

Jnana Bodhini

Faith Study of our Church

Holy Baptism and Holy Chrismation.

(Excerpts from the book Jnana Bodhini written by: H.G. Dr. Yuhannon mar Theodoras with His Grace's permission.)

Sacrament

1) What is sacrament?

In Syriac, the word meaning of sacrament is “make it holy”. The sacred service instituted by Jesus Christ through visible means of service and deeds to obtain invisible grace of God to us, is known as sacrament. We see God’s presence for particular fulfilments of our needs in sacraments. We see His presence and soft touch with love and strength in time of need and our ascension to Him to obtain the fullness of life in Him. This is what we do through sacraments.

2) Why do we refer sacraments as “Secrets”?

By the word ‘secrets’ it means the revelation of God’s plan for the salvation of mankind that was hidden from the beginning of ages and was fulfilled through Jesus Christ in due time. The manifestation of the God’s plan fulfilled through Jesus is rehearsed in this world through worship, commitments and praise that is in liturgy of holy sacraments. Hence we call these holy sacraments as secrets.

3) What is the most important sacrament?

Jesus is the most important sacrament. What He did is He changed sons of man into sons of God and compromised God with men. In order to do this He incarnated as human to make unity in himself, in soul and body, gentiles and Jews, heaven and earth, even the whole creation.

4) Is it possible to say exactly how many sacraments are there?

No. The reason is, since in God’s creation, everything is good and every object can be an object for sacrament. The world itself can be a sacrament. Every event in our life can turn in to a sacrament. It was officially declared that the number of sacraments is seven by the Council of Trent at Rome (1545-1563 with interruptions, by Roman Catholic Theologians). Due to the influence of western churches, it is observed as seven in our Orthodox church too.

5) How many important sacraments are there? What are they?

Seven. H. Baptism, Chrismation, Confession, H. Qurbana, Priesthood, Marriage, Unction.

6) What sacraments are supposed to be observed compulsorily by a faithful?

They are Baptism, Chrismation, Confession, H.Qurbana, and H. Unction.

7) Which sacraments are not repeated?

Baptism, Chrismation and H. Priesthood

8) Is there any special meaning for the digit “7”?

The digit seven occurs several times in the Bible. (Genesis 4:24; Numbers 23:1; Chron. 29:21; Revela.1:4; 3:1; 4:5). It is interpreted as a number of completeness (perfection). Three is found in Trinity and four is taken for the complete creation. The number that joins the creation and the creator is the sum of three and four that is seven. Some interpret it in this way.

9) What are the aim and importance of sacraments?

For Christ:

- Bring our lives in unity with Trinity
- Strengthen our faith in Christ.
- To bring the believers as part-takers of Christ’s life
- To free us from sinful deaths.

It also showers the glorifying eternal life to us. We can also attain the kingdom of God through the sacraments. It leads us to an ultimate aim of making ourselves Godliness.

10) What is the relationship between the Holy Spirit and sacraments?

Everything that is touched by the H. Spirit will change. It is made Holy. It is the Holy Spirit that acts, cleans and completes through all the sacraments. For example: Holy Qurbana; How Jesus turned water into wine. (John 2:1-11)

11) What is the meaning of sacramental life?

It is a mystical life in Christ we obtain through the grace of God which is achieved through sacraments to become one in God.

12) Which is a sacrament of sacraments or the “Queen of Sacraments”?

It is the Holy Qurbana. Every other sacraments and worships are for preparing ourselves to receive this Holy Sacrament or actions to make it complete. That is, it is fulfilling the completeness of all the other completeness.

13) What is the foundation of all sacraments?

The foundation of all the sacraments which we call as the mysteries is God's unlimited love for mankind and the incarnation of God as man to fulfil that love.

Holy Baptism

1) What is Baptism?

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| 1. Wash and clean; | 2. Entering in to a new life; |
| 3. A rebirth from the heaven; | 4. A drafting in to the body of Christ; |
| 5. A partnership with Jesus in His royalty, priesthood and prophet hood; | 6. Remission of sins; |
| 7. Salvation; | 8. Dwelling of Holy Spirit |
| 9. Robbed with unperishable garment; | 10. Freedom from sin, death and laws governing them. |

Thus there are many different meanings in the great mystery of Holy Baptism.

