

# **Why I am *Not* a Paedobaptist**

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If you are like me, you have heard many (or all) of the Paedobaptist (PB) arguments in support of baptizing infants...and there are many. And more than likely, you will find that those who take the PB position, take it very seriously (and they should) and they consider it a great disservice to your child, if you fail to baptize him/her as an infant. This conviction is certainly understandable, and in fact, upon embracing *their* proposed circumcision/baptism connection, one would have to be quite ignorant not to share such a fervent and strong conviction about this matter. And so, we “Credobaptists” (CBs) are rebuked by our PB brethren, as those who are, at the very least sinning against God in some fashion, and at most, withholding a significant blessing from our children (depending upon the conviction of each individual PB) when we neglect to “administer the covenant sign of baptism” to them. For example, Charles Hodge, in the 3<sup>rd</sup> volume of his systematic theology stated, “Those parents sin grievously against the souls of their children who neglect to consecrate them to God in the ordinance of baptism. Do let the little ones have their names written in the Lamb’s book of life, even if they afterwards choose to erase them. Being thus enrolled may be the means of their salvation” (Vol. 3, p. 588).

Having heard the multifaceted argumentation of many PBs (who, at times, find themselves disagreeing with each other at various points of their argumentation), I have actually come to further embrace the convictions of CBs. In fact, I can say that I have been virtually overwhelmed with all manner of spiritual gymnastics and the “elasticizing” of texts by PBs to the point that I have said to myself, “How far must one stretch to try to force a circumcision/baptism connection?” Now, this is not to say that there are no similarities or connections between the two covenant signs at all, but to compress them together as virtually equal (especially with regard to their subjects), has seemed to be the equivalent of seeking to convince someone that a dog and a cat are identical simply because they both have fur, four legs and a tail. I have followed the PB string of arguments, and it just seems like they are fighting to accomplish what they would never fight to accomplish in any other doctrinal pursuit, namely, the building of a case for a doctrine that, if true, due to the nature of the doctrine, ought to be taught and seen far more clearly and expressly in the teachings of the New Testament.

My goal in this paper is *not* to present anything close to an exhaustive defense of CB. There are better qualified scholars who are far more capable of doing that on paper, than I am. I might

recommend, Fred Malone's book, "*The Baptism of Disciples Alone: A Covenantal Argument for Credobaptism Versus Paedobaptism*," to this end (Founders Press, 2003). However, I would simply like to present four key, basic reasons for why I am not a PB. This is not to say that no one has heard any of these arguments, but I would like to give more attention to them, with the hope that they might provoke further thought on the matter from both sides. It is so easy to get caught up in the *major* tenets of the debate without giving due consideration to even the basic ones. My desire is to simply highlight the basics in a way that would draw more attention to their consideration, as I believe they are very significant for determining where one stands in this ancient and ongoing debate.

**Reason #1: There is no single *clear* or *direct* command for believers to baptize their infants.**

Just how important was circumcision as a sign of the Old Covenant? In Genesis 17, we are for the first time, given the *very clear* instructions that surround and make up the sign of the Old Covenant, namely, circumcision. There, Abraham is told by God in verses 9-13,

“And God said to Abraham: "As for you, you shall keep My covenant, you and your descendants after you throughout their generations. This is My covenant which you shall keep, between Me and you and your descendants after you: Every male child among you shall be circumcised; and you shall be circumcised in the flesh of your foreskins, and it shall be a sign of the covenant between Me and you. He who is eight days old among you shall be circumcised, every male child in your generations, he who is born in your house or bought with money from any foreigner who is not your descendant. He who is born in your house and he who is bought with your money must be circumcised, and My covenant shall be in your flesh for an everlasting covenant.”

Here we see that God left Abraham with clear and detailed instructions about this new ordinance, which were to be followed precisely according to God's instructions. And one cannot help but notice that these instructions are thorough and complete. For example, we are given the duration of the sign, the category and gender of the subjects who may receive the sign, the time when the sign is to be performed, how the sign is to be performed...etc. And then in verse 14, we are further given the consequences that were to come upon those who did *not* receive the covenant

sign, among the people of God: “And the uncircumcised male child, who is *not* circumcised in the flesh of his foreskin, that person shall be cut off from his people; he has broken My covenant.”

Needless to say, receiving the sign of circumcision was a very significant matter in the Old Covenant. One who failed to receive this sign was “cut off” (put to death) from among God’s people for breaking the covenant. So serious was this matter that even the great prophet and leader, Moses, was on the verge of being judged (as God was preparing to kill him or his son) for failing to circumcise his son (Exodus 4:24-26).

