

The Small Catechism of Doctor Martin Luther

The Fourth Chief Part: Baptism

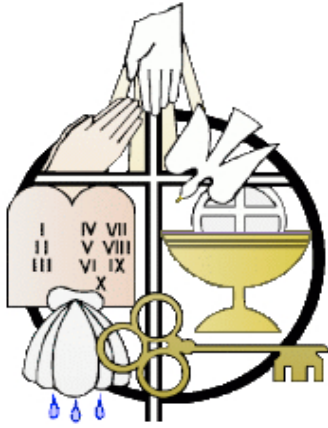
The Meaning of Baptism

What does such baptizing with water mean?

Such baptizing with water means that the old Adam in us should, by daily contrition and repentance, be drowned and die with all sins and evil lusts; and that a new man daily come forth and arise, who shall live before God in righteousness and purity forever.

Where is this written?

St. Paul writes, Romans 6:4: "We are buried with Christ by baptism into death, that just as He was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life."



People are so foolish as to separate faith from the object to which faith is attached and bound on the ground that the object is something external. Yes, it must be external so that it can be perceived and grasped by the senses and thus brought into the heart, just as the entire Gospel is an external, oral proclamation. In short, whatever God effects in us He does through such external ordinances. No matter where He speaks – indeed, no matter for what purpose or by what means He speaks – there faith must look and to it faith must hold. We have here the words, "He who believes and is baptized will be saved." To what do they refer but to baptism, that is, the water comprehended in God's ordinance? Hence it follows that whoever rejects baptism rejects God Word, faith, and Christ, who directs us and binds us to baptism. – Martin Luther, Large Catechism, IV, 30-31

FROM THE HOLY SCRIPTURES – John 3:1-8

"There was a man of the Pharisees named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews. This man came to Jesus by night and said to Him, 'Rabbi, we know that that You are a teacher come from God; for no one can do these signs that You do unless God is with him.' Jesus answered and said to him, 'Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.'



Nicodemus said to Him, 'How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter a second time into his mother's womb and be born?' Jesus answered, 'Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. Do not marvel that I said to you, "You must be born again." The wind blows where it wishes, and you hear the sound of it, but cannot tell where it comes from and where it goes. So is everyone who is born of the Spirit.'"

*Nicodemus visits Jesus by night
John LaFarge, oil on canvas, 1880*

A BIBLE VERSE TO REMEMBER

"Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. For the promise is to you and to your children, and to all who are afar off, as many as the Lord our God will call." – Acts 2:38-39