2) Who wrote the liturgy of H. Baptism?

It is the St. Severios of Antioch who wrote the worship book for Baptism in Syrian Church (+538). The book that was written in Greek was later translated by James of Edessa (+708) in to Syriac. The worship book that we are using in Malankara church is the one which is modified by the then Catholicos of the East Bar Ebraya (+1286) in the 13th century.

3) How many parts ate there in the liturgy of Baptism?

There are 4 parts.

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| 1. Preparation for receiving Baptism | 2. Baptism |
| 3. Holy Chrismation | 4. Receiving of Holy Qurbana |

Part 1- The preparation for receiving Baptism

a) How many parts are there in the preparation? Describe each part.

Through the introductory prayers, songs and the readings of promion and sedera, we are praying for mercy and grace and for the salvation of the baby's soul and dedicate the child into the hands of God. We also pray for him or her getting qualified for born- again and also pray to clothe the child in unperishable garments and make him or her grow in fullness in Christ and at last to receive a good ending.

b) What are the main ideas in the introductory prayers?

There are two main ideas here:

1. The prayer of the main celebrant asking to make him eligible to celebrate this Baptism in fire and spirit
2. It is a prayer asking to grant salvation for the child who was born from a worldly mother to born again from the new mother who is the Church, through this sacramental worship of Holy Baptism.

c) What are the songs of Psalms we sing after that what is its meaning here?

There are different songs we sing in Kukkilion for male and female child. For a male child we sing the first part of 29 th Psalms (1-4). There are two meanings for these verses here. One it proclaims the power of the H. Spirit that hovers over the water. When our Lord received His Baptism, the proclamation of God's word "This is my beloved son..." was reverberated over the water of Jordan river. Secondly it is an invitation for the candidate who is receiving baptism to dedicate himself to God for the Glory of God. "Worship the Lord in holy splendor" (Psalm 29: 2) this invitation is a visible mark of ones dedication to ones God.

If the baptism candidate is female we sing Psalm 45: 10-13 in Kukkilion. This Psalm was sung during the wedding of an Israel's king. In the background of Christianity, it is a song that brings out the unbreakable relationship between the Christ the bridegroom and Church the Bride. In this context, this is an invitation for baptism candidate to hear and receive our Lord; an invitation to cast away the old self and renew and become the new self. The common invitation through these two kukkilions is through this baptism he/she dedicating him or her to the Lord and become Lord's servants in this world.

d) What is mentioned in Promion, sedera prayers?

Through these promion prayers we are praising Lord for instituting this Baptism to the church. "We are praising that Lord who is the true light and who instituted the sacrament of H, Baptism through His praiseworthy divine knowledge to sanctify His flock of sheep." This is the meaning of the prayer.

The sedra prayer is an intercessory prayer for the baptism candidate. All these prayers are submitted to God the Son. It is shown as: the Church as a manger, Lord as a shepherd, and the baptism as the door to the manger (Isaiah 40:11; Ezekiel 34:11; John 10:10; 1 Peter 5:2 see these). Through baptism what happens is an attraction towards the Lord, our good Shepherd. In these sedra prayers, some conditions are also mentioned for this attraction.

1. Make yourself clean through a bath: Physical and spiritual cleanliness is most important in Christian life (Isaiah 11:6; Jere. 4:14). Holy Baptism is viewed as a sacrament of sanctification and redemption of sins.

2. Enter into water-flow of salvation and to the springs of Life: Water we use for baptism is the water of salvation. Through the sacraments it is changed into water of Life and spring of Life. When this water flows with the presence of God, it gives salvation to the faithful (Psalms 36:9; Isaiah 12:3).

