

Non-Essential: Types of Baptism

In essentials unity, in non-essentials liberty, in all things charity.

This week we will discuss the improbable divisions over baptism. I say improbable because this is something that demonstrates the great lengths humans will go to divide.

Not only are there divisions about whether we should or should not baptize, but who should, at what age, what salvation means, whether it is required, and more.

Making a Mountain out of a Flooded Rained Upon Damp Dry Mole Hill

To the right is a grid that signifies the best I could do on only a couple pages to divide the different groups into two main categories: *Sacramental* and *Symbolic*.

This is not perfect as trying to nail down every church and denomination into clean categories is destined to lead to frustration. (It did.) So please give me grace if I got some of this wrong or if there are exceptions.

•**Peadobaptism** (Infant Baptism) is baptizing infants in a ceremony with godparents and other family members present who promise to raise the child correctly. (Some groups do a similar ceremony

Historic Christian Baptism Traditions	
<i>Sacramental</i>	<i>Symbolic</i>
Tend to be sacramental (salvific), sprinkling or pouring water over the person is most common but not exclusive, baptism for infants, children and in some cases those about to die (last rites), also tend to require for salvation	Tend to be symbolical (but is called a sacrament), pouring while in water or full immersion are normative, baptism is only for those who voluntarily choose it after salvation, tend to not be seen as necessary for salvation
<i>Catholics, Eastern & Oriental Orthodox, Anglicans, Lutherans, Presbyterians, Methodists, some Nazarenes, the United Church of Christ, Wesleyans, Episcopalians, Reformed</i>	<i>Evangelicals, Assemblies of God, Vineyard, Church of God, Calvary Chapel, Baptists, Disciples of Christ, Churches of Christ (various), many or most non-denominational churches, Foursquare, Church of God in Christ, Anabaptists, Mennonite, Amish, Seventh-Day Adventists, some Methodists, most Pentecostals</i>
Other Baptism Traditions	
Baptism for the Dead	<i>Mormons (cult)</i>
Don't Practice Baptism	<i>Salvation Army, Quakers</i>
In the Name of Jesus (but not the Trinity)	<i>Oneness Pentecostals (cult)</i>

without baptism, called *Baby Dedication*.) This is also called *Christening*.

- Origen (185-254) and Tertullian (155-230) both say that infant baptism was customary (although Tertullian recommends waiting) as a part of the family. This is based on the idea that whole families convert as a part of covenant. See Lydia's conversion in Acts 16:15, "she and members of her household were baptized..." with no reference to their faith or age. (Another family is baptized by Paul in 1 Cor 1:16).

•**Credobaptism** (Believer's Baptism) is baptizing "believers on the basis of his or her profession of faith in Jesus Christ and as admission into a local community of faith." This is also called adult baptism, "even though children may be baptized so long as they are old enough to earnestly profess their faith."

- "Christians who practice believer's baptism believe that saving grace...are gifts from God by the recipient's faith alone and cannot be imparted or transferred from one person to another (such as from parent to child) by sacraments such as baptism... Because infants cannot hear or believe the gospel message, they cannot repent nor profess Christ as the Son of God."

- Important passages in the Bible about baptism all include repentance with baptism. (Mk 16:16, Acts 2:38)

What's the point of Baptism?

In Romans 6, Paul tells the believers that we are baptized into Christ's death, baptized into his burial and were raised like Christ. This passage isn't so much about baptism as it is about following Christ, but it is a popular way of thinking about baptism: we are symbolically going under water (death) and coming out again (life).

Non-savific traditions see baptism as a "public expression of faith, symbolically representative of the inner conversion of the person being baptized." Salvific traditions see it as a necessary act in salvation.

Passages like John 3:3-5, salvation = "born of flesh and spirit" and 1 Peter 3:21 "water symbolizes baptism that now saves you..." can seem to point to a requirement for baptism for salvation. However, that is not good exegesis of the whole of scripture.

Jesus said to the thief, "you will be with me today in paradise" (Lk 23:43) and he wasn't baptized. We are saved by grace through faith and not any deed (work) according to Paul (Eph 2:9). No action can help us or make us be saved otherwise it would us saving ourselves and not Jesus saving we who are incapable of saving ourselves.

Matthew 28:19-20 says, "Go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you."

