

§ IX. DOCTRINE OF THE CHURCH

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§ IX. DOCTRINE OF THE CHURCH

Lecture 1

Baptism

Let's step back for a moment and reorient ourselves to understand where we are. The Defenders class has a threefold purpose which I want you to recall. Our purpose is:

1. *To train Christians to understand, articulate, and defend basic Christian truths.* Our goal is to help equip you to better understand what you believe, to articulate it carefully, and to be able to defend it.
2. *To reach out with the Gospel to those who do not yet know Christ, always being ready to give a defense to anyone who asks the reason for our hope.* So the second purpose is evangelistic – to reach out with the Gospel to those who don't yet know Christ.
3. *To be an incendiary fellowship of mutual encouragement and care.* It is our church within the church so to speak as we come to know each other personally and mutually encourage and pray for one another as we grow as Christians.

So those are the purposes for which the Defenders class exists.

Our class is structured according to the so-called *loci communes* of classical Protestant theology. The *loci communes* were the common places (or the chief themes) of systematic theology. This class is structured in sections, each of which takes one locus (or one theme) of Christian doctrine. So we began, for example, with Doctrine of Revelation and looked at how God reveals himself in nature, in Scripture, and in Christ. We spent a good deal of time on Doctrine of God, understanding his existence and attributes as well as the Trinity. We discussed Doctrine of Creation – God's providence over the world and his miraculous acts in the world. We talked about Doctrine of Christ and Doctrine of the Holy Spirit as well – both the person and the work of Christ. Just recently we've completed a section on Doctrine of Salvation where we looked at such topics as justification by faith, perseverance, the new birth, mystical union with Christ, and so forth.

Now we are starting a brand new section. This is going to be on Doctrine of the Church. This is going to be the second-to-the-last section of the class. So we are really rounding the bend, coming into the home stretch. We'll look first at Doctrine of the Church, and following that we'll look at Doctrine of the Last Things. That will complete the series in the Defenders class.

We have outlines available. The purpose of these outlines is to help you to take notes so that you can then keep the notes, compile them in a notebook, and gradually build up a very nice notebook covering the whole body of Christian doctrine. Hopefully this will serve you well if you are called upon to teach a Sunday school class or lead a Bible study at some point. You can pull out your outline and share some of this material.

Sacraments / Ordinances

Introduction

Definition of Sacrament / Ordinance

The first thing that we'll want to talk about with respect to Doctrine of the Church is the church's *sacraments*, or alternatively *ordinances*. What do we mean by a sacrament? A sacrament is a means of grace belonging to the church. By contrast, an ordinance would be merely a sign which belongs to the church.¹ An ordinance is not a means of grace. Rather it is a sign or evidence of grace. But a sacrament would be an actual channel by which grace is imparted to the believer. So the question is: when we participate in baptism, the Lord's Supper, and perhaps other activities, are these means of grace which the church administers or are these merely signs of things that the church carries out? This will largely depend upon your view of what you think the church is. Is the church the means of salvation which God has given to mankind? Is the church itself in a sense a kind of primary sacrament? Is the church the means of grace that God has given to mankind through which we receive salvation. Or, is the church simply the fellowship of those who, through faith in Christ, are united together? It is not a channel of God's grace that he has instituted, but it is rather the fellowship of those who have come to know him through faith in Christ.

I hope you can see the difference between a sacrament and an ordinance. Although many times certain Protestants will speak loosely of sacraments, they don't really believe that, for example, baptism or the Lord's Supper are sacraments. They actually think they are ordinances but they are not means of grace.

What constitutes a sacrament or an ordinance? It will typically be the Word of God conjoined with some sort of visible element. It will be a conjunction of the Word and a visible element. For example, water or bread and wine would be the visible element conjoined with the Word of God which is proclaimed.

Efficacy of Sacrament / Ordinance

We will want to know then how are these sacraments to be understood in terms of their efficacy. What do they actually do? What actually happens as a result of participating in a sacrament? Here Christians have a diversity of views.

On the Catholic view, the sacraments are a means of infusing grace into a person. You'll remember when we talked about justification under a Catholic view justification involves the actual infusion of God's grace into an individual person. This happens through the sacraments. By taking the Lord's Supper, going to Mass, being baptized, and participating in other sacraments, God's grace is infused into you by these sacraments.

The Lutheran view is slightly weaker. On the Lutheran view, the sacraments are a means of grace by virtue of the Word which is bound up with the sacrament. Remember we saw that a sacrament involves the conjunction of the Word of God with some visible element. For the Lutheran, yes these sacraments are means of grace, but it is in virtue of the Word

¹ 5:00

that they impart grace to those who partake in them.

