Men and brethren, let me freely speak unto you of the patriarch David, that he is both dead and buried, and his sepulchre is with us unto this day. Therefore being a prophet, and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him, that of the fruit of his loins, according to the flesh, he would raise up Christ to sit on his throne; He seeing this before spake of the resurrection of Christ, that his soul was not left in hell, neither his flesh did see corruption. This Jesus hath God raised up, whereof we all are witnesses. Therefore being by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost, he hath shed forth this, which ye now see and hear. For David is not ascended into the heavens: but he saith himself, The LORD said unto my Lord, Sit thou on my right hand, Until I make thy foes thy footstool. Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ. Now when they heard this, they were pricked in their heart, and said unto Peter and to the rest of the apostles, Men and brethren, what shall we do? Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost. For the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call. And with many other words did he testify and exhort, saying, Save yourselves from this untoward generation. Then they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls. And they continued stedfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers.” (Acts 2:22-42)

*Comment: The above words are part of a sermon the apostle Peter preached on the day of Pentecost, when the apostles were specially gifted by the Holy Ghost to preach God's Word in the various languages of the world. Notice that Peter preached key doctrines concerning Jesus Christ: that He is the Messiah foretold of old; that He performed miracles and wonders and signs; that He was crucified, died, was buried, bodily rose again, ascended into heaven, reigns at the right hand of God; and, that this Jesus is Christ the Lord. Additionally, Peter made it clear that Jesus Christ is who provides the forgiveness of sins. Furthermore, Peter testified and exhorted with many other words; so, there was undoubtedly hours of instruction that day for those in attendance. Subsequently, they that gladly received the word Peter preached – those who repented of their sins and believed on Jesus Christ as their Savior and Lord – were baptized. And, note well that those adults then continued in the teachings of the apostles.*

“But there was a certain man, called Simon, which beforetime in the same city used sorcery, and bewitched the people of Samaria, giving out that himself was some great one: To whom they all gave heed, from the least to the greatest, saying, This man is the great power of God. And to him they had regard, because that of long time he had bewitched them with sorceries. But when they believed Philip preaching the things concerning the kingdom of God, and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women. Then Simon himself believed also: and when he was baptized, he continued with Philip, and wondered, beholding the miracles and signs which were done.” (Acts 8:9-13)

*Comment: Observe that Philip had been preaching the things concerning the kingdom of God, and the name of Jesus Christ. Then, those men and women – the adults – who believed were baptized. Yes, the*

*people were instructed, and the adults, who came to faith in Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior, were subsequently baptized, confirming them in the faith.*

**“And the angel of the Lord spake unto Philip, saying, Arise, and go toward the south unto the way that goeth down from Jerusalem unto Gaza, which is desert. And he arose and went: and, behold, a man of Ethiopia, an eunuch of great authority under Candace queen of the Ethiopians, who had the charge of all her treasure, and had come to Jerusalem for to worship, was returning, and sitting in his chariot read Esaias the prophet. Then the Spirit said unto Philip, Go near, and join thyself to this chariot. And Philip ran thither to him, and heard him read the prophet Esaias, and said, Understandest thou what thou readest? And he said, How can I, except some man should guide me? And he desired Philip that he would come up and sit with him. The place of the scripture which he read was this, He was led as a sheep to the slaughter; and like a lamb dumb before his shearer, so opened he not his mouth: In his humiliation his judgment was taken away: and who shall declare his generation? for his life is taken from the earth. And the eunuch answered Philip, and said, I pray thee, of whom speaketh the prophet this? of himself, or of some other man? Then Philip opened his mouth, and began at the same scripture, and preached unto him Jesus. And as they went on their way, they came unto a certain water: and the eunuch said, See, here is water; what doth hinder me to be baptized? 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. And he commanded the chariot to stand still: and they went down both into the water, both Philip and the eunuch; and he baptized him. And when they were come up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord caught away Philip, that the eunuch saw him no more: and he went on his way rejoicing.” (Acts 8:26-39)**

