



**AN ANALYSIS OF THE EFFECT OF EARLY BAPTISM ON FAITHFULNESS IN THE CHURCH IN THE SEVENTH DAY ADVENTIST CHURCH MORIA HILL CHURCH BASED ON MARK 16:16**

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Article info	ABSTRACT
<p><i>Corresponding Author:</i></p> <p>Chiccof Stephenson Benerivo Notty Universitas Advent Indonesia</p>	<p>This study aims to analyze the effect of early baptism on church faithfulness in the Seventh-day Adventist Church, especially in the Moria Hill Congregation, with reference to Mark 16:16. The research method used is a qualitative method with a case study approach. Data were collected through in-depth interviews with congregation members who have experienced baptism, as well as analysis of Scripture texts and related literature. The results showed that baptism too early can negatively impact faithfulness in the church, as in some cases, individuals who are baptized too soon may not have fully understood their commitment to their faith. The implication of this finding is the importance of a careful approach in the baptismal process, by providing a deep understanding of faith commitment before one is baptized. This research is expected to contribute to the development of more effective and sustainable baptismal practices in the context of the Seventh-day Adventist church.</p> <p><b>Keywords:</b> <i>Early Baptism, Faithfulness</i></p>
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**INTRODUCTION**

One of the important sacraments in the life of the Seventh-day Adventist Church is baptism, which signifies a sign of knowing God and acceptance into the community of faith. Nonetheless, the appropriate time to be baptized is often a subject of debate, especially among church members. The practice of baptizing too early, especially infants or young children, has raised questions about its impact on later church faithfulness.

According to Harianto GP (2020, p.117), Early baptism is often associated with the belief that it will provide an early foundation of faith and involve a person in the ecclesial community from the start. However, some argue that baptism too early may not allow a person to make a conscious and responsible faith decision. According to Aritonang (2008,

p.45) in this situation, it is important to learn more about the impact of being baptized too early on the faithfulness of church members. First of all, we must understand that baptism is a symbol of Christ's death and resurrection. Therefore, infants or young children who are exposed to baptism too early may question what baptism really means.

Is baptism just a tradition without deep understanding, or can they understand the commitment of living with Christ personally? While in her native language, Asih says that "Baptizo" is derived from the word "bapto" (βάπτω), which literally means "to immerse" or "to dive". The word is often used in Judaism to describe the process of immersion as part of ritual hygiene." (Sumiwi, 2018, : 3-20) In Christianity, "baptizo" evolved from an idea to an action that encompasses more than just physical immersion. It includes the administration of water as a symbol of inner change, repentance, and death to sin. The use of these Greek words shows that there is a reconciliation and connection between baptism in Christianity and the Jewish religious tradition." (Rumbay & Kuhu, 2021: 25-30) Although the meaning of baptism changed, Christian baptism provides a new understanding of spiritual change and relationship with Christ. Baptism is not only a symbolic act; it also indicates death with Christ and resurrection to new life in faith. This is in line with the teachings of Jesus Christ and is an important part of the spiritual experience of a believer. The word "pisteusas" comes from the verb "pisteuo", which means "to believe". Faith is the main requirement to understand baptism as an act performed by those who have believed the gospel in this situation. And baptized." The word "baptistheis" comes from the verb "baptizo", which is a term that refers to the act of baptism. In this situation, baptism is connected to faith as a concrete action after receiving faith. Sōthēsetai comes from the word "sōzō", which means "saved". This verse emphasizes how closely linked faith and salvation are, and baptism is a way to demonstrate and celebrate that salvation.

Rano Surita says that, in addition, the understanding of faith that develops with age can affect aspects of faithfulness in the church. A person who is baptized too early may grow up to be confused or unsure of their faith as their mind and life experiences develop (Surita, 2019: 143-161). Does baptism performed at a very young age provide a solid foundation for faithfulness to the church, or can it instead lead to internal conflicts and unanswered questions? There are also those who argue that baptizing too early can be beneficial, as it involves people in the ecclesial community from the very beginning. Children can grow up in a supportive environment for their spiritual growth by involving them in the life of the church" (Browning, 2008: 185). However, it is important to note whether this involvement is voluntary or simply the whim of the parents or family. To find out how early baptism affects faithfulness in church congregations, further research is needed. With a deeper understanding, churches can consider the practice of baptism contextually according to the spiritual development and faith understanding of each individual (Ronda, 2017: 45).