The Reformed view, which would be practiced in Reformed churches or Presbyterian churches, says that the sacraments are a confirmation of grace by means of a visible sign. So when you participate in a sacrament, what you are seeing is a visible sign confirming the grace which God has imparted to you.

Finally, on the Baptist view, which would be the weakest of all, the act is simply a confessional act on the part of the believer. In baptism, you give public confession to your allegiance to Christ and to your conversion to Christian faith. Or in the Lord's Supper, you confess your faith in him until he comes again and confess your sins. It is simply a confessional act; it is not a means of grace.²

Number of Sacraments / Ordinances

What about the number of the sacraments? Again, Protestants and Catholics differ on this view. On the Catholic view, according to the Council of Florence (which dates from 1439), the Council of Florence ratified seven sacraments which are recognized by the Roman Catholic Church. These are: baptism, confirmation (where an individual, typically a youngster, will confirm the decision that was made in baptism), the Eucharist (or the Lord's Supper), penance (which will involve confession and performing some act of contrition), marriage (interestingly enough), ordination (such as when a priest is ordained to the ministry), and finally extreme unction which you take when you die as the Last Rites which the Church administers to you.

By contrast, Protestants tend to recognize basically two sacraments or ordinances. These would be baptism and the Lord's Supper.

DISCUSSION

Question: Just a comment. I just recently heard a piece where they said that the Catholics now no longer emphasize extreme unction just at the time of death. They are now backing it up and using it even in healing conditions or services, anointings, etc. I just recently heard it.

Answer: I wonder if this might be the influence of the Charismatic movement within the Roman Catholic Church, which would have a stronger emphasis on healing. That is very interesting. I hadn't heard that.

Question: Could you describe extreme unction a little bit more? I have a feeling that a lot of people listening to this aren't quite sure what it is. Is that like extreme skiing or something like that? *[laughter]*

Answer: Typically (although it has to be qualified in light of what was previously just said) the priest will administer the Eucharist to a person before he dies as a kind of last infusion of grace into the person to prepare him for going to be with God, to be sure this person dies in a state of grace and is therefore ready for meeting God.

² 10:08

Baptism

Biblical Data

Let's turn now to the subject of baptism. We want to look first at the biblical data concerning baptism before we reflect on it theologically. It is really quite remarkable how much the New Testament talks about baptism. Just from the number of passages dealing with baptism in the New Testament, one would see that this is extremely important in the New Testament church. The New Testament, indeed, opens with the figure of John the Baptist on the scene who is proclaiming a baptism of repentance and calling people to be baptized in the Jordan River.

Let's look at Mark 1:4-5. Mark says,

John the baptizer appeared in the wilderness, preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. And there went out to him all the country of Judea, and all the people of Jerusalem; and they were baptized by him in the river Jordan, confessing their sins.

So right at the beginning of the New Testament – of Jesus' ministry – you have this enigmatic figure of John the Baptist calling people to the Jordan to repentance and baptism for sin.

Significantly, Jesus himself was baptized.³ He was among those in Judea who went out to John the Baptist to submit to John's baptism. Matthew 3:13-17:

Then Jesus came from Galilee to the Jordan to John, to be baptized by him. John would have prevented him, saying, "I need to be baptized by you, and do you come to me?" But Jesus answered him, "Let it be so now; for thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness." Then he consented. And when Jesus was baptized, he went up immediately from the water, and behold, the heavens were opened and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove, and alighting on him; and lo, a voice from heaven, saying, "This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased."

So Jesus himself submitted to John's baptism at the beginning of his ministry. Then Jesus continued the practice of baptizing others, interestingly enough. He, himself, was involved in carrying out a ministry of baptism. John 3:22-24. You wouldn't know this apart from this brief passage in the Gospel of John in which John records this. John 3:22-24 says,

After this Jesus and his disciples went into the land of Judea; there he remained with them and baptized. John also was baptizing at Aenon near Salim, because there was much water there; and people came and were baptized. For John had not yet been put in prison.

Here Jesus is carrying out a ministry of baptism contemporaneously with John the Baptist. John hadn't yet been arrested and Jesus is carrying out a similar ministry of baptizing people at the same time as John.

³ 14:54

Turn over to John 4:1-3, “Now when the Lord knew that the Pharisees had heard that Jesus was making and baptizing more disciples than John” – his ministry was becoming more successful than that of John the Baptist. More people were coming to Jesus to be baptized than were coming to his cousin John. Then John adds this parenthetical comment, “(although Jesus himself did not baptize, but only his disciples).” So he was apparently having them do the baptizing for him. “He left Judea and departed again to Galilee.” Here, again, it is the ministry of Jesus in baptizing people as described, and he is doing it through the agency of his disciples whom he had called to follow him.

