

BAPTIST HISTORY
Lesson 2 - Infant Baptism in the Apostolic and Early Church
Suggested Reading: None

I. Introduction

A. Infant Baptism

1. Our main point of disagreement with Reformed Paedobaptists
2. Their best argument for infant baptism:
 - a) Not from the New, but the Old Testament
 - b) From Covenant Theology
3. We have essentially the same view concerning how baptism "works"
 - (1) Symbolic
 - (2) Does not confer grace automatically (the view of Rome)
4. Their argument from church history
 - a) That infant baptism was the common practice in the church throughout the middle ages and up until the Reformation cannot be denied.
 - b) Many Paedobaptists claim that the writings of the early church fathers prove that infant baptism was the universal practice of the church from very early on.
 - (1) Even if true, this would not be authoritative
 - (2) If true, it would be weighty
 - (3) We should question it's truthfulness

II. The New Testament Evidence

A. Revisit Warfield quote

1. "It is true that there is no expressed command to baptize infants in the NT, no express record of the baptism of infants, and no passages so stringently implying it that we must infer from them that infants were baptized." (Warfield Studies in theology. p. 399)

B. "Household" baptisms in the book of Acts

C. Great commission

D. Symbolism of Baptism

III. Baptism in the Apostolic Fathers and the Early Church

A. Summary of our view

1. The post Apostolic Fathers did not regularly baptize infants until AD 200 in North Africa, and not until the 4th century in the Greek church.
2. These were emergency baptisms
3. Baptism was sacerdotal, not covenantal
4. No evidence at all of infant baptism until 200 with Tertullian

B. The Didache

1. 125-175 AD Earliest extra-scriptural document available to us
2. "Having first recited all these things"
3. Trinitarian formula
4. Living water
5. Allowance is made concerning the quantity of water in arid lands
6. Let the baptized to fast

C. Justin Martyr

1. Born 100AD to pagan parents
2. Wrote two apologies to Christianity
3. Christian Baptism, 1st Apology, Chapters 61, 65
 - a) Believe truth
 - b) Live accordingly
 - c) Period of devotion
 - d) Brought to the laver?

D. Gregory of Nazianzen

1. January 6th, 381 preached "Oration 40 The Oration on Holy Baptism"
2. Sanctify your children
3. Are we to baptize them? "Certainly, if any danger presses..."
4. But as for others, "wait till the end of the third year..."

5. Not believers baptism as we would define it, but certainly not infant baptism as it is today.
- E. Tertullian
1. Writing around 200AD
 2. De Baptismo Chapter 18
 - a) "Give not the holy things to the dogs..."
 - b) Do not hastily lay hands on a man
 - c) Especially children, for they may not be faithful to fulfill their obligations.
 - d) It must be present, especially in N. Africa, but Tertullian argues against the practice.
- F. Basil the Great
1. Greek bishop of Caesarea 330 A.D.
 2. The Protreptic on Holy Baptism
 3. Suitable time for everything
 4. Children must be taught; they must repent; they were not baptized as infants in the Greek church.
- G. Tombstone Inscriptions (mainly 3rd and 4th century)
1. Emergency baptism
 2. "Received grace"
 3. Brings assurance to parents
 4. The ages are different, some as old as 4. Where is infant baptism then?
 5. Think of the development of the 7 sacraments of Rome (extreme unction). When infant baptism takes root, extreme unction is added to deal with the end of life.

IV. Conclusion

- A. Baptism underwent changes for practical reasons.
1. To cleanse those of age who needed forgiveness
 2. To cleanse those in times of plague and disease who were about to die
 3. To make pagans into Christians
 4. Baptism goes to the end and beginning of life for the same reason - threat of death
 5. Many theologians and priests were ignorant of the content of the Bible