Discussion Questions

Lecture 4: What the Early Christians Believed about Infant Baptism and Believers Baptism.

Use these questions after watching the complete lecture. Each prompt is grounded in the teaching and is designed for personal reflection, family study, or group conversation.

1. Tertullian, Hippolytus, and Origen all describe baptism in terms of repentance, belief, or dying to sin even while newer child-baptism practices existed. What does that coexistence prevent us from assuming?

   Another way to ask: Why did believers' baptism not disappear when child baptism appeared?

2. A Catholic study of the catacombs describes catechumens as mostly grown people completing a long journey of instruction. How should evidence from a source friendly to infant baptism be evaluated?

   Another way to ask: Why is the Catholic catacomb evidence useful?

3. Several fourth-century leaders with Christian parents were baptized only as youths or adults. What does that reveal about the difference between an existing practice and a compulsory norm?

   Another way to ask: What do the delayed baptisms of famous Christians show?

4. How did Augustine's doctrine concerning the guilt and fate of unbaptized infants change the pastoral stakes of baptism?

   Another way to ask: Why did Augustine make infant baptism feel unavoidable?

5. What is the difference between persuasion by theological argument and uniformity produced by councils, anathemas, and imperial penalties?

   Another way to ask: Can government enforcement prove that a baptism practice is apostolic?

Continue the Conversation

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6. How did Theodosius's state-religion policy and Justinian's death penalty for rebaptism change the moral and theological setting of the baptism debate?

   Another way to ask: What happens when the state punishes believers baptism?

7. Lecture 4 reverses an earthquake analogy used to defend an unrecorded first-century practice. What should evidence look like near the historical origin of a universal norm?

   Another way to ask: Why should an apostolic practice leave its strongest early traces?

8. How does the lecture distinguish birth-citizenship in Israel and Judah from a voluntary kingdom of God whose citizens enter willingly and bear fruit?

   Another way to ask: Why can a whole country not be made Christian by baptizing its babies?

9. What did the Anabaptists attempt to restore, and why did both Catholic and Protestant state churches persecute them?

   Another way to ask: Why were the Anabaptists punished for believers baptism?

10. Why does Lecture 4 distinguish Cyprian's voluntary infant baptism in a persecuted martyr church from later compulsory infant baptism backed by the state?

    Another way to ask: How did voluntary infant baptism differ from compulsory statewide baptism?

Return to the lesson page for transcript-linked audio and the full Discussion Jumpstarters.