Now, if we are to suppose with our PB brethren that baptism is the New Covenant equivalent of circumcision, and that, as such, it ought to be administered to our infant children, then we must, in some significant way, adopt this level of severity into our view *of baptism* as well. This, of course, is not to say that we ought to reinstate the law of exercising capital punishment upon all children of believers who are not baptized, but at the least, we can say that failure to baptize the infants of believers ought to be considered a “breaking of the covenant” in some significant way. Suffice it to say that the matter is very serious. In keeping with our text in Genesis 17, certainly the parents would be greatly sinning, and the children who are not baptized would themselves be considered covenant breakers. Yes, that is indeed very serious!

This then leads to my first main, basic reason for not being a PB. How is it that our God, who is *not* the Author of confusion, who has made Himself thoroughly clear in the instructions given in the Old Covenant (leaving the people without any excuse for failure to properly administer the sign) has *not, in one single statement* in the New Testament (which is a Testament that brings further clarity to God’s will and not less) commanded believing parents to baptize their infants? *Not one* single express command? Our God is a God of order and precision. He has proven Himself to be that way all along. He left Noah a precise blueprint containing every detail of the ark that was to be built (from the materials to every detailed measurement...etc). He left Moses a precise blueprint containing every detail of the tabernacle that was to be built (from the materials to every detailed measurement...etc). He regulated every aspect of the tabernacle/temple worship (which animals were to be sacrificed, how they were to be prepared and sacrificed, who the priests were and what they were to wear...etc). He gave us the fullest and clearest understanding of the Gospel in the New Covenant, so that we are without excuse as to what is expected of us in our salvation. And yet, this matter of baptizing infants; this very significant matter of baptizing infants

in accordance with the very serious sign of circumcision given in the Old Covenant...*not one single* direct command??? All throughout the Old Testament, no one could ever argue against the clear command for circumcising infants on the eighth day. Why, in the glorious and far better New Covenant; in a covenant that is extended *not* simply to Israel but to the *whole world* is there no such direct command? Concerning so serious a matter, how could such a direct command be lacking in all of the New Testament? Surely, the matter would be addressed even when the Apostle Paul is dealing with the controversial topic of circumcising gentiles in Acts or Galatians? But of course, it is not. And because of this, there have been a great multitude of deceived “Baptists,” all throughout the history of the New Covenant, who have all repeatedly broken the New Covenant (or at least caused their multitudes of children to break the covenant) in their failure to baptize their infants. Would our very thorough and precise God be the Author of this? Just give us one express command in a worldwide covenant (a covenant that is clearly different from the Old Covenant in at least some significant ways—Jer. 31:31-34) and a Baptist denomination would never exist, and many dear brethren would be spared from rending the New Covenant by their neglect of rightly administering the covenant sign to their infants.

And so, my first reason for not becoming a PB is simply that no clear or expressed command is given to baptize *anyone* who is incapable of giving a viable profession of faith. Baptism is *always* clearly linked to a “profession” of faith in Christ in the New Covenant. That is what is expressly taught and that is what is expressly exemplified in the New Testament (See all of John the Baptist’s baptisms in the four Gospels—the “circumcised” Jewish religious leaders, however, were denied baptism; Acts 2:38-41; Acts 8:12-13; Acts 8:35-39; Acts 10; Acts 16; Acts 18...etc).

**Reason #2: Nowhere in the New Testament are we given a single, clear *example* of an infant being baptized.**

Ok, so there are no clear and direct commands, which call us to baptize our infant children, but what of actual examples? If we could find but even one clear example of an infant being baptized then the matter would be resolved forever. Great...but there are *no* clear examples. Well, what of the “household baptisms,” which are spoken of in the Book of Acts and in a few of the

Epistles? Are we to presume that there were no infants in those households? Let us look at the five examples of household baptisms given in Scripture before answering these questions:

1) Cornelius (Acts 10-11:18): When we are first introduced to Cornelius in Acts 10, we are told the following: “There was a certain man in Caesarea called Cornelius, a centurion of what was called the Italian Regiment, a devout man and one who feared God with all his household, who gave alms generously to the people, and prayed to God always” (vs. 1&2).

