

Age for Baptism

- If a prerequisite for baptism is a credible profession of faith that flows from hearing and understanding the gospel, then the question of the proper age of baptism is secondary to the question of what constitutes a credible profession of faith.
 - Is it possible for a normal 5 or 7 year old to grasp the good news of Jesus, repent, and trust Christ for eternal salvation?
 - Perhaps. But normal practice is inadequate communication of the gospel and encouragement of small children to get baptized (social pressure). Then when they turn 18, leave the house, they also leave the faith and never come back. That proves we often do baptism all wrong.
 - Mark Dever is correct when he says God has hardwired kids to respond positively to the prompting and urging of their parents and other adults (like Sunday school teachers). This is especially the case when a post-baptismal party is promised where people bring gifts.
 - Also, when VBS urges people to convert, some kids do not want to be the ones left out.
 - So Dever is right to say it is a gospel issue. They are not responding to the gospel, but they are responding to the prompting of parents and Sunday School teachers.
 - Sadly, in the SBC the average age of baptism is close to 5 years old. We then tell these kids “once saved always saved” and they feel safe when they leave the church later.

Pre-baptism Catechism?

- In the case of people (other than children) who hear the gospel, repent of their sins, and believe in Jesus Christ for salvation, should a period of time elapse— for catechism, for observing the genuineness of their conversion—before they are baptized?
 - There is no biblical precedent for this.
- Baptism should occur very soon after a person has embraced the gospel.
 - This position assumes that the new convert has given a credible profession of faith and thus has demonstrated a sufficient genuineness of having grasped onto Christ so as to be saved.
 - It further assumes that biblical teaching on baptism—its importance, meaning, and practice—has been communicated to the new Christian and understood, but this instructional process is not a lengthy one.



Pre-baptism Catechism?

- Why do we wait? Sure, we want to baptize genuine Christians, but remember the following:
 - Because the church will never achieve a complete guarantee that a person's conversion is absolutely genuine, to aim at such assurance—and, correlatively, postpone baptism until such a point is reached—is unrealistic.
 - You will baptize non-Christians in your ministry because God has not given us the ability to look into peoples hearts. So we do not have absolute certainty. Just because we make mistakes does not mean we keep waiting another week, month, year, etc.



What About Re-Baptism?

- Because this rite is administered by the church—intended here as the universal body of Christ expressed as a local assembly of Christians—rebaptism is not a thing.
 - If a person has heard the gospel, repented of sin, believed in Christ and, upon his credible profession of faith been baptized, that person's baptism avails for all time.
 - It may not and cannot be repeated. This applies to Christians who were properly baptized by another church or denomination.
- If you walk away for a while and then come back, you don't get rebaptized.
 - This requires some clarification: believer's baptism does not consider the baptism of an infant in any church—e.g., the Catholic Church, a Protestant paedobaptist church—to be a baptism.
 - Therefore, when Christians who have been baptized as infants express the desire to become members of a church that practices believer's baptism, they are first to be baptized (this is not a rebaptism, but a baptism).



The Lord's Supper

- This is the ongoing ordinance of the Lord.
- Historical Views.
- The early church:
 - From the earliest post-NT writings, we find clearly a proper order expressed. First comes baptism, then comes the Lord's Supper. If you would serve the Lord's Supper to unbaptized people is like casting pearls before swine. Only in the last 50 years has this point of order has been up for debate.
 - It was celebrated in the early church on a weekly basis. Part and parcel of the celebration was distribution to the participants.
 - To those who could not attend (shut-ins), the deacons brought the elements to them.



Lord's Supper: Historical Views

- Early on, the notion of the Lord's Supper being a sacrifice developed.
 - It was based on a prophecy in Malachi 1:11, where it says from the rising of the sun to the setting, God's name will be great, and a pure offering will be offered.
 - The early church interpreted this as Gentiles becoming the people of God and being required to make a pure sacrifice. The celebration of the Lord's Supper was the sacrifice.
 - The bread and wine was connected to the body and blood. This is still far away from the idea of transubstantiation. That comes 1,000 years later. But the language of the body and blood of Christ being associated with the elements of the Lord's Supper is present at this time.
- The same is true of it being a commemoration. It is done in remembrance of Christ.
 - It was also balanced with the idea that Jesus is somehow present when we take the Lord's Supper.
 - How that presence came about is not detailed at this point, but His presence was emphasized.
 - Yet, the fact of symbolism was also emphasized. Bread and wine are symbols, so they cannot be the reality.
- These theories were all floating around the early church.



Lord's Supper: Historical Views

- Medieval Church

- In the 9th and 10th centuries, there is a move to better define what is taking place in terms of the presence of Jesus Christ.
- They start to move strongly to think the actual body and blood of Christ are present in the Supper in a real way.
- However, it is not until 1215 at the 4th Lateran Council (general council recognized by Catholics, but not EO or Protestants), that the RCC proclaimed the official position of transubstantiation.



- Catholic Transubstantiation

- When the priest elevates the bread and wine, it is transubstantiated into the blood and body of Christ.
- Following this council, Thomas Aquinas provides the philosophical underpinnings for the dogma of transubstantiation.

Lord's Supper: Historical Views

- Catholic Transubstantiation

- They believe the bread and cup of wine are transubstantiated (there is a change in the substance) such that the bread is no longer bread in nature and substance and the wine is no longer the substance or nature of wine, but it is now blood, and the bread is now the body of Christ.
- The characteristics (or accidents) of the bread and wine (their nature and taste) do not change, so the bread continues to smell and look like bread, and the same with the wine.
- So nothing changes in the empirical facts of the bread and wine, but the substance changes and the nature.
- Belief in transubstantiation is absolutely essential to be a faithful Catholic. Protestants can never truly take part in a Mass because we don't believe it. We are forbidden to take part of it because we disagree with it.

