

- o The so-called “proof-texts” are not used as proofs, but as support, of the practice of infant baptism. Thomas E. Watson (in his book, “Should Babies Be Baptised?” pp. 35-42), has shown clearly that paedobaptists disagree among themselves concerning whether or not each text supports or teaches infant baptism. However, many paedobaptists continue to refer to these “proof-texts” when questioned by Baptists regarding infant baptism.

1. Acts 2:38-39, the promise of the covenant to the children.

- o Paedobaptists like Louis Berkhof, John Murray, and George Marston sometimes cut the text off at “the promise is to you and to your children...” and declare that the Jews who heard Peter’s words immediately assumed that the covenant sign of baptism was to be administered to their children. However, the text also states that the promise is “to those afar off, as many as the Lord shall call to Himself.”
- o There are two things that must be defined in this text: (i) What is the “promise”? (ii) Who is to receive it?
 - The word “promise” (“epaggelia”) in v. 39 refers to the promise of the Holy Spirit, who is poured out through Christ’s mediation (Luke 24:49; Acts 1:4; 2:33).
 - : One might point out that this was a Jewish audience and that the hearers would immediately think of the promise to Abraham and to his seed. Our response is, Yes, indeed this is so. But the promise to Abraham is not to be understood as giving the covenant sign of baptism to all the children of believing parents, for this would involve the following assumptions: (i) that believing parents are to follow the example of Abraham; (ii) that circumcision has been replaced by baptism; (iii) that the covenant sign is now to be extended to all children instead of just male children; (iv) that the covenant sign is to be limited to children of the family, but not to be given to servants in the family (cf. Gen 17:12-13).
 - : The correct understanding of “Abraham and his seed” is that through Abraham’s final physical Seed, Jesus Christ (Gal 3:16), the Holy Spirit will be given to Abraham’s spiritual seed, i.e. those who have faith in Christ (Gal 3:26, 29; Rom 4:13, 16; 9:6-8). The promise is the out pouring of the Holy Spirit, as prophesied throughout the OT (Joel 2:28-29; Ezek 36:26-27).
 - The recipients of the promise are those who have faith in Christ (Gal 3:22; Rom 4:16).
 - : In Acts 2:38, the promise of the Spirit is offered to those who repent and believe in Christ. Ac 2:39 shows that those offered this promise included the immediate hearers, their descendants, and others in distant places - “as many as the Lord our God will call.” This last phrase qualifies the offer of the promise to those three categories of people, consistent with the condition of Acts 2:38, viz. the need for repentance and faith in Christ.
 - : This understanding of Acts 2:38-39 is also consistent with the Great Commission of Matt 28:18-20, in which there is the “spatial aspect” (“make disciples of all the nations”) as well as the “temporal aspect” (and lo, I will be with you always, even to the end of the age”).

2. 1 Corinthians 7:12-16, “holy children.”

- o This concerns the children of a mixed marriage, in which one spouse becomes a believer after marriage (cf 2 Cor 6:14). The children are declared as “holy” instead of “unclean.” Paedobaptists use this to illustrate the special position of believer’s children “in” the visible church and “in” the Covenant of Grace, thus giving them the right by physical descent to baptism.
 - G. I. Williamson is typical of paedobaptists who use this passage wrongly, claiming that “The word translated holy is the standard word in the New Testament for professing adult Christians (often translated saints). Paul calls these infants saints.” But this is a wrong interpretation, for at least five reasons.
 - : First, the context has been ignored. The immediate context is that Christians should stay in the condition of life they were in when saved (1 Cor 7:20, 24, 26-27, 40). The marriage is still valid in God’s sight, and the children need not be put away, as required in the OT (Ezra 10:2-3). If paedobaptists believe that Acts 2:38-39 must be read through the eyes of the Abrahamic Covenant, then surely 1 Cor 7:14 must be read through the eyes of Ezra 10:2-3. But Paul is teaching that under the New Covenant, believers should stay with their unbelieving spouses and the children of the marriage are accepted by God as holy. Paedobaptists have shifted the emphasis to the “holiness” of the children, when the emphasis is actually upon whether the

marriage is valid.

- : Second, the word translated holy is not a noun for “saints” but actually an adjective meaning “set apart,” which contrasts with the adjective “unclean” (1 Cor 7:34). Furthermore, the husband “is sanctified,” which usually refers to Christians, as well as things, set apart or approved (Heb 10:14; 1 Tim 4:5). If children are regarded as saved, the unbelieving spouse would have to be regarded as saved as well.
- : Third, Paul may be dealing with the parallel situation of a Jew married to a Gentile, producing unclean children as in the case of Timothy (Acts 16:1). Under the Sinai Covenant (Dt 23:2), the children of an illegitimate union could not enter the assembly of God’s people. God, however, has changed the status of Gentiles in the New Covenant administration. The unbelieving spouse and therefore the children in this mixed marriage are not unclean, but holy
- : Fourth, Williamson’s view fails to take into consideration that children of mixed marriages may be called holy because they have a gospel heritage as opposed to children without Christian parents. In Rom 11:16, Paul considers the physical descendants of Abraham as holy because of their heritage (cf Rom 9:1-5). However, these “beloved for the sake of the fathers” (11:28) shall be grafted in again if they do not continue in unbelief (11:23). Similarly, the children of believing parents are holy because of their gospel heritage, but they are not in the New Covenant administration until they believe.
- : Fifth, 1 Cor 7:14 does not refer to baptism at all. Much is made of baptism when the passage is about the validity of a mixed marriage.

3. 1 Corinthians 10:1-14, “all baptised in Moses.”

- o The paedobaptist argument is that all were “baptised into Moses” when they passed through the sea on dry ground, including the infants. Thus, by good and necessary inference, here is an example of infant baptism from the OT. But this must be rejected for various reasons.
 - First, Paul is speaking figuratively, and one must be careful not to press in every detail and draw out too much from a figurative passage.
 - Second, the context is to warn every professing Christians not to fall into sin as those in the wilderness (10:1, 12 cf 1 Cor 1:2). Infants are not the intended recipients, neither is baptism the topic.
 - Third, Paul identifies “our fathers” as the subject of this illustration. He is dealing with those who consciously craved evil things and were punished by God, not their infants (10:1; Heb 3-4)
- o The same passage is used by some to justify sprinkling or pouring as the true form of baptism - “in the cloud and in the sea”(10:2).
 - Again, a figurative passage cannot be used to establish a practise contrary to the clear meaning of “baptizo” (to dip/immerse) in the NT.
 - Infants in the wilderness were not circumcised. If we argue like the paedobaptists, shouldn’t we conclude that children today should not be baptised?
- = The so-called proof-texts do not support infant baptism. Bad exegesis is involved, e.g. not taking a passage in context, establishing a practise from a figurative passage, and overruling the clear teaching of the NT.
- = If anything, the proof-texts actually support the baptism of disciples alone.