Before Peter comes to preach to Cornelius, we are told that he was a devout and God fearing man *with all his household*. At this point, we can at least say that his whole household (“all”/”panti”) feared God in at least some sense. This would already seem to indicate that no *infants* are present (or any children who were incapable of making a viable profession of faith for that matter). And then, in chapter 10:44, we are told that, “While Peter was speaking these words [The Gospel], the Holy Spirit fell upon *all* (“pantas”) those who heard the word.” This would have included all who were from Cornelius’ house, as well as the relatives and friends whom he had invited to hear Peter speak (see also Acts 10:24). The Spirit fell upon *all* who heard. And then lastly, in chapter 11, when Peter was defending his actions among the gentiles (especially eating with them) to the other apostles and his accusers from among the circumcision, he stated in verses 13-15, “And [Cornelius] told us how he had seen an angel standing in his house, who said to him, ‘Send men to Joppa, and call for Simon whose surname is Peter, who will tell you words *by which you and all your household will be saved.*’ And as I began to speak, the Holy Spirit *fell upon them, as upon us at the beginning.*” Clearly, all who were of the household of Cornelius heard the word, were saved, received the gift of the Spirit and were baptized. None of these things could possibly be ascribed to infants. In short, this all happened at a time period when no infants existed in Cornelius’ house. And is this so unusual? Are there not many households even in our churches today that presently do not have infants or children incapable of making a viable profession of faith?

2) Lydia (Acts 16:11-15): Here we are told the following about Lydia, “Now a certain woman named Lydia heard us. She was a seller of purple from the city of Thyatira, who worshiped God. The Lord opened her heart to heed the things spoken by Paul. And when she and her household were baptized, she begged us, saying, ‘If you have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come to my house and stay.’ So she persuaded us.”

Clearly, we are not given much information about Lydia's household. Why is there no mention of her husband? Was she even *presently* married? Was she a widower? Did she have any children, and if so, of what age? What was the makeup of her household? None of this information is given us. All we know about this situation is that this woman Lydia heeded the Gospel spoken by Paul, was saved and she and her household were baptized. In keeping with the analogy of faith, we ought to presume that her household likewise *believed* with her, when they were baptized. Where silence is present, the Scriptural norm ought to be assumed. Two things can be clearly assumed with respect to Lydia. First, the emphasis here is on the marvelous grace of God in opening her heart as the Gospel spreads beyond the boundaries of Judah, and not on the specific details of the makeup of her household. And second, there is no indication whatsoever of an infant existing in Lydia's house. The burden of proof, therefore, ought to be on the PBs to prove otherwise, in the light of every other Scriptural example.

3) The Philippian Jailer (Acts 16:25-34): Following Paul and Silas' glorious Gospel response to the jailer's frantic question, "What must I do to be saved," we are told in verses 32-34, "Then [Paul and Silas] spoke the word of the Lord to him and to all who were in his house. And he took them the same hour of the night and washed their stripes. And immediately he and all his family were baptized. Now when he had brought them into his house, he set food before them; and he rejoiced, having believed in God with all his household."

Here we are told that Paul and Silas spoke the word of the Lord to the jailer and to *all* ("*pasi*") who were in his house, and *all* who were in the house rejoiced, having believed in God. The wording of this particular text is even more interesting in the Greek. The literal wording actually states that they, "whole-housely" ("*panoiki*") rejoiced (or exulted). The whole house rejoiced. Why? Because, with the jailer, they all believed the glorious word of the Lord that was spoken to them. It would, of course, be quite foolish to assume that an infant consciously joined this celebration here, wouldn't it? Clearly, there were no infants existing in the household of the jailer at this time, and in keeping with the clear teachings of Scripture, those who *believed*, rejoiced and were baptized.

4) Crispus (Acts 18:8): While at Corinth, we are told that Paul reasoned with the Jews (about the truth of the Gospel) in the synagogue. Though most of the Jews rejected Paul, some of the Corinthians began to believe him, including a man named Crispus. We are told in verse 8,

“Then Crispus, the ruler of the synagogue, believed on the Lord with all his household. And many of the Corinthians, hearing, believed and were baptized.”

We are not given much information about Crispus here. But what we are given is significant to our subject matter. Clearly, Crispus *along with his household believed* on the Lord. And then, following this, providentially, we are given the clear pattern that was adopted and embraced by all Christians in the apostolic church, namely, they *heard*, then they *believed*, and then they were *baptized*. Again, no indication whatsoever of an infant being baptized or even existing in the home of Crispus.