This will support the formation of a strong allegiance rooted in the included personal experiences. Incomplete personal experiences and spiritual growth can cause one to be unstable in their faith, which can impact their loyalty to the church and Christian teachings. Before someone decides to be baptized, the church is responsible for providing sufficient

guidance and education. Without sufficient preparation, early baptism can result in a shallow understanding of the faith” (Meran, 2017: 88-94). The church also has an important role in accompanying the newly baptized; with proper guidance, their faithfulness in the church can be strengthened. Mark 16:16 is a verse in the New Testament of the Christian Bible that explains Jesus Christ's teachings on faith and baptism. This verse forms part of the account of the events following Jesus' resurrection, which is often referred to as the end of Mark's Gospel” (Nicolas, Zega & Titin, 2023: 22-30). Mark 16:16 is the final section of Mark's Gospel that describes the events that took place after the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. It is important to understand the fact that some older manuscripts of the Bible do not include chapters 16:9-20. As a result, this chapter is included in many modern copies of the Bible, but many Christian communities consider it to be part of the inspired text (Ginting & Tarigan, 2023: 10-14). This passage emphasizes the role of faith as the key to spiritual salvation. Individuals who believe in the teachings and existence of Jesus Christ as their personal Savior are promised salvation. The text links the act of baptism to faith. A person is considered to have been baptized as a sign that they truly understand and are willing to follow Christ (Suwito, Simanjuntak & Belay, 2022: 274-276). It's not just a symbol; it's also a public declaration of personal beliefs. Mark 16:16 is one of the most theological verses in the New Testament of the Christian Bible. It provides an important teaching from Jesus Christ on the relationship between faith and baptism, and how both contribute to spiritual salvation. This verse, located at the end of Mark's gospel, shows the important message that Jesus delivered after his resurrection. One of the oldest manuscripts of Mark's Gospel contains the passage, chapter 16:9-20, which is considered part of the inspired text in many contemporary Bible versions. Its historical context covers the events after Jesus Christ died and rose from the dead, during which He commanded His apostles to preach the gospel throughout the world.

The purpose of the study is to expand our understanding of the meaning of salvation mentioned in Mark 16:16. The study looked at how faith serves as the foundation of salvation and the act of baptism serves as the manifestation of that faith. Furthermore, the study investigates how the act of baptizing too early impacts the level of faithfulness of church members. In order to provide an in-depth and relevant analysis, problem boundaries had to be set. This is done to give focus to the scope of the study and ensure that the findings obtained are reliable and relevant. This research focuses only on the Seventh-day Adventist Church, so the results may not be directly applicable to other religious contexts.

The benefits of this study are expected to increase our understanding of the relationship between faith and baptism, help us apply the teachings of Mark 16:16 in the daily lives of Christians, and provide a basis for better teaching and ministry of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. The ultimate goal is to strengthen everyone's faith and help them experience the salvation that Jesus offers through faith and baptism. Furthermore, according to Syafruddin, every research has benefits, the benefits of research consist of two things, the first is to add insights to science and the second is that research can provide useful benefits for everyday life (Syafruddin, 2012: 147).

## **Theoretical Framework**

This research is based on a theoretical framework that combines theological, psychological, and pastoral ideas to understand the impact of early baptism on the level of faithfulness of individuals in the Seventh-day Adventist Church. Based on the teachings of Mark 16:16, this theoretical framework drives this study to investigate the relationship between the decision to baptize too early and the level of faithfulness of individuals in the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

Furthermore, this theoretical framework involves an understanding of the theology of baptism and the Christian tradition of salvation. These theological concepts include thinking about what baptism means, how faith aids salvation, and how the act of baptizing too early can affect one's understanding of spiritual commitment. Theological considerations depend on the understanding we have of the concept of salvation mentioned in Mark 16:16.

## **METHOD**

In this study, the author will use a qualitative method in which the author will analyze and describe the verses to be studied in qualitative form, namely in the form of words based on personal analysis, books, journals, and other necessary literature (Library Research). This research method is designed to explore the influence of the decision to baptize too early on the level of individual loyalty in the church, using Mark 16:16 as a theological foundation. This research method includes a series of steps designed to carefully collect, analyze, and interpret data.