The Life & Death of Christ

Essential: The Life and Death of Christ

Was Jesus real? Did he actually live? Did he actually die? The question of the historicity of Jesus is paramount to our faith. Or as Paul says in 1 Cor 15:14-19:

“And if Christ has not been raised, our preaching is useless and so is your faith. More than that, we are then found to be false witnesses about God, for we have testified about God that he raised Christ from the dead... if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins...If only for this life we have hope in Christ, we are of all people most to be pitied.”

A Jesus who said the things he did and then died and stayed dead is not worth following. He would be a mad man. So either Jesus did live and rise from death or our faith is useless, futile and to be pitied.

Did the Bible say he was real and died? Uh, yeah.

What about non-biblical sources? Uh, yeah. The following is adapted from a class I called the *Historicity of Jesus*, from a series I taught in 2012 called *Has God Spoken?* (*Audio is available at ashertopia.wordpress.com*).

The Historicity of Jesus Game

For the following quotes, fill in the empty space

with one of these topics that they prove.

(Remember, even though these guys weren't Christians and were not interested in proving Jesus, what they say about him does prove Jesus.)

- A. Jesus was a real person**
- B. Jesus did miracles**
- C. Jesus died**
- D. Jesus rose from the grave**
- E. Jesus is God / worshipped as God**

____ “It was by means of sorcery that [Jesus] was able to accomplish the wonders which he performed... It is by the names of certain demons, and by the use of incantations, that the Christians appear to be possessed of [miraculous] powers.”
Celsus, Greek

____ “Chrestus, the founder of the [Christian] name, was put to death by Pontius Pilate, procurator of Judea in the reign of Tiberius.” – Tacitus, Roman

____ “Jesus had come from a village in Judea, and was the son of a poor Jewess... His mother had been turned out by her husband, who was a carpenter... she gave birth to Jesus, a bastard.” – Celsus, Greek

____ “[Followers of Christ] were accustomed to meet on a fixed day before dawn and sing responsively a hymn to Christ as to a god...” – Pliny the Younger, Roman

The Life & Death of Christ

_____ “Jesus had assembled 10 or 11... tax-collectors, sailors, and fishermen...” – Celsus, Greek

_____ “Jesus, on account of his poverty, was hired out to go to Egypt. While there he acquired certain [magical] powers... he returned home highly elated at possessing these powers, and on the strength of them gave himself to be a god...” – Celsus, Greek

_____ “Jesus, a wise man... was a doer of wonderful works... He was the Christ, and when Pilate, at the suggestion of the principal men among us, had condemned him to the cross...” – Josephus, Jew

_____ “Let us believe that these cures, or the resurrection, of the feeding of multitudes with a few loaves... these are nothing more than the tricks of jugglers...” – Celsus, Greek

_____ “The Christians, you know, worship a man to this day – he distinguished personage who introduced their novel rites, and was crucified on that account... it was impressed on them... [to] deny the gods of Greece and worship the crucified sage...” – Lucian, Greek

_____ “For [Jesus] appeared to them alive again on the third day.” – Josephus, Jew

_____ “[Jesus] was deserted and delivered up by those who had been his associates, who had him for their teacher, and who believed he was the savior and the son of the greatest God...” – Celsus, Greek

Who were these guys?

- Publius Cornelius **Tacitus** (56 –117) was a senator and a historian of the Roman Empire.
- Titus Flavius **Josephus** (37 – 100) was a 1st-century Romano-Jewish historian and hagiographer of priestly and royal ancestry who recorded Jewish history.
- **Celsus** was a 2nd century Greek philosopher and opponent of Early Christianity.
- **Pliny the Younger** (61–112) was a lawyer, author, and magistrate of Ancient Rome.
- **Lucian** of Samosata (125 –180) was a rhetorician and satirist who wrote in the Greek language.

Jesus is For Reals

Bottom line is this: we would know about Jesus and what his disciples and followers believed even without using the Bible as a source.

We can show historical, extra-Biblical evidence (along with trustworthy Biblical evidence) of what his followers believed and testified to: *That Jesus was born in Judea, did miracles, claimed to be God, was killed by Romans at the request of Jews, was resurrected a short time afterward and his eye-witness followers believed this resurrection so fully that they gave their life rather than recant their beliefs.*

When someone says that the Biblical accounts of Jesus’ life can’t be trusted all you need to do is tell them of these authors, none of whom were followers of Jesus.