5) Stephanas: (1 Cor. 1:16; 1 Cor. 16:15&16). Again, here we are not given much information about Stephanas, other than the fact that his household contained some of the few Christians that the Apostle Paul had baptized. In chapter 1:16, we are simply told, “Yes, I also baptized the household of Stephanas...” And then in chapter 16:15-16, the Apostle states, “I urge you, brethren—you know the household of Stephanas, that is the firstfruits of Achaia, and that they have devoted themselves to the ministry of the saints—that you also submit yourself to such, and to everyone who works and labors with us.”

What do we know of Stephanas’ household? They were the firstfruits of Achaia, they were devoted to the ministry of the saints, and the Corinthians were to submit themselves to this household. Clearly, the entire household was made up of believers who loved and served Christ, and who ministered in some capacity (with the Apostle Paul) unto the church at Corinth. Every indication shows us that baptized believers were present and *not* baptized infants.

Having considered these five households, we can bring forth two clear conclusions, which speak to the present subject matter. First, there is clear evidence that in at least four out of these five examples, everyone in the household *believed* before they were baptized (and therefore, the one silent example (Lydia) ought to be considered in light of the other four examples before drawing any unique conclusions there). And second, not one single, *clear* example of an infant being baptized is given in the entire New Testament. As I have already stated, having a household without any infants (or children incapable of making a viable profession of faith) present is not so

uncommon (see also John 4:53). No express teaching/command and no clear example *anywhere* given. For these reasons, I am not a PB.

**Reason #3: Baptism outwardly signifies a *present, real* union with the risen Christ.**

One of the most glorious and profound realities of the Christian life is that we are actually united to the risen Christ! While this union is mystical, it is indeed real and powerful, and it is the very basis for our ability to fight and overcome sin. Consider a portion of the Apostle Paul's eye opening discourse in Romans 6, which addresses this reality:

“What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound? Certainly not! How shall we who died to sin live any longer in it? Or do you not know that as many of us as were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death? Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. For if we have been united together in the likeness of His death, certainly we also shall be in the likeness of His resurrection, knowing this, that our old man was crucified with Him, that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves of sin. For he who has died has been freed from sin. Now if we died with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with Him, knowing that Christ, having been raised from the dead, dies no more. Death no longer has dominion over Him. For the death that He died, He died to sin once for all; but the life that He lives, He lives to God. Likewise you also, reckon yourselves to be dead indeed to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus our Lord. Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body, that you should obey it in its lusts. And do not present your members as instruments of unrighteousness to sin, but present yourselves to God as being alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness to God. For sin shall not have dominion over you, for you are not under law but under grace” (Rom. 6:1-14).

Notice in verse 4, Paul states, “Therefore we *were* buried with [Christ] through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.” Here, the apostle Paul clearly teaches us that baptism is an outward profession of that which has *already* taken place in the believer's heart. The baptized Christian has *already* died with Christ. And he has likewise been raised with Christ. Sin no longer

has dominion over him and he walks in newness of life. He is born again. He can reckon himself dead to sin, because he *has been* regenerated by the Holy Spirit unto embracing Christ by faith (see also Gal. 3:26-27). Baptism is a picture of our *present, real* union with the risen Christ.

Who then ought to be baptized? Those who are *presently* in union with Christ; those who have a viable profession of faith in Christ; those who are walking in newness of life in keeping with the death and resurrection of Christ...professing Christians.

Would we dare say that infants (who are conceived in sin) have the Spirit of God within them and should therefore be baptized, so as to walk in newness of life? Have they been buried with Christ? Now, brother John Calvin seems to take a big leap of faith here, and he uses the examples of Jeremiah (who was sanctified in the womb) and John the Baptist (who was filled with the Spirit before being born) to justify the fact that an infant can have the Spirit of Christ. I would agree that this is definitely possible, but does a mere possibility (taken from two extraordinary examples) enable us to assume the case with all children of believers? Is this the norm, and is this what is evidenced in PB children for the most part? Certainly not! Let the Lord sanctify whom He will sanctify (when He so chooses to sanctify them), and let the Lord have mercy on whomever He chooses to have mercy (when He so chooses to have mercy on them), but we are far too frail to discern the Lord's plans. These two examples are extraordinary. In both cases, the one chosen has been set apart for a great and unique mission. Indeed, one of the two was chosen as a forerunner for the very Lord of glory! This certainly does not warrant the baptizing of our infants. And, in fact, as they mature in age, many PB children (like most children of believers even) evidence the fact that they do not have the Holy Spirit. Treating them as if they do (when they don't) can indeed do far more harm than good.