According to Didin, research methodology is a systematic framework or plan used to design, conduct, and evaluate a study. Research methodology helps researchers collect data, analyze information, and produce reliable conclusions (Fatihudin, 2014: 153). Furthermore, according to Sugiyoni, the research method is a step owned and carried out by researchers, in order to collect information or data and conduct on the data that has been obtained. Basically the research method provides an overview of the steps taken by the researcher (Sugiyono, 2017: 2).

## **Qualitative Descriptive Research Design**

In this study, researchers used qualitative research methods. Qualitative methods are research procedures that produce descriptive data, and personal speech, and later this method produces descriptive data. According to Rukajat, this research is in the book Research Approach. Quantitative descriptive method is a method in researching the status of a group of people, an object, a condition, a system of thought or a class of events in the present (Rukajat, 2018: 112). The objectives of descriptive research are to make descriptions, pictures or paintings systematically, factually and accurately about the facts, characteristics and relationships between the phenomena being investigated. Descriptive characteristics not only describe situations or events, but also explain relationships, test, hypotheses, make predictions and get the meaning and implications of a problem to be solved (Lengkana, 2017: 146). Based on Anggi's opinion, descriptive research is research

that tries to describe phenomena that occur in a real, realistic, actual, real and current manner, because this research is to make descriptions, pictures or paintings systematically, factually and accurately about the facts, characteristics and relationships between the phenomena investigated.

### **Research Model**

This research is organized in paper format with the main objective of producing valuable scientific contributions, namely in the form of articles. The results of this research are expected to make a significant contribution to the understanding and knowledge in a particular field. Thus, the resulting scientific work is expected not only to have academic value, but also to provide real and concrete benefits to readers, helping them to understand current issues, or providing solutions to challenges faced. With a focus on article writing as the main output, this research aims to explore deeper understanding and communicate the findings in a way that is accessible and understandable to all interested readers.

### **Writing and Publishing Time**

This research will be divided into two stages. The first is article writing which will take from December 2023 to January 2024. The second is publishing time. It is expected that the article will be published between February and April 2024.

## **FINDING AND DISCUSSION**

### **Literature Review**

Asep Hermawan said that a literature review is the first step in research that involves reading and analyzing literature relevant to the research topic. In the context of the research, the literature review will cover various aspects, including the theology of baptism, the concept of faithfulness, and the influence of baptism on the spiritual development of individuals (Hermawan, 2005: 45). Furthermore, the same thing was said by Muhammad. According to Muhammad Syukri Nur and Asep Saepul Uyun, the literature review is an initial analysis of research that was written first. It aims to get answers to the problems under study. Furthermore, Nur and Uyun state that a literature review is a written record containing evaluations, assessments, and comparisons of previously existing research (Nur & Uyun, 2020: 35-36).

### **Previous Research**

Previous studies have shown that early baptism can have a great impact on the spiritual aspect of a person. People who are baptized at an early age often have a strong spiritual foundation and tend to have an earlier understanding of what salvation is and their religious identity, which often forms a strong foundation for their spiritual journey. Prasetya states that it is incumbent to baptize at an early age (Prasetya, 2022: 24). Overall, previous research has examined baptism at an early age, for example Linwood Urban examined baptism at an early age. This allows for a better understanding of how spiritual experiences at an early age can affect various aspects of a person's life. While this shows many good

results, it is important to remember that everyone's experience is different, and one's cultural context and social environment also play a role in the complexity of the impact of early baptism. As we continue to delve into this research, we will gain a better understanding of the role and implications of early baptism in a person's spiritual journey (Linwood, 1986: 393). Previous research on early baptism has provided a complex understanding of the impact of early baptism on a person's spiritual development. According to the Catechetical Commission Team, a person who is baptized has the right to faith formation. Despite positive results regarding religious identity, understanding of the concept of salvation, and church involvement, debates and theological questions remain and further research is needed to better understand the complexities of early baptism and its impact on one's spiritual development (Java Regional Catechetical Commission Team, 2018: 7).

Based on the results of the author's search, most previous studies focused on certain stores. The discussion of baptizing someone at an early age in the Gospel of Mark has not yet been raised, let alone making research on baptism at an early age based on what the author stated in the introduction.