3. Reflect the light from the Lord: It is a prayer to grow with the presence of the Lord and grow in His likeness.

4) Be a son or a daughter to the Father: Jesus Christ was the only son of God the Father. Through Holy Baptism we become the children of God by His grace and also brothers or sisters of Jesus Christ (Rom. 8:15; Gala. 4:5; Ephes. 1:15)

5) Cast away the old man, and wear the unperishable garment of the new man : “If anyone is in Christ there is a new creation” (2 Corin.5:17). The one who become new should grow into His likeness and become righteous and saintly, he will obtain the unperishable garment of glory (Isaiah 61:10; Rom. 2:7; 1 Corin. 15:33; 2 Timo. 1:10; 1 Peter 1:4; 3:4)

e) What are the readings after that?

The readings come after this describes salvation and its nature. The reading from Epistles of Paul is Romans 5:20-6: 4. This reading makes it clear that through baptism we are part-takers of His death and resurrection, therefore an entrance into the eternal life. The pesgomo or the beginning Halleluiah song before reading Evan Galion is given as Psalm 51:7. Evan Galion reading is Luke 3:15-16; John 3:5-6

f) What is the context of writing name in the Book of Life?

The priest writes the name of the child and the name of the God father in the baptismal register. The part of the prayer that priest say in secret is like this: “Please write the name of this child who you called from darkness and wayward life into Your real wisdom in Your book of Life. Please count him (her) among the people who worship you and reflect the light of Your countenance in him (her) (Ephe. 4:3)

From this time onward, church accepts this child as a member. Our faith reveals that this child has its own individuality and honor in the eyes of God. Getting a new name through baptism also reveals of getting a new life.

g) What is the meaning of blowing a breath (Insufflation) by the priest over the face of the candidate of baptism?

Blowing on the face of the child, the priest prays like this: “Please give him (her) the same godly breath that your only son blew on His disciples (John 20:22). Please prepare him (her) to receive the Holy Spirit and destroy all remnants of idol worship from his (her) mind”. The Godly breath is the symbol of the Holy Spirit that gives life and renews life to all creation (Genesis 1:2; 2:7; Ezekiel 37:9). God blew breath in to the nostrils of Adam and give him life. It is represented by the breath Jesus blew over His disciples. (John 20:22). Here, the child who died to sins receives the Holy Spirit through blowing the breath of life and prepare him for rebirth.

h) What is meaning in getting sealed on the forehead?

There are three parts in this worship. First without oil and then with Saith oil, the thirdly seal him (her) with Holy Chrism which is the symbol of spreading of Holy Spirit. By sealing him, God became the owner of him and reveals God’s protection over him (her). The meaning is the child who receives baptism has already become the property of God.

i) What comes after this sealing on forehead?

After this, there is the exorcism of the devilish power that torments the child. There are long and short prayers, small prayers are usually used. There are four things in these prayers.

1. It is a petition to God to exorcise the candidate and sanctify him for God.
 2. To renounce the crooked and proud Satan in the name of God, the creator and protector of all things.
 3. Since God’s name invokes fear, be alert about the coming judgment.
 4. The declaration that human body is God’s temple and not the dwelling place of Satan.
- During the time of these prayers, the priest’s right hand is placed over the head of the candidate for baptism. There is a tradition to place the hand over the head and pray to renounce the devil, to heal and to bless.

j) Why does the priest make the sign of the Cross and makes the candidate to repeat the oath?

Cross is a symbol of victory over the evil powers (Satan). The prayer that comes after this equip the child and seal him (her) in the holy name of Christ and sanctify him (her) exorcise from all the evil spirits, enemies and unseen unholy spirit. It also declares that from now on he belongs to Christ and his body is a temple of God and not an abode of some evil powers.

k) What is the manner of taking the oath?

The oath is that he renounces Satan and his army. The God –father turns the face of the baby towards West and says like this: “I (name) who is being baptized renounce you, Satan, all your army, your angels, the fear of you, and all your evil deceitful ways”. This is the first step to Christianity to renounce Satan and his army who has the evil powers. This is a challenge. If we cannot face the evil and fight against it, we cannot belong to God. By the word renounce, it means, first we have to accept the reality of evil powers and then face it and know its powers and declare God’s power to destroy the powers of evil. It also declares by saying the oath that the coming Baptism is an act of victory over Satan. This is also a preparation for coming of the God’s kingdom by freeing the world from the slavery of Satan.