We see here, therefore, that in keeping with the normative pattern of Scripture, faith precedes baptism, and baptism is a picture of our *present* union with Christ. Before one can receive the ordinance of baptism, they must die with Christ. If they are not buried with Christ, then they are still in their sins, and we know that the *Holy* Spirit will not dwell with such persons, let alone dwell within them. Having the Spirit, one now walks in newness of life as well. Is an infant prepared to do this? If so, then why is it that many go astray in their later years? Can we not see, in this simple light, the error of baptizing infants? It is a practice, which is contrary to the very meaning of baptism.

Assuming the child later dies with Christ, can we not see the disorder here? It is as if we would throw our children into the new life, of which they would then make ship-wreck, only to later repent and make a true profession of faith. Why put the rite of baptism at the beginning (even assuming that they will be saved)? Why not leave it at its rightful place, and let the person profess publicly that which has indeed taken place within them? Otherwise, we are in danger of shaking hands with the Roman Catholics, at least in this one respect. For, they too speak, “Peace,” when there is no peace.

Some have said, “Well what of the hypocrite who makes a profession of faith and is baptized? They are not in union with Christ nor do they have the Spirit...etc.” This is very true, but the hypocrite has at least provided what appeared to be a viable profession of faith. An infant cannot do this. And the hypocrite, once discovered, is cut off from the church by means of excommunication (or some form of church discipline). We do have examples of hypocrites being baptized in Scripture (Judas Iscariot, Simon the Sorcerer, Demas...etc). However, again, we have no examples of infants being baptized. Only God knows the heart, but when no viable profession of faith is made, we are given enough information to know that the individual (infant or adult) is *not* eligible to be baptized.

Therefore, I am not a PB because baptism, unlike circumcision (which pointed forward to circumcision of the heart), portrays an *already existing* union between the one being baptized and the Lord Jesus Christ.

**Reason #4: There are significant differences between the Old and New Covenants and these differences relate directly to the subjects of each covenant, thereby affecting and changing who ought to receive the covenant sign.**

I don't know if there is any other topic within the realm of theology that has more confusion attached to it than the topic of God's covenants. In fact, you could probably safely say that if we all had a perfect understanding of God's covenants, there would be a universal denomination today. In other words, at the end of the day, a clear understanding of God's covenants would more than likely eliminate the differences between Reformed Baptists, Paedobaptists, Dispensationalists, Arminians, Antinomians and all of the other various groups that are found

within each denomination. Our view of the New Covenant is what ultimately distinguishes us from other evangelical denominations.

One of the key arguments in support of Paedobaptism is the argument that seeks to emphasize “continuity” between the Old and New Covenants. And by this means, our PB brethren identify a direct link between circumcision and baptism, the signs of each covenant respectively. And the logical conclusion, therefore, is, “since infants were circumcised in the Old Covenant (since they received the Old Covenant sign), they ought to be baptized in the New Covenant (receiving the New Covenant sign).” PBs would see this as a clear and evident implied connection between the covenants. It is for this reason that I must address this matter of “covenant continuity” before ending this paper. For a more thorough and detailed exposition of what I will attempt to say here, please see the fine work by Dr. Sam Waldron and Dr. Richard Barcellos titled, *A Reformed Baptist Manifesto* (Reformed Baptist Academic Press, 2004).

As we seek to approach this important matter, it is important that we begin by considering at least a very basic definition of the term, “covenant.” Borrowing Dr. Sam Waldron’s basic definition, “A covenant in the Bible, among other things, is the formal or legal basis of some relationship.” In the case of a marriage covenant between a man and a woman, the covenant contains various commitments and promises that both are to keep with one another (to love and cherish, to have and to hold, to honor and submit, in sickness and in health, for richer for poorer, till death do we part...etc). In the case of our relationship with God, a covenant is the formal or legal basis of our relationship with God. Our God is a covenant making/keeping God (especially as a ruling, sovereign Being) who forms covenantal relationships with people. For example, God’s relationship with Adam and Eve was covenantal. What was the covenant basis of their relationship with God? As long as they obeyed God and ate only of those trees which they were permitted to eat, and not of the “Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil,” they would have eternal life and fellowship with God. Were they to disobey God and eat of the forbidden tree, they would break His covenant, forfeit His fellowship and bring about certain death. Hence, in their breaking of the covenant, they were given the death sentence and kicked out of the garden, which was the place of fellowship with God. From that point on, the shedding of innocent blood was required to have any type of fellowship with God, because the original covenant had been broken. God’s

relationship with His people—Noah, Abraham, Moses, Israel—all throughout Old Testament history were all covenantal relationships.

