

Christ's Great Commission and Infant Salvation

-- by Rev. Professor-Emeritus Dr. Francis Nigel Lee

We need to look at Christ's Great Commission. Just before He gave it, covenant children (*paidas*) had been praising Jesus. He Himself had then insisted that God had perfected His praise -- even out of the mouth of speech-less in-fants (*nepia*) and unweaned babies (*thelazonta*). Indeed, He soon went on to assure especially the tiny children in Jerusalem that He loved them just as much as a mother hen loves her own little chickens.

Soon after that, Jesus obviously included such speech-less in-fants (and other children too) -- among the God-praisers in "all the nations" to be baptized in terms of His Great Commission. For, as Isaiah predicted of Him -- "so shall He sprinkle many nations," and "He shall see His seed." Hence, Jesus commanded His Ministers: "Disciple all the nations, baptizing them!"

Also as far as His infant seed is concerned, the implied teaching of Christ's Great Commission is very clearly: first, belief; and only then, baptism. Hence, declared Jesus: "he who believes and is baptized, shall be saved; but he who does not believe, shall be damned!" Of course, this means all believers (the tiny ones too), and all unbelievers (the tiny ones too).

Against the views of all Baptists, we must insist upon executing the full thrust of Christ's Great Commission. For it not only permits but in fact requires that all apparent believers need to be baptized. This means not just older children and adults who profess belief, but also even all of the many tiny believers not yet professing.

For the very "nations" (including their babies) are to be baptized. Indeed, just before ordering baptism, Jesus commanded that the Gospel is first to be preached to "every" creature or human being -- including all infants.

The false notion that the (believing but unprofessing) babies of believers should be left unbaptized -- is an Anti-Protestant doctrine which denies the brand-mark of holy baptism to those who seem to be Christ's little lambs. For the risen Christ commanded His servants to feed not just His sheep, but especially His little lambs -- His *arnia* or *probatia*.

Advocates of the opposite and equally atrocious error would baptize unbelieving babies and unbelieving adults. Such erring advocates cast the pearl of Christ's sacrament before those deemed or deemable to be swine (or at least little pigs).

As the great Anglican and Puritan scholar Rev. Dr. William Wall rightly insists in his massive *History of Infant Baptism*: "Suppose our Saviour had bid the apostles, 'Go and disciple all the nations' -- but instead of 'baptize,' had said 'circumcise them!' An antipaidobaptist will grant that in that case, without any more words, the Apostles must have circumcised the infants of the nations as well as the grown men -- though there had been no express mention of infants in the commission."

Very frankly, because baptism has now replaced circumcision, the Great Commission has irrefragable paidobaptist force. Jesus has commanded His Church to subjugate

"the nations" as such (including their infants) to the Great Commission. Yet from their antipaidobaptistic viewpoint, Baptists would never wish "the nations" as such to get baptized. Consequently, their hypothesis is not only a sacramentological and an ethical but also an eschatological error.

"He that believeth and is baptized" -- includes babies! In the Great Commission according to Mark 16:16, we read: "He who believes and is baptized, shall be saved; but he who does not believe, shall be condemned."

Here, baptistic antipaidobaptists and inconsistent paidobaptists both allege -- that "infants cannot believe." In this, both are wrong.

For, thus Hebrews 11:6, "without faith [or belief] -- it is impossible to please God." This is so, whether one is an infant, or an adult.

Inconsistent paidobaptists often very wrongly divorce Mark 16:16 from infant baptism. Antipaidobaptists like Wall' s opponent Dr. Gale, in his work *Reflections on Mr Wall's 'History of Infant Baptism'* (II:441), rightly declare: "If these words must be extended to all, and applied to every one -- then no person, no not any infant, can be saved without faith." Exactly so!

However, it is only consistent paidobaptists who can transcend Gale -- and then go on to draw the really right conclusion. It is this. Because nobody can be saved without justification through faith, infants too must have faith in Christ, so as to be justified. For he who believes and is baptized, shall be saved; but he who does not believe, shall be condemned! Mark 16:16.

That is why Jesus commanded His Apostles [and in them also their ministerial successors] "that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His Name among all nations." Then, predicting the soon descent of the Holy Spirit into their midst, He further promised them: "I am sending the Promise of My Father upon you. But remain in the city of Jerusalem, until you are endued with power from on high!"

Here, the word ' endued' translates the verb ~~endusesthe~~ *endusasthe* in Luke' s account of Christ' s prediction. The verb also anticipates Paul' s later statement that "as many of you as have been baptized into Christ, have put on Christ (*endusasthe*)." It further anticipates Paul' s other accompanying statement: "If you are Christ' s, then you are Abraham' s seed!"

The above verb "endued" in Luke' s Gospel also anticipates his own later verses in the Book of Acts. For, at the beginning of the latter, Luke records Christ' s predictive statement that the apostles would "be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days" thereafter. When that occurred -- Luke tells us a little later in his Book of Acts -- it would fulfil Joel' s prediction that God would pour out His "rain" even on covenantal "sucklings" or unweaned infants.

Christ' s Apostle Peter himself also said so. For he rightly understood the full covenantal thrust of his Saviour' s prediction. Accordingly, he urged his Pentecost Sunday converts to "be baptized" -- and reminded them that the promise was also for "your children."

Later still, and then looking back, Christ' s same Apostle Peter would again remind Christian families that they had been "born again" and "sprinkled" even "as new-born babies." Indeed, he would add they had thus been separated unto God. He would then remind them about the ' baptism' of Noah' s entire household inside the ark. By the sprinkling of the rainwater, that had also separated them -- from the ungodly households outside the ark of the covenant.

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