When we turn to the book of Acts following Jesus’ death, resurrection, and ascension, we discover that baptism did not disappear. Baptism was not something that simply belonged to that early time of the ministry of John and Jesus; rather, baptism typically accompanied conversion in the book of Acts. When people came to Christian faith, they were baptized. So baptism continued.

Acts 2:37-38, 41. This concerns the persons who were converted through Peter’s preaching at the Feast of Pentecost. Luke writes,

Now when they heard this they were cut to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, “Brethren, what shall we do?” And Peter said to them, “Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. . . . So those who received his word were baptized, and there were added that day about three thousand souls.

So when people were convicted of the message of the Gospel, what they were supposed to do by way of response was to repent and be baptized in Jesus’ name.⁴

Look at Acts 8:36-38. This is the story of the conversion of the Ethiopian official who had been visiting Jerusalem and was on the way home, and Philip shares with him the Gospel. Luke writes,

And as they went along the road they came to some water, and the eunuch said, “See, here is water! What is to prevent my being baptized?” And he commanded the chariot to stop, and they both went down into the water, Philip and the eunuch, and he baptized him.

The response of the Ethiopian eunuch to Philip’s sharing of the Gospel was to say, “Well, then baptize me now. Here’s water.” And Philip does baptize him.

Turn over to Acts 9:19a. This is the story of the conversion of Saul of Tarsus, a Pharisee and the chief persecutor of the early Jesus movement in Jerusalem. He sees a vision of Jesus on the Damascus Road which leaves him blind and helpless. He goes into Damascus and Ananias comes to meet Saul and to carry out the Lord’s commission to Ananias. We read in Acts 9, let’s begin with verse 17:

So Ananias departed and entered the house. And laying his hands on him he said, “Brother Saul, the Lord Jesus who appeared to you on the road by which you came, has sent me that you may regain your sight and be filled with the Holy Spirit.” And immediately something like scales fell from his eyes and he regained

⁴ 20:13

his sight. Then he rose and was baptized.

Again, the immediate response to his conversion is to submit to Christian baptism.

Turn over to Acts 10:45-48. This is the story of Peter's preaching to the household of a Roman centurion, Cornelius. Now the Gospel goes to Gentiles – not to other Jews, but to actual Roman persons. In verse 45 we read:

And the believers from among the circumcised who came with Peter were amazed, because the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out even on the Gentiles. For they heard them speaking in tongues and extolling God. Then Peter declared, "Can any one forbid water for baptizing these people who have received the Holy Spirit just as we have?" And he commanded them to be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ.

These Gentiles, hearing the proclamation of the Gospel, received the Holy Spirit and Peter says, "Why not proceed then with baptism? Can anyone prevent me from baptizing them?" No one can, so they are baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus.

This is the regular pattern over and over again in the book of Acts. Christian conversion is accompanied by baptism in the name of Christ.

In Galatians 3:27, Paul says this, "For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ." Look how closely linked baptism is with Christian conversion in that sentence.⁵ "As many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ." I think for these New Testament Christians it would have been unthinkable for a person to say "I believe in Christ – I am a Christian" and yet not to submit to Christian baptism. That would have just been incomprehensible. As many of them as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. Conversion and baptism went like hand in glove.

What then is the meaning of baptism? Let's just look at three passages in the New Testament that speak to the question of the meaning of baptism. We'll talk more about these later but we want to get these passages out on the table.

Romans 6:3-4, here Paul writes,

Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, so that as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life.

Here baptism is an identification with the death of Jesus. We are said to be baptized into Jesus' death and identify with his death on the cross.

Colossians 2:12, Paul says, "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." In Romans, baptism is into the death of Christ with a view toward walking in newness of life.⁶ But here in Colossians, it makes it explicit that baptism is not only an identification with Christ's death, it is an identification with his resurrection. He says that "you were buried with him in baptism, in which you were also raised with him." So in baptism we

⁵ 24:55

⁶ cf. Romans 6:3-4

are identified not only with the death and crucifixion of Christ but also with his resurrection.

The final passage is 1 Peter 3:21: “Baptism, which corresponds to this, now saves you, not as a removal of dirt from the body but as an appeal to God for a clear conscience, through the resurrection of Jesus Christ.” Here Peter says that baptism saves us, not through an external washing, but it is an appeal to God for a clear conscience.