Therefore, when we think of an “Old covenant” and a “New covenant,” right from the outset, we must think of God having (at least to some degree) a *different legal basis* for His relationship with those whom He is entering into a *New Covenant*. Having these thoughts in mind, let us consider the only Old Testament text that actually uses the term “New Covenant,” namely, Jeremiah 31:31-34:

"Behold, the days are coming, says the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah--not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt, My covenant which they broke, though I was a husband to them, says the Lord. But this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the Lord: I will put My law in their minds, and write it on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people. No more shall every man teach his neighbor, and every man his brother, saying, 'Know the Lord,' for they all shall know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them, says the Lord. For I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin I will remember no more."

Before seeking to consider a few important revelations given in this text, let me give a brief contextual overview of what is going on in the history of Israel at this time. Israel is in captivity for her failure to keep God’s covenant (not simply for her struggling with sin and failure, which the temple labors assumed, but for her complete abandonment of God and His Law in exchange for the worship of other gods and idols). The nation’s heart grew hardened to the point where the voice of God proclaimed by His prophets was ignored (in fact, many of the prophets were even killed and tortured) and God’s lesser judgments were ineffectual (at least in the long run) for bringing about the desired change. For the sake of the remnant (God’s elect), God uproots the nation of Israel from her land and casts her into a foreign nation, making her inhabitants slaves, with the intention of bringing about genuine remorse and repentance, ripening the remnant for His mercy, that He might once again restore them to the land of His blessing, making them fit to glorify Him as His peculiar people. The above text taken from the prophet Jeremiah follows God’s promise to once again restore the Israelites to their land. However, Israel’s continual breaking of the covenant all throughout her history ushers in the desperate need for a *New Covenant*.

Right from the beginning, evidence of this need surfaced. In fact, while Moses was on the mountain receiving the Old covenant stipulations, the Israelites fell into gross idolatry and already broke the covenant. This was pictured when Moses broke the two tablets of the Law. When you walk through the time of the judges with the repeated cycle of covenant breaking, judgment, repentance and restoration, and then the time of the kings, finally leading to the Assyrian and Babylonian captivities, there is clear evidence of a desperate need for a *New Covenant*, one which cannot be broken.

Hence, we can begin to appreciate Jeremiah's prophecy all the more, where God is speaking in light of Israel's present captivity, with a coming restoration in view, but a restoration that would dawn upon something far better and critically urgent, a *New Covenant*; a new "legal basis for God's relationship with His people;" one which would not be broken as the Old one had been *continually*; a *New Covenant* that is needed to deal with the main problem not addressed in the Old Covenant—the corrupt heart of man.

With this context in view, let us simply note something essential for a moment. Arguing for covenantal continuity, there are many PBs who would say that both covenants are virtually the same and that the New simply expands upon and renews the Old. However, while seeking to discern any level of continuity between the covenants, it is important that we allow the Bible to speak for itself, without inserting our own preconceived notions into it. In this context, we are told that the New Covenant will *not* be according to the covenant that God made with the Israelites during the time of Moses. This is not to say that there are no similarities (or that there is no continuity between the two covenants), but in our text, both directly stated and in its immediate context, Jeremiah seeks to emphasize *difference* here and *not* similarity. And why is this so? Because the *Old Covenant* has been broken (see verse 32).

As we look carefully at Jeremiah's words here, we find four clear distinctions between the Old and New Covenants:

1) In verse 33, we find that while the Old Covenant involved God's Law being written (by God) *on stone* (tablets) for His people to obey, the New Covenant involves God's Law being written (by God) *on the hearts* of His people. God's New Covenant is made with a people who are divinely regenerated, quickened by the Holy Spirit, with the Law written into their hearts. The

Law is not done away with in the New Covenant. It is simply taken off of the stone and placed into the heart. Recognizing, of course, that Christ has fully abrogated the ceremonial and judicial laws by fulfilling them in His atonement, and understanding the significance of God “writing” this Law, we would have to believe He is speaking about His moral Law here, or what we would call the “Ten Commandments” and the principles therein assumed. God writes His moral law *on the hearts* of those who are in the New Covenant.