### **Book of Mark**

The Gospel of Mark is one of the four Gospels found in the New Testament of the Christian Bible. It has a unique position with its emphasis on the ministry of Jesus Christ as a devoted Servant who gave His life as a ransom for many (Ruth & Graham, 2007: 228). Its author, Mark, is known for his involvement in the early ministry of the church and as a faithful follower of Peter. The Gospel of Mark consists of sixteen chapters and describes the life, teachings, miracles, and death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Compared to the other gospels, Mark highlights more of Jesus' actions and ministry than His teachings (Wahono, 2009: 372). It has a dynamic and fast-paced narrative structure, with many events briefly outlined to emphasize the urgency of Jesus' mission.

### **Author Background**

According to most scripture scholars, the Gospel of Mark is the oldest gospel. Mark is mentioned in several parts of the Bible as a figure involved in key events in the life of Jesus. He is first mentioned in the Book of Mark itself, where he is referred to as John Mark. In the Acts of the Apostles, Mark appears as the one who owned the house in Jerusalem where the disciples gathered to pray (Acts 12:12) (Gunawan, 2022: 132-139). He is also mentioned as the cousin of Barnabas (Colossians 4:10). Mark had a close relationship with the apostles, especially Peter and Paul. Some traditions attribute Mark to the information he received from Peter, so his gospel can be considered as a spy record of Jesus' teachings and actions relayed by Peter. This is reinforced by a number of references to Peter in Mark's Gospel. Furthermore, Sujud Swastoko said that, compared to the Gospel of Matthew, the Gospel of Luke, and the Gospel of John, the Gospel of Mark is different from the others because it writes the soteriology of Jesus Christ in a straightforward and simple manner, like the news model used in the mass media. Mark's gospel is more about Jesus' actions than about his

teachings, which is different from the writing model of the other gospels (Swastoko, 2019: 45-47).

### **Author of the Gospel of Mark and Time of Writing**

The author of the Gospel of Mark is Mark, also known as John Mark. The writing of the Gospel of Mark is thought to have taken place around 60-70 AD, making it one of the earliest written gospels in the New Testament of the Christian Bible. Mark, referred to in the Bible as John Mark or simply Mark, was an important figure in early Christian history (Kristiani, 2023: 7). Much about him is found in the Bible, especially in the Book of Mark itself and the Acts of the Apostles. In the Book of Mark, Mark is mentioned as the companion of Paul and Barnabas during their missionary journey (Mark 13:5). According to Christian tradition, Mark had a close relationship with Peter, one of Jesus' most important disciples (Bruggen, 2006: 21). Some even say that Mark wrote the Gospel based on Peter's teaching, making him an eyewitness to the events written about in the Gospel. The time of writing of Mark's Gospel is estimated to be in the period 60-70 AD, making it one of the earliest written Gospels. Several factors help determine this approximate time. According to some ancient church texts and traditions, Mark wrote the gospel based on the teaching and testimony of Peter (Drane, 2005: 213). Since Peter is thought to have died between 64 and 68 AD, the writing of the Gospel probably took place after these events.

### **CONCLUSION**

Based on data obtained from all kinds of literature and arguments, The conclusion of the analysis of the effect of early baptism on faithfulness in the Church in the Moria Hill Seventh-day Adventist Church based on Mark 16:16 can be summarized as follows:

1. The **Importance of Spiritual Maturity**: Baptizing someone before they are truly spiritually ready can result in a lack of faithfulness in the long run. Spiritual maturity is important in maintaining one's loyalty to the church and their faith.
2. The **Role of Deep Teaching**: Before someone is baptized, it is important to provide in-depth teaching on the teachings of the church, the consequences of such a commitment, and the spiritual preparation required. This can help ensure that the baptized person fully understands their decision and is prepared to maintain their allegiance.
3. **Context of Mark 16:16**: This verse affirms the importance of faith and baptism in salvation, but does not directly outline the exact timing of baptism. Therefore, interpretation of this verse must be accompanied by a deep understanding of its context and the broader principles in the scriptures.
4. The **Role of Mentoring and Guidance**: The church needs to have a strong mentoring and guidance system for baptismal candidates so that they can continue to be supported and guided in their faith journey after baptism.

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