So those are three critical passages about the meaning of baptism in the New Testament. What we will do next time is to begin to ask several probing theological questions about this biblical data with a view toward understanding the significance and meaning of baptism.⁷

⁷ Total Running Time: 28:54 (Copyright © 2014 William Lane Craig)

§ IX. DOCTRINE OF THE CHURCH

Lecture 2

Baptism as a Sacrament

Theological Questions

We are talking about the Doctrine of the Church and in particular about the sacraments or ordinances of the church. We concluded last time by looking at the biblical data concerning baptism. Today we want to raise some theological questions about the nature of baptism.

Sacrament or Ordinance?

The first and foremost question that needs to be addressed is: is baptism a sacrament or is it an ordinance? You will remember the definition of a sacrament as opposed to an ordinance. A sacrament is literally a means of grace. It is like a channel by which God's grace comes to you, rather the way water might flow through a pipe. On the sacramental view we receive God's saving grace by being baptized. By contrast, on the view of baptism as an ordinance, baptism serves merely a symbolic function. It is a sign of some act of God's grace that can be quite independent of that sign. It is not baptism that is the thing that accomplishes the reception of God's grace. It is merely a sign of it, or a symbol of it.

Today we want to look at the case for thinking of baptism as a sacrament. This would be the case that would be presented by, for example, Catholics or Lutherans or others who take a sacramental view of baptism.

The first thing that the sacramentalist will note is that *baptism is very closely linked with justification*. There is a tight connection in the New Testament between being baptized and being justified which is, of course, what accomplishes salvation. So let's look again at Romans 6:1ff, one of the key New Testament passages on baptism.

What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin that grace may abound? By no means! How can we who died to sin still live in it? Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, so that as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life.

Notice here, according to Paul, it is through baptism that we are incorporated into Christ's death. We are united with him in his death and then in his burial and then in his resurrection. This is not just some sort of a symbolic expression. It says this is what actually happened. We who have been baptized were baptized into his death, being buried with him in baptism, and then raised from the dead so that just as Christ was so we might walk in newness of life. The use of the passive voice in this passage – “you were buried with him into baptism,” for example – indicates that God is the active subject here. God is the one who has buried you in baptism. God has identified you with Christ by going through the rite of baptism. So these are literally acts of God by which you are identified with Christ's death, burial, and resurrection.

Now turn over to Colossians 2:11-14.⁸ Here Paul says,

In him also you were circumcised with a circumcision made without hands, by putting off the body of flesh in the circumcision of Christ; and 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 you, who were dead in trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, God made alive together with him, having forgiven us all our trespasses . . .

So this passage, again, shows our identification with Christ's crucifixion and resurrection through the act of baptism. It is by being baptized that we are identified with Christ's death and resurrection.

Then 1 Corinthians 6:11. Paul speaks here of the type of sinners that will not inherit God's Kingdom and he says, "And such were some of you. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and in the Spirit of our God." The sacramentalist will claim that this is a baptismal verse. This is evident from the language of washing – "you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified" – and then also from the formula "in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ." The New Testament church baptized people in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. So this idea of being washed in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ shows its connection with baptism as does the mention of the Spirit of God because, as we will see later on, Spirit baptism is linked with water baptism. The sacramentalist will say that insofar as you undergo water baptism you are also baptized in the Holy Spirit. So 1 Corinthians 6:11 is a baptismal verse.

For the comparison with being baptized in the name of Jesus, look over at Acts 22:16. He says to Paul, "And now why do you wait? Rise and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on his name." There you have the idea of washing in baptism and calling on the name of the Lord Jesus.

G. R. Beasley-Murray, who is a Baptist New Testament scholar and has written a very, very thorough book on the subject *Baptism in the New Testament*, says, "The inference cannot be avoided that the reality signified by justification and sanctification is apprehended *in baptism by faith*."⁹ So in this verse it teaches that in baptism you are given the grace that justifies and sanctifies you. This is all the more impressive that this comes from a Baptist theologian that he would therefore take a sacramentalist understanding of baptism in the New Testament against what would normally be his tradition.

Finally, *no gift or power in the New Testament is not ascribed to baptism*. It is really remarkable when you look at the passages on baptism in the New Testament how virtually every blessing and power that is the believer's is said to be ours in virtue of being baptized. Again, I quote from Beasley-Murray's book *Baptism in the New Testament*, he says,¹⁰

⁸ 4:55

⁹ G. R. Beasley-Murray, *Baptism in the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1973), p. 166.