Next is taking the oath of accepting Jesus Christ. After keeping the face of the baby towards East, he says this way: “I (name) who is being baptized believe in you, Lord, Jesus Christ, and in doctrines that you divinely revealed through Saints, Prophets, Apostles and ancient fathers” After renouncing Satan, he or she is taking an oath with this meaning: “I am ready to be owned by you, Jesus Christ, I dedicate myself to you, I shall believe and obey the doctrines of our Church and its teachings to the end of my life.”

l) What is the meaning of turning baby’s face first towards West and then towards East?

Sun sets in the West. West symbolizes the authority of Satan and darkness. Ancient Greeks believed that the entrance to Hades is in the direction of West. To renounce Satan, we turn towards West which is the direction of darkness. Sun rises in the East. East symbolizes goodness and light. To receive Lord Jesus Christ, who is the Sun of righteousness and the Light of the World we face towards East and take the oath. Paradise is in the East. After renouncing Satan those who turn towards East visualize Jesus in Paradise face to face. The action of renouncing Satan and coming in the unity of Jesus declares our faith. The child who is baptized recently is transferring himself (herself) from one master to another master, from Satan to Christ.

m) What is the importance of Godfather or Godmother?

In the place of the baby, it is the Godfather (mother) who renounced Satan and received Jesus. This mediator stands for the child as a representative of the Church. He (she) is also the spiritual guide and mentor for the child who is being baptized. This Godfather (mother) should be deeply rooted in Orthodox faith and have a model life pattern. He (she) is also obliged to bring the child up in accordance to the Church doctrines and faith and the child should reflect the

life of a Jesus. Along with the Godfather (mother), parents are also very much responsible to bring up the child in a life with Christ with faith and spirituality.

By saying the Nicene Creed, there comes an end to the preparation of baptism. The mediator or Godfather (mother) is saying the Orthodox faith through Nicene Creed.

II part - Baptism (Taking bath in water)

i) When does the second part of baptism start?

The second part starts with anointing of the blessed olive oil. This olive oil is known as “Oil of Gladness”. The prayer that says at this time is: “with the rebirth, to make this child (name) deserve to become your son, he is being sealed for eternal life, with the oil of gladness in the name of the Father, Son and the Holy Spirit.”

ii) What is the meaning of anointing with the oil of gladness?

The child is being anointed with the blessed oil, by making the sign of Cross three times on the forehead. This oil is the symbol of joy, peace and happiness. (Refer to Isaiah 61:1; Psalm 45:8; Hebrew 1:9; Luke 4:18; Acts. 10:38). This is the sign of Christ’s coming in joy, peace and happiness in the life of a faithful. It is also interpreted that in order to draft us to the true olive tree, who is Christ, we are being anointed with the olive oil. (Romans 11:17). Through this anointing, we achieve a preparation for rebirth and sanctification.

iii) What is done during the blessing of the water?

Blessing of water is a very important part. The priest pours hot and cold water simultaneously to the baptismal font and covers it with a white cloth having a sign of cross on it. When all sing a song with the meaning that “when the priest opens the baptismal font...” the priest celebrates the white crossed cloth as he does Sosappa in H. Qurbana. He calls in the H. Spirit by celebrating with his hands.

iv) What is being symbolized by the water?

In the Holy Bible water symbolizes death and salvation. During the time of Noah, with flood evil people were killed and saved Noah (Genes. 6:8). It is also through the waters of Red Sea, the destruction of Pharaoh and his army and the salvation of Israelites happened (Exod. 14). By crossing the River Jordan, Joshua and the Israelites entered into the Promised Land (Joshua 3). The salvation of the New Israel which is the Church and the defeat of the Satan are experienced to a faithful through this water in the baptismal font.

v) What is the idea of blessing this water?

