

Creeds of the Kehillah ~ Part 41

The Nicene Creed ~ Part 27

In our last post, we continued to explore the **Nicene Creed**. In this post, we continue to dig into the third article of faith, keeping with the phrase **We Acknowledge One Baptism** in the **Nicene Creed**.

We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life,
who proceeds from the Father and the Son.
With the Father and the Son, He is worshiped and glorified.
He has spoken through the Prophets.
We believe in one holy catholic and apostolic church.
We acknowledge one baptism for the forgiveness of sins.
We look for the resurrection of the dead,
and the life of the world to come. Amen.

WE ACKNOWLEDGE ONE BAPTISM

Messianic baptism (which means “immersion”) goes back to **Yeshua** because it is administered because of His mandate. It is distinct from other previous types of **baptism** in use among the Hebrews. Regardless of who officiates in **baptism**, it is considered that it is always **Yeshua** who baptizes: ***He will immerse you in the Ruach HaKodesh and in fire.*** In the letter to **Titus**, **baptism** is defined as ***the mikveh¹ of rebirth and the renewal brought about by the Ruach HaKodesh*** (Titus 3:5b ~ CJB). Already in the **Brit Hadashah**, there exists a rich theology about **baptism** as rebirth, regeneration, and purification by the **Ruach**; as seal of faith, as union with **Yeshua** in death and resurrection; and as forgiveness of sins and as a condition for entering the kingdom of **God**.

Mark and **Matthew** begin their **Gospels** with the **baptism** of **John** and conclude with the command of **Yeshua** to baptize all. The **Gospel** of **Mark** ends with the command of **Yeshua**: ***As you go throughout the world, proclaim the Good News to all creation.***¹⁶ ***Whoever trusts and is immersed will be saved; whoever does not trust will be condemned.*** **Kefa**, on the day of **Shavu'ot**, encourages the people to receive **baptism** for the remission of sins: ***"Turn from sin, return to God, and each of you be immersed on the authority of Yeshua the Messiah into forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Ruach HaKodesh!"*** (Acts 2:38 ~ CJB) Thus, the forgiveness of sins and receiving the gift of the **Ruach** are closely united. **Yeshua**, however, did not need a **baptism** of repentance. The connection between the **Ruach** and **baptism** also emerges from the **baptism** of the centurion at **Caesarea**, when **Kefa** affirms ***that if God gave them the same gift as He gave us after we had come to put our trust in the Lord Yeshua the Messiah, who was I to stand in God's way?*** (Acts 11:17 ~ CJB).

The **Didache**, a document that came from the countryside of Syria, from the second half of the first century, describes the rite as follows:

“Concerning **baptism**, baptize thus: Having first rehearsed all these things, baptize, ‘in the name of the Father and of the Son and the Holy Spirit,’ in running water; but if you have no running water, baptize in other water, and if you cannot baptize in cold water, then use warm water. But if you have neither, pour water three times on the head ‘in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit,’ and before the **baptism** let the baptizer and him who is to be baptized fast, and any others who are able. And you shall bid him who is to be baptized to fast one or two days before.”

¹ Bath or pool with a flow of fresh water; used in Orthodox Judaism to this day for ritual purification.

In the normal rite, **baptism** consisted of a triple immersion: each following the response of the candidate to the minister who asked questions on the trinitarian faith. The *Apostolic Tradition* describes the central rite as follows:

Then after these things, let him be given over to the presbyter who stands at the water. And let them stand in the water naked. And let a deacon likewise go down with him into the water. As he goes down to the water, let him who baptizes lay hands on him, saying thus: Do you believe in **God the Father Almighty**? And he who is being baptized shall say: I believe. Let him immediately baptize him once, having his hand laid on his head. And after this let him say: Do you believe in **Yeshua, the Son of God**, who was born of the **Holy Spirit** and the **Virgin Mary**, who was crucified in the days of Pontius Pilate, and died, and rose the third day living from the dead, and ascended into the heavens, and sat down at the right hand of the **Father**, and will come to judge the living and the dead? And when he says: I believe, let him baptize him the second time. And again, let him say: Do you believe in the **Holy Spirit** in the holy church and the resurrection of the flesh? And he who is being baptized shall say: I believe. And so let him baptize him the third time.

The whole ceremony ended with the kiss of peace on the part of the whole community.

In the fourth century, these rites tended to expand in number, extension, time, and dramatic power. The more significant number of candidates led to some of the rites being anticipated on Good Friday. One rite acquired a solid spiritual and social significance: the newly baptized wore a white garment for the whole week following the **baptism**.

Present research on the **baptism** of infants has come to a complete stop. It is believed that the practice existed from the apostolic period. However, we have explicit evidence only from the following centuries. **Baptism** of infants becomes more and more common beginning with the fifth century. An adequate period of preparation for **baptism** is something that caught hold only slowly: we find it fully developed only in the third century, and it reached its high point in the fourth century and then began to decline because of the spread of infant **baptism**. Several reasons pointed to its necessity and influenced its development: the numerous heresies, the conscious decision to break with the pagan world, the weakening of initial enthusiasm, and apostasy in times of persecution.

In the New Testament, much importance is given to the outpouring of the Holy Spirit on the newly converted. In the case of the centurion Cornelius, that outpouring comes before **baptism**, but this is an exceptional case. In general, the outpouring of the **Ruach** comes after **baptism** and by the imposition of the hands by the apostles, and it is a gesture that is necessary for the completion of **baptism**. *When the emissaries in Yerushalayim heard that Shomron had received the Word of God, they sent them Kefa and Yochanan, ¹⁵ who came down and prayed for them, that they might receive the Ruach HaKodesh. ¹⁶ For until then, he had not come upon any of them; they had only been immersed into the name of the Lord Yeshua. ¹⁷ Then, as Kefa and Yochanan placed their hands on them, they received the Ruach HaKodesh.* ~ Acts 8:14-17 (CJB). In fact, to be a full member of the new community, both were necessary, the immersion (ablution) in water and the imposition of hands. Very soon, the rite became one continuous process, with no intervals in between the various parts. All the components ultimately were included together under the one name of **baptism**.²

Creating this post has been a real eye-opener for me. I was sprinkled as an infant and had hands laid on me when I was twelve. In later years, I was immersed years later after I had prayed for the infilling of the Ruach.

In my next post, we continue to dig into the third article of the **Nicene Creed: We Acknowledge One Baptism**.

² Di Berardino, A., & Oden, T. C. (Eds.). (2010). **We Believe in One Holy Catholic and Apostolic Church** (Vol. 5, pp. 87–90).