¹⁰ 9:38

In the light of the foregoing exposition of the New Testament representations of baptism, the idea that baptism is a purely symbolic rite must be pronounced not alone unsatisfactory but out of harmony with the New Testament itself. . . . The Apostolic writers make free use of the symbolism of the baptismal action; but they go further and view the act as a symbol with power, that is, a sacrament. . . . The ‘grace’ available to man in baptism is said by the New Testament writers to include the following elements: forgiveness of sin, Acts 2:38 and cleansing from sins, Acts 22:16, 1 Corinthians 6:11; union with Christ, Galatians 3:27, and particularly union with Him in his death and resurrection, Romans 6:3ff, Colossians 2:11f, with all that implies of release from sin’s power, as well as guilt, and the sharing of the risen life of the Redeemer, Romans 6:1-11; participation in Christ’s sonship, Galatians 3:26f; consecration to God, 1 Corinthians 6:11, hence membership in the Church, the Body of Christ, 1 Corinthians 12:13, Galatians 3:27-29; possession of the Spirit, Acts 2:38, 1 Corinthians 6:11, 12:13, and therefore the new life in the Spirit, i.e. regeneration, Titus 3:5, John 3:5; grace to live according to the will of God, Romans 6:1ff, Colossians 3:1ff; deliverance from the evil powers that rule this world, Colossians 1:13; the inheritance of the Kingdom of God, John 3:5, and the pledge of the resurrection of the body, Ephesians 1:13f, 4:30.¹¹

These are the gifts that are made available to us in virtue of baptism. These are said to be ours because of baptism.

I think you will agree with me that that is a pretty impressive list of blessings that are said to be ours in virtue of baptism. So you can see the close link that exists in the New Testament between being baptized and justification, sanctification, and all the rest that comes with salvation. So for that reason the sacramentalist will say that baptism is not a mere symbol. Look at all the things that it does; look at what God does through baptism to you! This is a sacrament; it is a means of grace.

The second point in defense of sacramentalism is that *baptism is also very closely linked with Spirit baptism*. Water baptism is linked with being baptized in the Holy Spirit. You will remember when we talked about regeneration, it is that baptism in the Holy Spirit that results in regeneration and in being born again to new life. Having the Spirit within whereas before a person was spiritually dead. Baptism is linked with this being baptized in the Holy Spirit.

Look again at Acts 2:38.¹² This is the response to Peter’s preaching on the day of Pentecost: “And Peter said to them, ‘Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.’” This verse is very much like the one we read from Acts 22:38 where Paul is told to rise, wash away his sins, and receive the Holy Spirit. Here “be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.” So in order to receive the regeneration of the Holy Spirit one undergoes baptism. This sets the pattern then for the rest of the book of Acts. One undergoes water baptism and thereby receives the gift of the Holy Spirit.

¹¹ Beasley-Murray, *Baptism in the New Testament*, pp. 263-64.

¹² 14:54

Not only do we have the book of Acts supporting this tight link between water and Spirit baptism, but also a pair of passages in Paul's letters also seem to link these very closely. I'm talking about 1 Corinthians 12:13 and Galatians 3:27-28. In 1 Corinthians 12:13, Paul says, "For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—Jews or Greeks, slaves or free—and all were made to drink of one Spirit." Here Paul talks about being baptized by the Holy Spirit into the body of Christ and being made to drink of the Spirit (receiving the Holy Spirit). So he connects Spirit baptism with being baptized into the body of Christ. Now look at what he says in Galatians 3:27-28, "For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus." Notice the emphasis there is the same. In 1 Corinthians 12:13, "Jews or Greeks, slaves or free," all are baptized into the one body. Then here in Galatians again, "There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus." Whereas in 1 Corinthians 12:13 he is associating this with the Holy Spirit – "by one Spirit we were all baptized into the body of Christ. . . . [We] were made to drink of one Spirit." In Galatians 3:27, there is no mention of the Spirit. It is water baptism: "As many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ." So this shows the tight link between water baptism and Spirit baptism. Even if these are not identical, they are simultaneous or co-incident. As one is baptized in water in the name of Jesus, one is baptized into the Holy Spirit into the body of Christ. This goes right along with what we have already seen: it is by baptism that we identify with the death of Christ, his burial, and resurrection. So in water baptism one receives the baptism of the Holy Spirit and is incorporated into the body of Christ.

Finally, the last passage that we want to look at that closely connects water baptism and Spirit baptism would be Paul's letter to Titus – Titus 3:5-7. There Paul says,

He saved us, not because of deeds done by us in righteousness, but in virtue of his own mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewal in the Holy Spirit, which he poured out upon us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior, so that we might be justified by his grace and become heirs in hope of eternal life.

