

Large Catechism Lesson 24

Part 4: Baptism

Connection to Catechism

“Where the first three chief parts encompassed the entire life of an individual from the beginning of creaturely life to the resurrection, the sacraments encompass the total life of the Christian from the new birth to the resurrection of the dead. Indeed, they do more than encompass it, they bring it about.”¹

Questions about Baptism?

Caught in the middle

During the Reformation, Luther found himself defending the sacraments on both sides.

1) Rome

- Objective efficacy of the sacraments
- Downplayed the need for faith to receive the sacraments' blessings

2) Sacramentarians

- The need for faith
- Let go the objective efficacy of the sacraments which gave faith nothing to cling

Both Rome and the Sacramentarians reveal a misunderstanding of faith.

- For Rome, Luther “stressed the necessity of faith for receiving and appropriating the blessings of the sacraments.”
- For the Sacramentarians, he “emphasized God's presence and work in selected elements from the created order.”²

Why are the Sacraments included in the Catechism?

1) To preserve them against protests of particular radical groups during the Reformation

- Common characteristics of these groups
 - Biblicism
 - Moralism instead of justification
 - Millennialists
 - Anticlerical
- Viewed the Sacraments as keys that the priest held over the church.
- Stories arose of the radicals who would rush up front during the Lord's Supper and trample on the host to prove that Christ was not there.
- Anabaptists were one of the primary groups.

2) To teach catechetically, the sacraments as conveyors of grace

- The sacraments concretely bring God into our lives.
 - Engage senses
 - Certainty

1 Arand, *That I May Be His Own*, 167.

2 Ibid.

Baptism

¶ 1-22

How many sacraments are there?

“What God institutes and commands cannot be an empty thing. It must be a precious thing, even though it looked like it had less value than a straw...We ought to value Baptism much more highly and more precious, because God has commanded it” [IV. 8-9].

Who is doing the baptizing: God or men?

Why does Luther call our reason insane? [¶13]

From one lordship to another

¶23-31

What does it mean that baptism saves us?

What is Luther’s point about faith believing in an outward thing?

-How can we respond to those who see this as a struggle to trust in the gift of baptism?

¶32-46

Valid Baptism | the Benefits of Baptism

Doctor analogy

‘I am baptized’

Infant Baptism

¶47-63

Questioning infant baptism attacks what part of the Creed?

Rebaptism?

Connection between faith and knowledge?

-Coma?

-Alzheimer’s?

Excursus: When did the church begin to baptize infants?

From the beginning of New Testament Christianity at Pentecost to our time, unbroken and uninterrupted, the Church has baptized babies. Polycarp (69-155 AD), a disciple of the Apostle John, was baptized as an infant.

Justin Martyr (100-166 AD) of the next generation, about the year 150 AD, states in his Dialog with Trypho The Jew “that Baptism is the circumcision of the New Testament.”

Irenaeus (130-200 AD) writes in Against Heresies II 22:4 "that Jesus came to save all through means of Himself – all, I say, who through Him are born again to God – infants and children, boys and youth, and old men."

Similar expressions are found in succeeding generations by Origen (185-254 AD) and Cyprian (215-258 AD), and at the Council of Carthage in 254 where the 66 bishops stated: "We ought not hinder any person from Baptism and the grace of God ... especially infants ... those newly born."

Origen wrote in his Commentary on Romans 5:9: "For this also it was that the Church had from the Apostles a tradition to give baptism even to infants." Origen also wrote in his Homily on Luke 14: "Infants are to be baptized for the remission of sins."

Cyprian's reply to a bishop who wrote to him regarding the baptism of infants stated: "Should we wait until the 8th day as did the Jews in the circumcision? No, the child should be baptized as soon as it is born."

Augustine (354-430 AD) wrote in De Genesi Ad Literam, 10:39 declared, "The custom of our mother Church in baptizing infants must not be counted needless, nor believed to be other than a tradition of the Apostles." Augustine further states: "... the whole Church which hastens to baptize infants, because it unhesitatingly believes that otherwise they cannot possibly be vivified in Christ."

In 517 AD, 10 rules of discipline were framed for the Church in Spain. The fifth rule states that "... in case infants were ill ... if they were offered, to baptize them, even though it were the day that they were born...such was to be done." (The History of Baptism by Robert Robinson, London, Thomas Knott, 1790, p.269)

This pattern of baptizing infants remained in Christianity through the Dark and Middle Ages until modern times. In the 1,500 years from the time of Christ to the Protestant Reformation, the only notable church father who expressed opposition to infant Baptism was Tertullian (160-215 AD). Tertullian held that in the case of "little children," baptism ought to be delayed until they "know how to ask for salvation" ("On Baptism," ch. 18).³

The rhythm of Baptism

¶64-86

The daily dress

-cf. to a nun's habit

"The definitive act of dying and rising with Christ becomes the pattern for the life of the Christian."⁴

How does baptism allow us to better understand the relation of the two kinds of righteousness?

³ <https://www.lcms.org/about/beliefs/faqs/doctrine>

⁴ Arand, 169.