*Comment: Philip expounded God’s Word – including particular prophecies concerning Jesus Christ found in the book of Isaiah – to a man of Ethiopia. Philip preached about Jesus Christ to that man. Then, the man confessed his faith in Jesus Christ, the Son of God. Realize that the fact the Ethiopian asked to be baptized indicates that Philip had undoubtedly instructed the man as to what Holy Baptism is; otherwise, the man would not have known to ask to be baptized. Thus, the adult Ethiopian was subsequently baptized and confirmed in the faith. Additionally, notice that the Bible does NOT say that the man went UNDER the water, just that he went INTO the water with Philip, who then Baptized him. Those who insist that baptism must be by immersion attempt to use the case with the Ethiopian as proof, which it obviously is not.*

**“And Saul, yet breathing out threatenings and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord, went unto the high priest, and desired of him letters to Damascus to the synagogues, that if he found any of this way, whether they were men or women, he might bring them bound unto Jerusalem. And as he journeyed, he came near Damascus: and suddenly there shined round about him a light from heaven: And he fell to the earth, and heard a voice saying unto him, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me? And he said, Who art thou, Lord? And the Lord said, I am Jesus whom thou persecutest: it is hard for thee to kick against the pricks. And he trembling and astonished said, Lord, what wilt thou have me to do? And the Lord said unto him, Arise, and go into the city, and it shall be told thee what thou must do. And the men which journeyed with him stood speechless, hearing a voice, but seeing no man. And Saul arose from the earth; and when his eyes were opened, he saw no man: but they led him by the hand, and brought him into Damascus. And he was three days without sight, and neither did eat nor drink. And there was a certain disciple at Damascus, named Ananias; and to him said the Lord in a vision, Ananias. And he said, Behold, I am here, Lord. And the Lord said unto him, Arise, and go into**

**the street which is called Straight, and inquire in the house of Judas for one called Saul, of Tarsus: for, behold, he prayeth, And hath seen in a vision a man named Ananias coming in, and putting his hand on him, that he might receive his sight. Then Ananias answered, Lord, I have heard by many of this man, how much evil he hath done to thy saints at Jerusalem: And here he hath authority from the chief priests to bind all that call on thy name. But the Lord said unto him, Go thy way: for he is a chosen vessel unto me, to bear my name before the Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel: For I will shew him how great things he must suffer for my name's sake. And Ananias went his way, and entered into the house; and putting his hands on him said, Brother Saul, the Lord, even Jesus, that appeared unto thee in the way as thou camest, hath sent me, that thou mightest receive thy sight, and be filled with the Holy Ghost. And immediately there fell from his eyes as it had been scales: and he received sight forthwith, and arose, and was baptized.” (Acts 9:1-18)**

*Comment: The adult man named Saul, whose name was later changed to Paul, came to faith in Jesus Christ when the Lord Himself called him. Subsequently, a disciple of Christ named Ananias was sent to Saul to restore Saul's sight and to baptize him. Saul had been a persecutor of Christians; Saul knew what Christians believed concerning the Lord Jesus. Saul was converted by Jesus Himself speaking to him from a blinding light; then, after the adult man named Saul was so instructed and came to faith in Jesus as Lord, he was baptized.*

**“Then Peter opened his mouth, and said, Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons: But in every nation he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with him. The word which God sent unto the children of Israel, preaching peace by Jesus Christ: (he is Lord of all:) That word, I say, ye know, which was published throughout all Judaea, and began from Galilee, after the baptism which John preached; How God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost and with power: who went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil; for God was with him. And we are witnesses of all things which he did both in the land of the Jews, and in Jerusalem; whom they slew and hanged on a tree: Him God raised up the third day, and shewed him openly; Not to all the people, but unto witnesses chosen before of God, even to us, who did eat and drink with him after he rose from the dead. And he commanded us to preach unto the people, and to testify that it is he which was ordained of God to be the Judge of quick and dead. To him give all the prophets witness, that through his name whosoever believeth in him shall receive remission of sins. While Peter yet spake these words, the Holy Ghost fell on all them which heard the word. And they of the circumcision which believed were astonished, as many as came with Peter, because that on the Gentiles also was poured out the gift of the Holy Ghost. For they heard them speak with tongues, and magnify God. Then answered Peter, Can any man forbid water, that these should not be baptized, which have received the Holy Ghost as well as we? And he commanded them to be baptized in the name of the Lord. Then prayed they him to tarry certain days.” (Acts 10:34-48)**