Again, the sacramentalist will take this to be a baptismal verse in virtue of the mention of the washing.¹³ "He saved us . . . by the washing of regeneration and renewal in the Holy Spirit." This is a reference to baptism. Notice what is found through this washing: regeneration, renewal in the Holy Spirit, and justification by grace so that we become heirs of eternal life. So this would again show the close linkage between baptism in water and Spirit baptism. It is by undergoing water baptism that we are baptized in the Holy Spirit, regenerated, and incorporated into the body of Christ.

I think you can see on a sacramental view, baptism is really critical because it is through baptism that you receive God's saving grace. The Scripture will even say, "Thus baptism now saves you, not by washing of dirt from the body but by an appeal to God for a clear conscience."¹⁴ So we have regeneration and justification taking place in water baptism through the Holy Spirit co-incidentally or simultaneously with our water baptism. Therefore, baptism is just absolutely critical in the process of becoming a Christian.

¹³ 20:12

¹⁴ cf. 1 Peter 3:21

DISCUSSION

Question: I wanted to ask a question about a passage in Acts 19 starting with verse 2.

And he said to them, “Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?” And they said, “No, we have never even heard that there is a Holy Spirit.” And he said, “Into what then were you baptized?” They said, “Into John’s baptism.” And Paul said, “John baptized with the baptism of repentance, telling the people to believe in the one who was to come after him, that is, Jesus.” On hearing this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. And when Paul had laid his hands upon them, the Holy Spirit came on them.”

My question is: it almost seems like there was a different type of baptism before the church was established than after it. Is that the case or not?

Answer: Yes, I think that is quite right. This case of these disciples that Paul found in Ephesus is really bizarre. These people had heard about John the Baptist and they had been baptized in that type of baptism. It was a baptism of repentance for forgiveness of sin. But it wasn’t baptism *in the name of Jesus*. As we saw in the book of Acts, this is critical being baptized *in the name of Jesus*. So they hadn’t received the Holy Spirit. They were like the people pre-Pentecost during the ministry of Jesus when John the Baptist was baptizing people in the Jordan for forgiveness of sins. They weren’t receiving the Holy Spirit at that time. Pentecost had yet to come. The Holy Spirit was not yet given. But baptism in the name of Jesus, the sacramentalist will say, is an altogether different thing, and it now does confer the Holy Spirit. So because they had not received the Holy Spirit Paul in effect regarded their baptism as incomplete or invalid or not truly Christian baptism.

We will see there is a different case with Apollos just above. Look up in verse 25 of chapter 18. Apollos “had been instructed in the way of the Lord; and being fervent in spirit, he spoke and taught accurately the things concerning Jesus, though he knew only the baptism of John.” So what happens is, “when Priscilla and Aquila heard him, they took him and expounded to him the way of God more accurately.” What is the difference between Apollos and these people in Ephesus that Paul ran into? The difference was the Holy Spirit. The people in Ephesus had only heard of the baptism of John but they didn’t know the Holy Spirit. By contrast, Apollos, though he only knew the baptism of John, was fervent in Spirit.¹⁵ He evidently had the Holy Spirit and so they didn’t need to re-baptize him. They didn’t re-baptize him; they simply taught him more accurately the way of the Gospel. So it was the presence of the Holy Spirit in Apollos’ life that made the crucial difference in whether he needed to be re-baptized.

Question: Just a comment. It seems like these proof texts for baptismal regeneration seem to very heavily involve faith and belief, almost like all the proof texts used for baptismal regeneration cut equally against infant baptismal regeneration.

Answer: Ah. Yes, and this is one of the points that Beasley-Murray, as a Baptist, makes very emphatically. He said, “I am a sacramentalist. I believe in baptismal regeneration. It

¹⁵ 25:06

is in water baptism that we are regenerated and baptized into the Holy Spirit and become Christians.” He says for that reason it must be believer’s baptism. Infant baptism he will completely rule out because an infant obviously cannot make a choice to believe and receive Christ.¹⁶ So Beasley-Murray believes in sacramentalism, but he rejects infant baptism. We will talk more about infant baptism later. That will be the second thing we will talk about. What kind of candidate is appropriate for baptism? But you are quite right that the need for repentance and faith in Christ would be an argument that would cut against infant baptism or pedobaptism.

Question: I had this question in my mind since we started talking about baptism. If baptism is a sacrament, what is your opinion about immersion versus sprinkling, and are there any passages about that?

Answer: I don’t think that I was going to say anything about that because it seemed to me that in the New Testament there isn’t any sort of prescription in that regard. Whether they were fully immersed or maybe knelt in the water and the water was poured over them or something, it seems to me that that is not something that Scripture emphasizes or really has anything to say about. The key elements would be some sort of a sign or outward manifestation (water) and then some word of God conjoined with that sign. But it doesn’t seem to me that there is anything in the New Testament that would mandate the mode of how it is done.