By nature, the symbol of death is water. The main idea in blessing this water is changing it to a symbol of life and salvation with the grace of the Holy Spirit from the symbol of death as water. The water of Jordan is sanctified by the baptism of Jesus in it, by His touch and also by the presence of Holy Spirit in it at that time. Through the blessing of water, by the grace of the Holy Spirit, the water in which the baby is being baptized turns into that water of Jordan in which Jesus is baptized. (In the prayer that is prayed at this time, it says: “God, You sent your Holy Spirit in the form of a dove to sanctify the water of Jordan. Please make this person complete and clean him (her) through the saving baptism and make him ready for the relationship with Jesus in his life.”)

What are the ceremonies after that?

The priest blows three times over the water in the form of Cross. There are silent prayers and public prayers after that. As in Holy Qurbana, the priest says a silent prayer, calling the Holy Spirit celebrating his hand over the water as if he is asking Him to dwell in it. Then he says prayers and three times make the sign of Cross over the water. Then he takes the holy blessed oil chrisam and celebrates it and pours it in water in the form of a Cross.

vi) What is the meaning in pouring Holy Chrism in the baptismal font?

Anointing with H. Chrism is a sacrament of Holy Spirit. In Genesis. 1:3 it says: in the beginning of creation, the Spirit of God was working over water making creation. The face of Earth was covered with water and it was formless and void. From this formless and void condition, the Holy Spirit created an Earth which has a form and systematic. But this old creation came under the influence of sin and fell in death and decay. Lord Jesus came to renew this creation. When He received baptism in the river Jordan the Holy Spirit dwell in the water and in Him. Just like what happened in the beginning of creation Holy Spirit started working again. In the same manner through the Holy oil, God’s Spirit works on the water again and makes it suitable for a rebirth.

It is to show that baptism is a rebirth, “being born of water and Spirit”(John 3:5), the Holy Chrism which is also a symbol of Holy Spirit is poured in the water. It also denotes the sanctification of water is complete.

vii) What is the meaning in lowering the child in the baptismal font and giving baptism?

The priest makes the child to sit facing the East in the baptismal font and he himself turns towards the West and say this prayer: “In the hope of new life and redemption of sins, in the name of Father, Son and the Holy Spirit this child (name) is being baptized for eternal life.” Thus the child is baptized.

Baptism is an act in which we have been baptized in to His death, buried with Him in baptism and raised with Him through faith in the power of God. (Romans 6:3-5; Colo. 2:12) To remind that Jesus remained dead for three days, during baptism water is poured over in the name of Triune God three times.

III What is the signification of anointing again after the baptism?

Anointing with the Holy Chrism signifies the completeness of rebirth through water and spirit. That is the seal of Holy Spirit. The prayer, that is prayed when the baptismal candidate is being anointed with Holy Chrism three times in the form of Cross is very meaningful. “This child (name) is being sealed with Holy Chrism which is the symbol of fulfillment of the gifts of the **Holy Spirit**, and a seal of sweet scent and true faith in Jesus.” Anointing of the Holy Chrism is a symbol of fulfillment of all the good gifts of the Holy Spirit (acceptance as sons and daughters, born again, redemption of sins) we receive during baptism. Without this, baptism is not complete. It is through this anointing the spiritual scent of Jesus is spread in the faithful’s life. The whole body of the child will be anointed with this sweet scented oil.

In the doctrines of Apostles, the sweet scent of Gospel is compared to the sweet smell of Jesus. As a member of the Holy Church which is the body of Christ he or she becomes a sweet scent and a witness of the Gospel.

What is the meaning of the coronation after that?

The person who received baptism and Holy Chrism is being crowned with glory and **brilliance**. The child is being crowned with the meaning that he is eligible now to rule with Jesus in the kingdom of God. The song which is sung after this indicates that the child is being presented through baptism the experience of entering in Paradise and gifted the same eternal crown and the garment of Glory that Adam had in Eden. In Eastern philosophy crown is a symbol of martyrdom. Crown is a gift given to a faithful who foresees God’s glory in leading a life of hardship and obstacles. The Church also sees it as a pre-play of achieving the crown which is kept in heaven to give to those who lead a good life. With this celebration of the crown the child who received baptism is being accepted among the other faith-full as a person who is born again.