*Comment: A number of interesting facts are found in the Scripture passage quoted above. It is evident again that Baptism is for people of all nations, all races. Additionally, notice what key doctrines the apostle Peter preached— the Person and the works of Jesus Christ, the Lord of all, who is also true man: who died by crucifixion for the sins of the world, who triumphantly and bodily rose from the dead after three days, who in His resurrected body appeared to witnesses; and, who must be believed in if one would personally receive the forgiveness of sins. The crowd of Gentiles, who heard Peter preach and then believed, received a special gift from the Holy Ghost as they were able to speak in foreign languages, which they had not studied and learned by normal means. Subsequently, Peter commanded those*

*believing folks to be baptized with water in the name of the Lord; that is, in accord with the Lord Jesus Christ's command (which is Baptism in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost).*

**“And a certain woman named Lydia, a seller of purple, of the city of Thyatira, which worshipped God, heard us: whose heart the Lord opened, that she attended unto the things which were spoken of Paul. And when she was baptized, and her household, she besought us, saying, If ye have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come into my house, and abide there. And she constrained us.”**

**(Acts 16:14-15)**

*Comment: Observe that the Lord opened the heart of a woman named Lydia, so that she attended to – that is, she believed – the things preached by the apostle Paul. Lydia and her household were then baptized (her family probably containing people of various ages, possibly little children).*

**“And at midnight Paul and Silas prayed, and sang praises unto God: and the prisoners heard them. And suddenly there was a great earthquake, so that the foundations of the prison were shaken: and immediately all the doors were opened, and every one's bands were loosed. And the keeper of the prison awaking out of his sleep, and seeing the prison doors open, he drew out his sword, and would have killed himself, supposing that the prisoners had been fled. But Paul cried with a loud voice, saying, Do thyself no harm: for we are all here. Then he called for a light, and sprang in, and came trembling, and fell down before Paul and Silas, And brought them out, and said, Sirs, what must I do to be saved? And they said, Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house. And they spake unto him the word of the Lord, and to all that were in his house. And he took them the same hour of the night, and washed their stripes; and was baptized, he and all his, straightway. And when he had brought them into his house, he set meat before them, and rejoiced, believing in God with all his house.”** (Acts 16:25-34)

*Comment: Again we see that the apostle Paul preached to an entire household, speaking the Word of God to those folks, thereby instructing them in the principal doctrines of the Christian religion. And then, when all those in that household believed on the Lord Jesus Christ, they were baptized.*

**“After these things Paul departed from Athens, and came to Corinth; And found a certain Jew named Aquila, born in Pontus, lately come from Italy, with his wife Priscilla; (because that Claudius had commanded all Jews to depart from Rome:) and came unto them. And because he was of the same craft, he abode with them, and wrought: for by their occupation they were tentmakers. And he reasoned in the synagogue every sabbath, and persuaded the Jews and the Greeks. And when Silas and Timotheus were come from Macedonia, Paul was pressed in the spirit, and testified to the Jews that Jesus was Christ. And when they opposed themselves, and blasphemed, he shook his raiment, and said unto them, Your blood be upon your own heads; I am clean: from henceforth I will go unto the Gentiles. And he departed thence, and entered into a certain man's house, named Justus, one that worshipped God, whose house joined hard to the synagogue. And Crispus, the chief ruler of the synagogue, believed on the Lord with all his house; and many of the Corinthians hearing believed, and were baptized. Then spake the Lord to Paul in the night by a vision, Be not afraid, but speak, and hold not thy peace: For I am with thee, and no man shall set on thee to hurt thee: for I have much people in this city. And he continued there a year and six months, teaching the word of God among them.”**