Question: Did I understand you correctly when you said through baptism we receive God’s saving grace?

Answer: That is what the sacramentalist thinks – yes. You are saved through baptism. This is when regeneration occurs.

Followup: So if you are not baptized, you are not saved?

Answer: Yes.

Followup: So the Quakers are not saved?

Answer: I don’t know enough about Quakers. Do they not baptize?

Followup: Right.

Answer: Yeah, well, on a sacramentalist view I think they would be in trouble unless there were some other means of grace.

Followup: Also it seems like Luther would say that the regeneration comes before that and it is by mercy we are saved. His mercy he saved us.

Answer: Lutherans also have a sacramentalist view of baptism.

Followup: I am just talking about when the regeneration takes place.

Answer: As far as I understand, for a Lutheran as well Spirit baptism and regeneration

¹⁶ “We should be honest enough to recognize that 1 Peter 3:21 is one example of a New Testament baptismal utterance that cannot be applied to infant baptism. The baptism of an infant is neither his prayer to God for a pure conscience nor his promise to God to maintain such. This aspect of New Testament baptism, accordingly, we must ungrudgingly confine to the baptism of believers.” Beasley-Murray, *Baptism in the New Testament*, p. 362.

would be co-incident with water baptism.

Followup: So in other words we do something and then God gives us grace.

Answer: Yes, or God does something to us through this sacrament. He buries us with Christ in baptism. He incorporates us into the body of Christ through baptism. This is a means of grace that God uses.

Followup: Before that you said we were dead in our sins. So how do we get to that point where we want to?

Answer: That would go back to what we already talked about in terms of effectual calling, faith and repentance, and all that. And as you know there are different views on that depending on whether you are Reformed or Arminian. So how you answer that question is quite different.¹⁷ But the point would be that the person who wants to become a Christian and place his faith in Christ does what Peter says on the day of Pentecost – repent and be baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. The people said to Peter, “What shall we do?” and what Peter answered was “Repent and be baptized and you’ll receive the Holy Spirit.” How you get to that point is going to depend upon these issues we’ve already talked about in the previous section.

Question: I think most of these references – this is a problem of reading “water” anytime the word “water” or “baptism” is used into water baptism. I think most of these references are the Spirit baptizing us into Christ. When you had the progression of the church from Jerusalem, Samaria, Judea, and all the ends of the world, this is how this progressed. Paul said, “I am glad I didn’t baptize any of you” when baptism became controversial about who should do it. He said “He sent me to proclaim the Gospel.” Baptism isn’t even part of the Gospel according to that verse.

Answer: Yes, and this will be one of the passages that we will look at when we look at the view that baptism is an ordinance and not a means of grace. The passage you are referring to is in 1 Corinthians where Paul really seems to depreciate the importance of baptism.¹⁸ He didn’t seem to be concerned about baptizing anyone. We will look at that later, so hang onto that.

As for your first point, I think your first point about the washing not being a reference to baptism – I think that is a possibility with respect to some of these passages like Titus where it says, “By the washing of regeneration and renewal in the Holy Spirit.” You could see that as metaphorical, a kind of spiritual washing. But I must say that the parallelism between 1 Corinthians 12:13 and Galatians 3:27-28 really looks tight there. You’ve got Spirit baptism in 1 Corinthians 12:13 and then in Galatians the Spirit isn’t even mentioned. There it does seem to be water baptism and seems to suggest a real tight connection that goes beyond just washing.

Followup: It could be the occasion was the same in some cases but if you take the reference on the water side, if you take the reference in Peter, if you weren’t in Christ in the ark – in Peter’s reference, and the ark being one of the most perfect symbols of Christ – if you weren’t in Christ, the water was an instrument of death, not of life.

¹⁷ 30:01

¹⁸ cf. 1 Corinthians 1:14-17

Answer: Yes. OK, let's look at that passage, 1 Peter 3:21: "Baptism, which corresponds to this, now saves you, not as a removal of dirt from the body but as an appeal to God for a clear conscience." There it says "baptism saves you." You can't get much clearer than that! What you are pointing out is: but the ark saved them from the danger of the water. The water there was the threat through which they were saved, whereas in baptism the water isn't the danger. It would seem to be the means on a sacramentalist view. I think you would just have to say that you are pressing the metaphor or the parallelism too hard to say that in order to truly be parallel that the water of baptism needs to be a threat. It seems to me that the intent of the author there is to ascribe some kind of salvific significance to the rite of baptism. It is clearly water here and not Spirit baptism.