IV Receiving the Holy Qurbana

Through participating in the Holy Qurbana, the child completes the Holy Baptism and becomes a part of the active Church. It is also a right of the person who becomes the part of Christ’s body

through baptism to part-take in the Holy Qurbana. When the child receives Qurbana, we sing a song that says: “we are happily placing the fruit that Adam could not taste in Paradise, in to your mouth...”. After receiving the Holy Qurbana the person who received baptism is considered as a member of the royal priesthood and allowed them to kiss the Thronos. After this, just like in Qurbana the Service ends with the prayer (Hoothomo) and benediction.

Holy Chrismation

1) What is the meaning of Chrismation?

It is our partnership in receiving the Holy Spirit as Jesus received it after his baptism. Like our participation in death and resurrection of Christ through baptism we have to take part in His anointing of Holy Spirit through Chrismation. In what we are reborn in baptism to enable us to live that divine life, we need to receive the Holy Spirit and we do it by receiving Chrismation. This is a sacrament. Through this we make our whole body a temple for Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit with Jesus enters into our inner temple and lives there through Holy Chrismation and Holy Baptism.

2) Who are we become through Holy Chrismation.?

As St. Peter says, we become “you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own specific people ...” (1 Peter 2:9). Every Orthodox Christian who received Baptism with the anointing of Holy Chrism is being united with the body of Christ. Everyone who is anointed with the Holy Spirit become partners of kingdom of Heaven and priesthood of the faithful.

3) What is the importance of the seal of Holy Spirit?

The priest seals the child’s body with the Holy Spirit. It has many different meanings.

- This sanctifies the five senses (sight, hearing, touch, taste and smell) to do the service for Jesus Christ. His body is dedicated as an instrument to do the work of H. Spirit.
- The seal of the H. Spirit is God’s signature on the new creation. This also declares that the person is a new creation of God.
- The seal of the H. Spirit denotes the source and ownership of the person.
- This declares the authenticity. He (she) receives the authority to proclaim the glorious Gospel of Jesus Christ.

- The seal is an assertion. As St. Paul says: “you are sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, who is the guarantee of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, to the praise of His Glory” (Ephesians 1:14), “God has sealed us and given us the Spirit in our hearts as a guarantee (2 Corinthians 1:22). That means the Holy Spirit that we have received now is a guarantee of the complete rights of what we are going to receive in the kingdom of God.

4) What is the aim of receiving Chrismation?

1. God sanctifies man through baptism from the original sin and the slavery of the Satan. Through the anointing of Holy Spirit we become a new creation and come in the experience of salvation. (2 Corinthians 5:17)
2. The Chrismation that follows the baptism prepares us for the spiritual war. It is like Jesus was led to the wilderness after baptism to be tempted by Holy Spirit.
3. Chrismation is not only equipping us for spiritual war, but also energizes the spiritual senses.
4. This is a divine call to serve our Lord. The seal is a symbol that we are also a part of the Lord’s army.

Part III – General study.

Common Questions

1) What is the historical background of baptism?

Baptism was not in Jews tradition. They have only a Circumcision on the eighth day. But in the first Century B. C, it is found in some books that when a gentile becomes a Jew, after his Circumcision, on the seventh day he was baptized; this was taught by the disciples of Hillel, a Jewish Rabbi. Certain monks in a monastery of Kumran near the Dead Sea also did baptism when they added new members in their society. It is not wrong to believe that the Christians started baptism from this practice. The love showed by Yuhanon Mamdana was also like that showed by the Society of Kumran. There are many proofs to show that when the Jews baptized the gentiles they did it to their babies too. In the place of the Circumcision of the Jews, Christians started Baptism.

2) What is the difference between Infant Baptism and Adult Baptism?

When babies join the Church it is infant baptism and when adult join the Church it is adult baptism. It is very necessary that one of the parents should be an Orthodox when an infant is becoming the member of the Church. They have to give a guarantee that they can bring up the child in Orthodox faith. A person stands as a representative of the Church and oversees the growth of the child in his (her) spiritual growth and that person should be ready to bail out the child in renouncing Satan and accepting Jesus. When an adult from the group of unfaithful, believes and wants to become a member of the Church, it is not necessary that one of the parents should be a faithful Orthodox. The person who is being baptized renounces Satan and accepts Jesus and repeat the Doctrine of Faith.