2) Again, in verse 33, we find that unlike the Old Covenant, God’s people are “made willing in the day of His power.” That is to say that all of God’s New Covenant people, having the Law written *on their hearts*, will obey God from the heart and keep His covenant. Here, the “if/then” conditional language, which permeated the Old Covenant (i.e. “if you obey X and remain faithful, then blessing Y will come), is removed and replaced, as it were, with, “they will.” In the writing of the Law upon the hearts of His people, God ensures their obedience to His covenant (guaranteeing *not* perfection, but neither an abandonment nor a falling away nor a breaking of the covenant in the ultimate sense). Hence, He will be their God (the forfeiting of His people to their enemies is no longer a possibility) and they will be His people. They will, in their hearts, desire to know, love and serve God. This is a key blessing attached to the New Covenant.

3) In verse 34, we see that *everyone* in the New Covenant will know God. They will be regenerate, the Law will be written in their hearts and they will be reconciled to God. They will be His children in the truest sense. They will have a relationship with Him and know Him fully. We will come back to this point in a few moments.

4) How will they know God? How will they be reconciled to Him and be given His Law and His Holy Spirit? In verse 34, we are told that God will atone for their sins and remember them no more (see also Heb. 10). Through the shed blood of Christ, God will actually remove the sins of His people and atone for them.

This now brings us to an important question. If the New Covenant is a *different* covenant, and these four distinctions are the unique aspects of it, how then do we account for those who were faithful in the *Old* Covenant? In other words, did not David and Moses and Elijah and the rest of the faithful saints of old, have the Law written in their hearts? Weren’t they regenerate children

of God? Didn't they know God and have their sins completely pardoned? Clearly, when we consider such texts as, Psalm 37:31 ("The Law of his God is in his heart; his steps do not slip"), Psalm 9:10 ("And those who know Your Name will put their trust in You. For You, Lord, have not forsaken those who seek You.") and Psalm 32:1-2 ("Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered. Blessed is the man to whom the Lord does not impute iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no deceit"), the answer to these questions is a resounding, "Yes!" Well, how then do we explain the above four distinctions as clear differences between the Old and New Covenants in keeping with Jeremiah's prophecy? Simply put, the *faithful* in the Old Covenant also benefited from the spiritual benefits of the New Covenant even before it was actually inaugurated (see Heb. 9:15). Those who embraced the divine promise, namely the coming Christ, were already benefactors of the New Covenant, and their redemption which was then anticipated, was signed, sealed and delivered in the completed work of Christ. In one sense, you can say that they were a part of the Old Covenant and the New Covenant at the same time.

If this be the case, what is truly *New* about the New Covenant? The key that unlocks this whole mystery is found right in Jeremiah's prophecy in verse 34: "No more shall every man teach his neighbor, and every man his brother, saying, 'Know the Lord,' **for they all shall know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them**, says the Lord. For I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin I will remember no more."

"For they will ALL Know Me!" While the Old Covenant had some who did not break it and who knew God *in truth*, there were many (in fact probably most) who never knew God. For example, we are told of Eli's sons who were in the Old Covenant, "Now the sons of Eli were worthless men; they did *not know the Lord*" (1 Sam. 2:12). There was a need to teach those *already in the covenant* the need to know and obey God. Many of the people in the Old Covenant were unregenerate and therefore unable to keep the tables written on stone. God's New Covenant, however, is strictly with *regenerate* people.

In the Old Covenant, simply being circumcised and part of an Israelite household, placed one in the covenant. God indeed became a husband to the Israelites and took care of them and gave them all of the trimmings of the Old Covenant, but the real problem was that many (most) in that covenant were not circumcised *in the heart*. The burden of obedience was placed upon them even as children and they were called to keep that which was written on stone. But God now

makes His covenant with those whom He regenerates. He inscribes His Law in their hearts, removes their transgressions altogether and causes them to know Him in a personal way. We now reach out to those who are outside of the covenant, with the hope that God might regenerate them unto believing His glorious Gospel of Christ, so that they might officially enter into the eternal covenant with God. And God brings His chosen elect, those whom His love is set upon, into the realization of this covenant through the preached Gospel! And of course we know that in the New Covenant, God binds himself to a people from every tribe, tongue and nation!

