

Is Infant Baptism a Biblical Mandate?

One of the amazing outcomes of the Reformation is that the Word of God was read by people in their own language for the very first time. Martin Luther translated the Bible into German. John Wycliff, William Tyndale, and Miles Coverdale translated the Bible into English with their lives at stake. So committed was the Holy Roman Empire in preventing the spread of the Word of God to the people, that they persuaded Kings to hunt down and kill Bible translators.

Wycliff, though hunted, was not caught before his death. He was tried posthumously, his body dug up and burned, and his ashes spread upon the river.

"Tyndale's translations were condemned in England, where his work was banned and copies burned. Catholic officials, prominently [Thomas More](#), charged that he had purposely mistranslated the ancient texts in order to promote [anti-clericalism](#) and [heretical](#) views... challenging key doctrines of the Roman Church. Betrayed to church officials in 1536, he was defrocked in an elaborate public ceremony and turned over to the civil authorities to be strangled to death and burned at the stake. His last words are said to have been, 'Lord! Open the King of England's eyes.'" wikipedia.org/wiki/tyndale_bible

Video of the sermon

Miles Coverdale was also hounded by the Holy Roman Empire in an attempt to take his life. He was often on the run – at least three times he fled England for safer ground in the Netherlands. It was costly then to follow Christ, to bring God's Word to the people as it is becoming costly again today.

But when the word of God was brought to Europe in the

Reformation, it meant difficult changes to restore the original design Christ had for His church. In my sermon last week, I spoke of the five themes of the Reformation: Sola Scriptura, scripture alone. Sola Fide, faith alone, Sola Gratia, grace alone. Solus Christus, Christ alone. Soli Deo Gloria, glory to God alone.

Beginning with Scripture alone meant looking at everything, including assumed ideas and long-standing traditions to see what the Word of God truly said. One of those difficult areas was baptism. As practiced throughout the Middle Ages, baptism was performed on infants with the teaching that such infants were thereby becoming part of the church, their original sin being cleansed away, and that they had begun to live a Christian life. Now that Christ had made the down payment by His death on the cross, they had to make weekly installment payments: confession, penance, mass, and so on. Those weekly installments, in theory, would pay for their sins after their baptism as an infant. Unpaid sins would have to be paid for after this life in purgatory. Salvation was a combination deal; Christ's work on the cross, plus good works, confession, penance, mass, etc. Note that once this theory caught on, thinking people concluded that it was best to be baptized, not as an infant, but on one's own death bed. For if baptism cleansed all the sins that went before, then were you to be baptized at death, you would have no sins left to pay for and would enter directly into heaven rather than purgatory. Thus was born the so-called sacrament of last rites. But what do we find when we open the scriptures regarding the Christian ordinance of baptism? Watch below:

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