3) Does the Bible say anywhere that infants should not be baptized?

It is not said by Our Lord Jesus anywhere in the Bible that infants should not be baptized. If He had been against infant – baptism He should have mentioned it. The reason is since He knew about the seventh day Circumcision of the Jewish custom for the babies to join it; He should have told that it should not be done something like that in Christianity. Since nothing is said about it, it means Jesus was not against infant baptism. Not only that we can see incidents that support the infant baptism in the Bible.

4) What do they say against infant baptism and what are the replies?

a) “He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned. (Mark 16:16)” Thus says the Bible; since babies cannot practice belief, they cannot be baptized. This is the important argument.

What does happen if we accept this argument? Infants are forbidden to enter into the kingdom of God or salvation. Then the kingdom of God is prepared just for the adults. Do you think that this sentence is said to forbid the infants to come into the experience of kingdom of God? Let us see what Jesus replied to a misunderstanding of some sectarian division. “Let the little children come to me; do not forbid them; for of such is the kingdom of God.”(Mark 10:14). Then He teaches adults by saying: “Assuredly I say to you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God as a little child will by no means enter it.” (Mark 10:15). Jesus taught that kingdom of heaven is for children and for people who are like children. If these heretics who teach otherwise understand this teaching, they would not have talked against the Word of God.

Let us read Mark 16:15 verse along with verse 16: “Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. He who believes and is baptized will be saved.” In gentiles there are adults those who hear the gospel. Some of them believe and some do not. Among them those who are baptized after believing the gospel, are saved. Others will have to face judgement. Here there is no mention of infant baptism. If infants are not permitted to be baptized, it must have mentioned specifically. So this verse cannot be used against infant baptism.

Mark 16:16 is not found in old handwritten copies of the Bible. 16:1-8 is seen in every manual. Verses from 9 to 20 are written in brackets. It means to show that this was added afterwards. Based on Mark 16:16, if infants are prohibited from being baptized or prohibited from entering into the kingdom of heaven, then it is foolish, stupid, against the Bible and it is also contempt to humanity. Then who gave this man of little life-span, permission to prevent children from entering the kingdom of God which is promised to them.

b) Another problem they bring forward is that there is no mention about infant baptism in the Bible.

Like above mentioned, it is not difficult to understand that what is mentioned in Mark 10:14, is supporting infant baptism. Not only that, we see that, when gentiles came into Christian faith the whole family came forward and took baptism. For example in Acts 16:15, it is cleared mentioned that when Lydia from Thyatira came into Christian faith and when she was baptized along with her the whole family came to be baptized. If only Lydia and her husband were baptized, then it would not have mentioned as “whole family”. It does not say that only adults were baptized and children were baptized later on. Lydia’s family consists of children and grandchildren. There is another example. In Acts 16:33, it is mentioned that the Philippian Jailer believed and on the same night he and his household (whole family) were baptized. In the same way, 1 Corinthians 1:16, St. Paul says that he baptized the household of Stephanas. If the children are separated from the family and adults are being baptized it should have mentioned there specifically.

c) There is another argument that says, you cannot be saved if you do not have a faith of your own.

This argument is against the Holy Bible. A person can be saved with the belief of another person. In Mark 2:5, we see that Jesus forgave the sins and cured the paralytic man by seeing the faith of those who carried him to Jesus, not by seeing the faith of the patient. In St. Matthew 8:13 we see that the Centurion’s servant was cured not by the faith of the servant but by the faith of the Centurion. In St. Matthew 17: 14 -18, we see that a man brought his son who was possessed by demon to the disciples and they could not cure him. The father and may be the son too had faith, but the disciples had no faith and they could not cure him. Today too the forgiveness of sin and salvation is given through a faithful Church. In the first sermon of St. Paul, he says that God’s promise of salvation is not only given to the adults but “the promise is to you and to your children, and to all who are afar off, as many as the Lord our God.” (Acts: 2:39) (Please refer the Malayalam Bible too). In Greek “techna” means, children (see 1 John 2:12)

d) It is not against the Bible that those who are already baptized as a baby, getting baptized again. So it is a problem when they argue that you have to be baptized when you are of age.

