28   Baptism - What others believe

During the late 4th and 5th centuries, Saint Augustine laid the foundations for infant baptism in the Roman Catholic church. According to him, people are born with an affinity for sin and, as descendants of Adam and Eve, share in the guilt of original sin. Saint Augustine stressed the importance of infant baptism, a ceremony in which the child's head is sprinkled with water to cleanse its soul and prepare it for a life in Christ.

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Christening
Mark 10:14; Matthew 18:4

These verses are used to justify the widespread practice of "baptising" infants. What was Jesus really saying?

How do the principles you learned about last week compare with the practice of sprinkling infants or dipping their heads in water?

Confirmation?

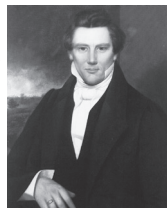Have a discussion about what this is and what it means. What do you conclude?

Baptism for the dead.
1 Corinthians 15:29

Does this passage mean that we can save those who have died by being baptised for them, as Mormons believe? Or can we only be baptised to save ourselves?

Mormonism

Joseph Smith, was the founder of the 'Latter Day Saints'. During the late 1820s he became the leader of a group of followers who believed that an angel had given him a book of golden plates containing a religious history of ancient American peoples. He said he had translated the writing on the plates from an unknown language into English; and in 1830, he published the translation as the Book of Mormon and organized what he said was a restoration of the early Christian church.

In 1840 he declared that those who had died before hearing the gospel could have vicarious baptisms done on their behalf.

Joseph Smith apparently first considered the propriety of baptism for the dead after reading the only biblical reference to it: "Else what shall they do, which are baptized for the dead, if the dead rise not at all? Why are they then baptized for the dead?" (I Cor. 15:29). His consideration led to the full-fledged development of the doctrine. He made the first public disclosure of it on 15 August 1840 in Nauvoo at the funeral sermon of Seymour Brunson. Simon Baker later remembered that Joseph Smith told the congregation that although baptism was necessary for salvation, "people could now act for their friends who had departed this life, and . . . the plan of salvation was calculated to save all who were willing to obey the requirements of the law of God". At the October 1840 conference the Prophet instructed the Saints of Nauvoo about baptism for the dead and called for the construction of a temple, in part to accommodate the ritual which was then being conducted in the Mississippi River.

from Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought, vol. 23, no. 2, p. 63)

Joseph Smith's plans for the temple included the design of an unusual baptismal font in which they could perform their proxy baptisms.

Inside every Mormon Temple is a baptismal font based on this design.

The baptismal font is situated in the center of the basement room, under the main hall of the Temple; it is constructed of pine timber, and put together of staves tongued and grooved, oval shaped, sixteen feet long east and west, and twelve feet wide, seven feet high from the foundation, the basin four feet deep, the moulding of the cap and base are formed of beautiful carved work in antique style. ...

The font stands upon twelve oxen, four on each side, and two at each end, their heads, shoulders, and fore legs projecting out from under the font; they are carved out of pine plank, glued together, and copied after the most beautiful five-year-old steer that could be found in the country

History of the Church, vol. 4, p. 446

So what conclusions would you draw?

How does this compare with the principles of baptism that you looked at in the previous topic?

Why do we need to understand the gospel before baptism?