**(Acts 18:1-11)**

*Comment: Note that the blaspheming Jews, who rejected Jesus Christ and God's Word, were NOT baptized by the apostle Paul. Only the Jews and the Gentiles who believed in Jesus Christ, after hearing God's Word preached to them, were baptized. Furthermore, those baptized folks continued to learn more of God's Word, as the apostle Paul taught them for a year and a half while dwelling at that location.*

As mentioned earlier (on page 2 of this Topical Bulletin), Luther's Small Catechism says: "What distinction is to be made in baptizing? (A.) Those who can receive instruction are to be baptized after they have been instructed in the principal doctrines of the Christian religion. (B.) Little children should be baptized when they are brought to Baptism by those who have authority over them."

We have covered part (A.); now we will cover part (B.): little children should be baptized when they are brought to Baptism by those who have authority over them.

**"And, ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath: but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord." (Ephesians 6:4)**

*Comment: Parents are responsible to bring their children up in the education, instruction, discipline and correction of the Lord. Little children are NOT to be kept away from God and His Word! The Lord Jesus Christ says: "Take heed that ye despise not one of these little ones; for I say unto you, That in heaven their angels do always behold the face of my Father which is in heaven. For the Son of man is come to save that which was lost. How think ye? if a man have an hundred sheep, and one of them be gone astray, doth he not leave the ninety and nine, and goeth into the mountains, and seeketh that which is gone astray? And if so be that he find it, verily I say unto you, he rejoiceth more of that sheep, than of the ninety and nine which went not astray. Even so it is not the will of your Father which is in heaven, that one of these little ones should perish." (Matthew 18:10-14) Accordingly, it is evident that little children – infants – are to be baptized!*

**"And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world. Amen." (Matthew 28:18-20)**

**"Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost. For the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call." (Acts 2:38-39)**

*Comment: Observe the underlined words in the Bible verses quoted above. Infants are certainly part of all nations; and, the Gospel promise includes children. Hence, children are to be baptized and instructed in God's Word later, as they continue to grow. "Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it." (Proverbs 22:6)*

**"Behold, I was shapen in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me." (Psalm 51:5)**

**"And they brought young children to him, that he should touch them: and his disciples rebuked those that brought them. 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. Verily I say unto you, Whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child, he shall not enter therein.** (Mark 10:13-15)

*Comment: From the moment of conception, one is a sinner, who is therefore in need of the forgiveness of sins and salvation which God provides. Holy Baptism is the only means whereby infants, who too, must be born again, can ordinarily be regenerated and brought to faith in Jesus Christ as their Savior and Lord. Indeed, Scripture is clear, "Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit." (John 3:5-6) Yes, we all must confess, as did the apostle Paul, "I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing: for to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not." (Romans 7:18) Our flesh is sinful from the moment of conception; regeneration is required!*

**"But whoso shall offend one of these little ones which believe in me, it were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and that he were drowned in the depth of the sea."** (Matthew 18:6)

**"Even so it is not the will of your Father which is in heaven, that one of these little ones should perish."** (Matthew 18:14)

*Comment: Note well that infants can believe; and, it is NOT God the Father's will that any infants should perish. Therefore, infants – little children – should be baptized into the Triune God!*

The Church custom of having sponsors or witnesses at infant baptisms is to have adults available to testify that children have been properly baptized, "...in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established." (Matthew 18:16) Sponsors are also to assist in caring and training those children (known as their godchildren) should they lose their parents. Also, sponsors and witnesses are to pray for those children.

There is still more to consider concerning **Holy Baptism**. Therefore, in next month's Topical Bulletin we will continue on with the subject.

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