Here is a counter question to the people in this sectarian society who says that the babies have to be baptized again because they did not have knowledge of the Christian faith when they were baptized. “The child accepts his (her) parents as his own father and mother when he (she) comes of age. Is it because he (she) had faith in them in his (her) infant stage that he (she) accepts them when they are knowledgeable?” The baby does not recognize the person who gave him physical birth. But during his growth he realizes this truth based on their love, care and spiritual bonding. Like this, baptism is a birth and a beginning. A baby does not recognize any of his spiritual birth when he is baptized but through the situations of his spiritual growth and through the advices, training, influences that he gets through different situations he recognizes his grace that he received through baptism. He realizes his true nature. He also recognizes his Church who is the mother who gave birth to his spiritual life. He recognizes the true faith. If any child insists when he grows up that this is not my parent, I must go to my real parent, then that is the greatest folly. That is an unforgivable sin. In the same way, those who received Holy Spirit through baptism and became the children of God, if they take baptism again, it is an unforgivable sin against the Holy Spirit and also against the word of God. If he is a child of God once, he is always a child of God. We have to guide them through faith, change of mind, dedication and through holy Confession we have to renew the promise taken during the baptism. When the child decides that he will not do anything which makes the Holy Spirit sad, he is renouncing Satan. The Simon of Samaria, the magician, did not have enough faith when he was baptized. But the Apostles did not ask him to get baptized again but asked him to repent and confess and pray to God that He may forgive him (Act. 8: 14-24). St. Paul says, “One baptism” in Ephesians 4:5; it means that baptism is only once. Some people against their conscious for little profit, or for worldly pleasures, or with the wrong thought that spirituality is the emotions they feel reject the truth which is very certain and they reject the true Church and accept the wrong teaching; how unfortunate (pathetic) they are!

5) Why is infant baptism not mentioned in the New Testament?

In the early Church, during the time of the Apostles, it is an undoubtable fact that the infant baptism was prevalent. Since it was a common sacrament that the Church practiced, nobody specifically mentioned about it. If there was a subject of debate, or something out of common practice or against the word of the Bible (faith) prevailed in the Church, then Apostles and Ancient Fathers thought about them and very strongly took a decision and wrote about it and said about it. (Example: when Gentiles joined the Church, Acts. 15, they discussed about faith and advising them to abstain from eating the sacrifice that was offered to idols). But infant baptism was not a subject of debate. Nobody thought that it was against the faith or the word of Bible. Not only that, history says that from the time of the ancient Church with the strong belief infant baptism was done as a necessary sacrament.

6) What are the graces we receive through baptism?

1. Rebirth (Titus 3:6,7; 1 Peter 1:5, 23; John 3:5)
2. Adopting as sons and daughters (Galatians 3:27, 28)
3. Remission of sins (Acts 22: 16, 2:38)
4. Gift of the Holy Spirit (Acts 2 38,39)
5. Come as in one communion with the members of the Church which is the Body of Christ. (1 Corinthians 12:13; Romans 6:3)

7) What do the Fathers of the Church say about it?

Clement of Alexandria in A. D 195 said about the Christians as “Children who are taken from water”. Origen, the disciple of Clement wrote very clearly about the infant baptism. In the foot notes on Leviticus chapter 8, it says: “According to the tradition of the Church children are also baptized.” In the foot notes of Romans 6: 5-7 we can see: “in this way the Church acquired the tradition of baptizing the babies from the Apostles.” In the famous book “Apostolic Traditions” written in Rome by Hippolytus in A. D. 218, it says that baptism should be performed at the time of crowing of the rooster on the festival of Passover and it should be done in the following way: “Let the prayers on the water be done during the time of crowing of the rooster...First you must baptize the infants. Those grownups, who can repeat the faith by themselves, let them do so. For those who are not old enough for this, their parents or someone from that family repeat the faith for them.” Thus there are many historical proofs to show that from ancient time onward infants were baptized and it was a truth that there was no argument about it at that time.