

Holy Baptism (First Part)

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 into all the world and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost." [Matt 28:19]

1. The Lutheran approach to understanding the Sacraments is to begin at their institution, and see what they were made to be. Who instituted Baptism, and when?
2. What precedes the "therefore" of Matt 28:19? That is, what power is our Lord Jesus investing in Holy Baptism?
3. Can Holy Baptism therefore be treated simply as human testimony to a "decision for Christ?" If not that, what is it?
4. What follows the "baptizing" of Matt 28:19? That is, what is the "other part" of "making disciples"? How does it go hand-in-hand with Baptism? (see the Small Catechism's second question!)

From Luther's *Large Catechism* (IV: Baptism)

⁶⁻⁸ In these words you must note, in the first place, that here stand God's commandment and institution... For it is of the greatest importance that we esteem Baptism excellent, glorious, and exalted, for which we contend and fight chiefly, because the world is now so full of sects clamoring that Baptism is an external thing, and that external things are of no benefit. But let it be ever so much an external thing, here stand God's Word and command which institute, establish, and confirm Baptism. But what God institutes and commands cannot be a vain, but must be a most precious thing, though in appearance it were of less value than a straw...

¹⁰ For to be baptized in the name of God is to be baptized not by men, but by God Himself. Therefore, although it is performed by human hands, it is nevertheless truly God's own work. From this fact every one may himself readily infer that it is a far higher work than any work performed by a man or a saint. For what work greater than the work of God can we do?...

¹⁷ God Himself stakes His honor, His power and might on it. Therefore it is not only natural water, but a divine, heavenly, holy, and blessed water, and in whatever other terms we can praise it—all on account of the Word, which is a heavenly, holy Word, that no one can sufficiently extol, for it has, and is able to do, all that God is and can do (since it has all the virtue and power of God comprised in it).