This being the case, we give the New Covenant sign *solely* to those who are *already* in the Covenant. In the Old Covenant, you did not circumcise foreigners. You only circumcised those who were fixed in the Israelite community. Likewise, in the New Covenant you do not give the sign of membership, baptism, to any who are not in the covenant. And who again is in this covenant? Those *who have* the Law of God written in their hearts, those *who have been* reconciled to God and those *who know* Him because their sins have been forgiven in Christ. Again, a unique distinction of the New Covenant is that it is made with those who will *not* break it. God fixed the problem of the Old Covenant. “For they ALL shall know Me.” God makes His covenant with regenerate believers.

Hence, we do not baptize infants or those who are incapable of making a viable profession of faith. They neither did that in the New Testament nor is it to be assumed that, because infants were circumcised in the Old Covenant, they ought to be baptized in the New Covenant. That was the problem with the Old Covenant, which God fixed. It was made with unregenerate people. We have no warrant to assume that our children are in the covenant until they make a viable profession of faith. This is clear from Jeremiah’s prophecy. We can state the matter further this way: Circumcision *pointed forward* to that which was necessary to benefit in the truest sense from God’s blessing, namely, the “circumcision of the heart,” and baptism *looks back* to that which has already been accomplished in Christ. I *have been* united with Christ in His death and His resurrection. I *have been* crucified with Christ. The old man *has died* and the new man *has risen* with Christ. “For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as were baptized into Christ *have put on* Christ” (Gal. 3:26-27).

I am not a PB because, while there are similarities between the covenants and while there is some level of continuity between the covenants, there are clear differences as well, and those

differences relate to the subjects of each covenant, thereby affecting and changing who ought to receive the covenant sign.

## **Conclusion**

I have sought to provide the reader with four basic reasons for why I am *not* a Paedobaptist:

First, there is no single *clear* or *express* command for believers to baptize their infants. Second, nowhere in the New Testament are we given a single, clear example of an infant being baptized. Third, baptism outwardly signifies a *present, real* union with the risen Christ. Fourth, there are significant differences between the Old and New Covenants and these differences relate directly to the subjects of each covenant, thereby affecting and changing who ought to receive the covenant sign.

Understanding these four clear and basic Scriptural principles ought to lead us to avoid reading PB traditions and presumptive doctrines into texts of Scripture that have absolutely nothing to do with the baptizing of infants [i.e. Acts 2:38-39, which actually contains a promise to parents that if their children (or anyone else for that matter) *repent and believe*, they too will have their sins forgiven and be saved; Matt. 19:13-15, where Jesus blesses the little children and neither He nor his disciples (who, rebuking the mothers, were obviously not accustomed to giving attention to young children, let alone baptizing them) are recorded as having baptized anyone in this particular context, let alone infants;...etc].

To baptize an infant, therefore, is contrary to Scripture, and it violates even the very basic principles of biblical hermeneutics (as shown above). And furthermore, administering the New Covenant sign of baptism to infants carries with it many potential dangers. Treating your children as if they are in the covenant, when in fact such an assumption cannot be made until they exercise a viable profession of faith has very practical dangers. It can and will lead many parents away from centering their focus upon raising their children in need of the Gospel. It can and will lead parents to treat their unregenerate children as if they are already saved, labeling them “Christians,” when in most cases, they are not. It can and will lead parents to assume that their unregenerate children are able to discern spiritual things, when they cannot. And ultimately, all of this can serve

to repel our children, rather than draw them into Christ through the grace of the Gospel. Baptizing our children pre-confession can ultimately serve to produce rebels or Pharisees in our churches. I have heard PB brethren speak of Baptists doing their children such a great injustice by waiting to administer the covenant sign to their children (until they are able and willing to bring forth a viable profession of faith), but I believe that the Scriptures would confirm the very opposite. Treating someone as if they are in the covenant; treating someone without the Holy Spirit as if they are able to bring forth the fruits of the Spirit; treating my children as if they are in union with Christ, when they have no expressed desire to even be in union with Him...that is the greater injustice in my book.

I conclude then by making the following resolve: Until my children profess faith in Christ and exercise fruit confirming that reality, I will continually pour the Gospel into their souls, proclaiming it as their dire need. I will bring them to the Law to be judged so that they might cast themselves wholly upon Christ. I will not treat them as if they are already in the covenant, when Scripture nowhere warrants such treatment nor will I expect them to think in any other way than the way that an unbeliever thinks, until, by their viable profession of faith, I have the assurance (to the best of my ability) that they are in the arms of Christ. At such a time, and at no time earlier, with great rejoicing, I will gladly and tearfully see them baptized!

Herein, lays four basic reasons for why I am *not* a Paedobaptist.