

## Solemn vows

This simple and yet wonderfully profound sacrament does need to be taken with due seriousness and solemnity. In this respect we particularly draw your attention to some solemn vows you will be asked to make.

As we pointed out, this is not a Christening where things happen automatically. Your part of the covenant is to nurture your child in the things of the Lord. This needs to happen by both word and example.

With respect to “word” it will mean teaching your child the Bible and the truths it contains. Most Christian families begin to read a suitable Children’s Bible with their child from a very early age. As their understanding grows they will also need to grasp the truths summed up in that great Creed that is reproduced on this pamphlet.

With respect to “example” this ought to include worshipping together as a family so that your child will learn the importance of our communal praise of God for the wonderful blessings of the gospel of Jesus Christ..

Rest assured that your church wishes to support you in any way it can and for that reason the congregation too is asked to make a solemn vow to help you fulfil your responsibilities as a Christian parent..

It is our prayer that your little one will come to understand the wonder of God’s love and learn to rejoice in the Lord Jesus Christ as Saviour and Lord.

## *APOSTLES’ CREED*

I believe in God the Father Almighty,  
Maker of heaven and earth.

And in Jesus Christ, His only Son,  
our Lord.

Who was conceived by the Holy  
Spirit,

born of the virgin Mary;

Suffered under Pontius Pilate,  
was crucified, dead, and buried;

He descended into hell.

The third day He rose again  
from the dead;

He ascended into heaven,

and is seated at the right hand of God  
the Father Almighty;

From there He shall come to judge  
the living and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Spirit,

the holy catholic Church,

the communion of saints;

the forgiveness of sins;

the resurrection of the body,

and the life everlasting.

**You,  
your child  
and  
Baptism**



## The status of our kids

We hardly need reminding that children are a wonderful blessing from the Lord. Their specialness is evident not only in the months of preparation that goes into welcoming a new child but especially the excitement at the child's arrival - an excitement usually shared by family and friends.

In the Lord's eyes children are special too. The psalmist put it this way, "Sons are a heritage from the LORD, children a reward from him." (Ps.127:3). In the Old Testament they were included in the covenant that God had made with his people. Abraham was commanded to circumcise every male child born into his family. This marked the child as belonging to the Lord in a very special way. The heart of the covenant arrangement was that God would be their God and they would be His people. As part of a covenant family the children too could claim the promise of God's love and protection even as they were called to live a life of faith and obedience as they grew up.

In the New Testament Jesus is the fulfilment of the covenant promises and baptism now takes the place of circumcision (Col.2:11,12). That our children too are included is evident in that Jesus took them in His arms and blessed them (Mat.19:14). Not surprisingly therefore whole households were baptised when they were converted (Acts 16:15).

## The two parts

One of the features of a covenant is that it has two parts - think of it as a contract initiated by God.

First, there is God's part. In the covenant God makes promises. For us as new covenant believers the promises that are given are forgiveness of sins and eternal life - together with all the glorious blessings associated with that.

Second, there is our part. As God's covenant people we are called to faith and obedience. It's our duty to trust in the finished work that Jesus accomplished on the cross and to live a life of gratitude for that wonderful salvation.

Some Christians argue that infants should not be baptised until they come that point of faith. The argument is that they are not yet able to fulfil their part of the covenant. However we have shown that Scripture treats children as belonging - belonging to Jesus and His church.

A comparison may be helpful. When a couple get married they usually take out medical and health insurance. But their children are included in that family health cover. But when children grow up and commence work they then need to take out their own health insurance. In a similar way children of believers are called holy on the basis of the faith of their parents (1Cor.7:14).

## Sign and seal

In our churches we do not do Christenings. The idea of Christening is that in baptism a child actually becomes a Christian. Some argue that in Christening the child's original sin is taken away - or the seed of faith planted in the heart of the child.

In contrast we believe that baptism is a sign and a seal. Baptism does not *make* this child of a believer special, it simply *shows* that this child is special and *confirms* the special nature of that child.

As a sign the sacrament of holy baptism is really God's picture language. It's a picture reminding us that in Jesus we are washed clean of all our sins. In those sad situations where an infant dies we believe that this child of believing parents goes to be with the Lord. However - not because this child was born innocent (Psalm 51:5) but simply because in His grace God includes the young children of believers within His covenant community and covers them with the cleansing blood of Christ that is symbolised in baptism.

As a seal the sacrament of baptism is given to us to reassure us of God's faithfulness and His love for us - that He *will* keep the promises that He has made to us in the gospel. Just as an ancient wax seal on a scroll guaranteed that it was sent by the king so baptism guarantees the blessings God promises us through the work of Jesus.