



Baptism in the Early Church

Session 2





We want to know...

1. The meaning of baptism
2. The recipients of Baptism
3. The mode of baptism





Mark 1:7-8:

"One who is more powerful than I am is coming after me. I am not worthy to stoop down and untie the strap of his sandals. I baptize you with water, but he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit."





Acts 1:4-5

While he was with them, he commanded them not to leave Jerusalem, but to wait for the Father's promise. "Which," he said, "you have heard me speak about; for John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit in a few days."





Colossians 2:9-15 (Challenging verse)

For the entire fullness of God's nature dwells bodily in Christ, and you have been filled by him, who is the head over every ruler and authority. You were also circumcised in him with a circumcision not done with hands, by putting off the body of flesh, in the circumcision of Christ, when you were buried with him in baptism, in which you were also raised with him through faith in the working of God, who raised him from the dead. And when you were dead in trespasses and in the uncircumcision of your flesh, he made you alive with him and forgave us all our trespasses. He erased the certificate of debt, with its obligations, that was against us and opposed to us, and has taken it away by nailing it to the cross.





Colossians 2:9-15 (Let's break this down into parts)...

1. "you have been filled by him" (non-physical reality)
2. "You were also circumcised in him with a circumcision not done with hands" (non-physical, circumcision of the heart)
3. "when you were buried with him in baptism" (non-physical, , the baptism of the Holy Spirit)
4. "you were also raised with him through faith" (non-physical)
5. "when you were dead in trespasses and in the uncircumcision of your flesh" (no-physical)
6. "he made you alive with him" (non-physical)
7. "He erased the certificate of debt" (non-physical)
8. "has taken it away by nailing it to the cross" (non-physical)





Acts 8:36-39

The eunuch said, “Look, there’s water. What would keep me from being baptized?” So he ordered the chariot to stop, and both Philip and the eunuch went down into the water, and he baptized him. When they came up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord carried Philip away, and the eunuch did not see him any longer but went on his way rejoicing.





Romans 6:4

Therefore we were buried with him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, so we too may walk in newness of life.





Baptismal Practices: 1st & 2nd Centuries





Value of Studying Early Church Practices...

1. Understand their theology behind baptism
2. Did baptism practices change over time?
3. To set the record straight of really happened.





Summary of Early Church Baptisms...

1. By immersion (normative mode)
2. Salvific (belief that the act brings salvation)
3. Baptism by professing believer's (normative)



The Didache



Date / Author: Late 1st century / author unknown

Ch. 7: "And concerning baptism, baptize this way: Having first said all these things, baptize into the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, in living water. But if you have no living water, baptize into other water; and if you cannot do so in cold water, do so in warm. But if you have neither, pour out water three times upon the head into the name of Father and Son and Holy Spirit. But before the baptism let the baptizer fast, and the baptized, and whoever else can; but you shall order the baptized to fast one or two days before.

• Teaching: immersion (preferred mode), believer's baptism



Epistle of Barnabas

Date / Author: Late 1st century / author unknown

Ch II: "we go down into the water full of sins and foulness, and we come up bearing the fruit of fear in our hearts, and having hope on Jesus in the Spirit."

Teaching: believer's baptism, immersion, salvific





The Shepard of Hermas

Date / Author: mid-2nd century / Hermas

Ch 3: "I heard, sir, some teachers maintain that there is no other repentance than that which takes place, when we descended into the water and received remission of our former sins."

Teaching: believer's baptism, immersion, salvific





The Shepard of Hermas

Date / Author: mid-2nd century / Hermas

Ch. 16: "The seal, then, is the water: they descend into the water dead, and they arise alive. And to them, accordingly, was this seal preached, and they made use of it that they might enter into the kingdom of God."

Teaching: believer's baptism, immersion, salvific



Justin Martyr

Date: mid-2nd century



“First Apology, Ch. 61: “As many as are persuaded and believe that what we teach and say is true, and undertake to be able to live accordingly, are instructed to pray and to entreat God with fasting, for the remission of their sins that are past, we praying and fasting with them. Then they are brought by us where there is water, and are regenerated in the same manner in which we were ourselves regenerated.”“

Teaching: believer's baptism, salvific



Irenaeus

Date: late-2nd century

"Against Heresies", Book 2, Ch. 22: "but sanctifying every age, by that period corresponding to it which belonged to Himself. For He came to save all through means of Himself—all, I say, who through Him are born again to God -infants, and children, and boys, and youths, and old men. He therefore passed through every age, becoming an infant for infants, thus sanctifying infants; a child for children, thus sanctifying those who are of this age, being at the same time made to them an example of piety, righteousness, and submission; a youth for youths, becoming an example to youths, and thus sanctifying them for the Lord. So likewise He was an old man for old men, that He might be a perfect Master for all, not merely as respects the setting forth of the truth, but also as regards age, sanctifying at the same time the aged also, and becoming an example to them likewise."



Summary of 1st & 2nd Century Baptisms...

1. 100% Believer's Baptism (no mention of infants)
2. By immersion (normative mode)
3. Salvific (belief that the act brings salvation)





Tertullian

Date: 200 A.D.

“The Shows”, Ch. 4: “I shall turn to that highest authority of our “seal” itself. When entering the water, we make profession of the Christian faith in the words of its rule; we bear public testimony that we have renounced the devil, his pomp, and his angels.”

Teaching: believer's baptism, immersion



Tertullian

Date: 200 A.D.



“On Baptism”, Ch. 18: “And so, according to the circumstances and disposition, and even age, of each individual, the delay of baptism is preferable; principally, however, in the case of little children.

For why is it necessary--if (baptism itself) is not so necessary--that the sponsors likewise should be thrust into danger? Who both themselves, by reason of mortality, may fail to fulfil their promises, and may be disappointed by the development of an evil disposition, in those for whom they stood? The Lord does indeed say, “Forbid them not to come unto me.” Let them “come,” then, while they are growing up; let them “come” while they are learning, while they are learning whither to come; let them become Christians when they have become able to know Christ. Why does the innocent period of life hasten to the “remission of sins?”“



Teaching: advocating for believer's baptism, salvific