Question: My question is the motivation of the sacramental view. I don't hold it myself, and I guess I struggle to understand why people would hold it. My question is whether the sacramental view comes from a worldview that we are saved by works and so the sacrament sort of fits into that, or is it that they read these passages and they feel so obligated to a literalist interpretation that they sort of fit baptism in keeping salvation through Christ but also holding to this literalist view.¹⁹

Answer: I think it would be unfair to say that it is based upon a view of salvation by works. I think that would not be right. But, as I said when we introduced this topic, it is rooted in what you think the church is. Do you think the church is a means of grace that God has given to humanity so that by being incorporated into the church you receive God's grace through the instruments that the church has to administer like baptism and the Eucharist? Or do you think the church is just sort of the fellowship of believers, the fellowship of everyone who has come to know Christ but it is not a sacrament itself? So the sacramentalist view of these rites is, in a sense, just an expression of a deeper view of what the church is – that the church is itself a kind of primal sacrament and hence these are sacraments.

I have to say in all candor (and I think here Beasley-Murray would agree) that it is just the force of these passages when you read them that makes one think really hard about sacramentalism and that whether or not those who think baptism is a mere ordinance are taking it too lightly. I think these passages are very powerful. I feel put back on my heels by reading these. I feel – whoa! – there is something here that really needs to be addressed. These can't just be dismissed. So I think that the sacramentalist case with respect to baptism is pretty strong. Whether or not it is compelling will depend on the considerations that we will look at next time with regard to regarding baptism as an ordinance and not a sacrament. So hang on and we will save that for next time.²⁰

¹⁹ 34:58

²⁰ Total Running Time: 37:10 (Copyright © 2014 William Lane Craig)

§ IX. DOCTRINE OF THE CHURCH

Lecture 3

Baptism as an Ordinance

In our lesson we have been thinking about baptism as a sacrament or an ordinance. Last time we presented a case for thinking of baptism as a sacrament; that is to say, a means of grace, an event that brings about spiritual rebirth and regeneration and unites us with Christ in his death and resurrection and with the body of Christ, his church.

Now we want to look at an alternative interpretation or understanding of baptism. This would be to view baptism as an ordinance, not as a sacrament and not as a special means of grace.

Those who think of baptism as an ordinance rather than a sacrament remind us that the process of conversion and initiation in the New Testament was a process – a process that involved, first of all, repentance and faith, then receiving the Holy Spirit, and finally water baptism. So conversion and initiation involved the elements of repentance and faith, receiving of the Holy Spirit and regeneration, and then following the Lord in water baptism. Conversion is inward. Initiation is outward. It is the public identification of the believer with the Christian church – with the body of Christ. It is a sign, as it were, of that inner work that has taken place in conversion. The key to conversion is the baptism of the Holy Spirit. When a person is regenerated by God, when the Holy Spirit comes into him, he is baptized in the Holy Spirit and, as we would put it, is born again, born anew to spiritual life and eternal life. So the key to conversion will be baptism in the Holy Spirit. The key to initiation into the Christian church, however, is water baptism. So Spirit baptism is the key factor in conversion. Water baptism is the key factor in initiation into the Christian faith.

So what makes a person a Christian on this view is not water baptism. That is a matter of his public initiation. What makes him a Christian is that inner work of the Holy Spirit – of regeneration that has made him born anew to eternal life.

Let's look at some passages in support of this understanding.

First, 2 Thessalonians 2:13-14. Here Paul is recalling his experience of sharing the Gospel with the Thessalonian believers. He says,

But we are bound to give thanks to God always for you, brethren beloved by the Lord, because God chose you from the beginning to be saved, through sanctification by the Spirit and belief in the truth. To this he called you through our gospel, so that you may obtain the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Notice the elements in their conversion that are here described. First of all there is God's election. He says, "God chose you from the beginning to be saved." So there is God's election of these persons. Then there is God's calling. He says, "To this he called you through our gospel." Then there is faith. It says that it is through "belief in the truth" that they are saved.²¹ And then, finally, regeneration by the Holy Spirit: he says,

²¹ 4:55

“sanctification by the Spirit.” So all of the essential elements of conversion are there: election, calling, the response of faith, and sanctification by the Holy Spirit. There is no mention whatsoever of baptism in Thessalonians. It is these elements that are sufficient for conversion and being a Christian.

Look over, similarly, at Galatians 3:1-5, then also verse 14. Paul says,

O foolish Galatians! Who has bewitched you, before whose eyes Jesus Christ was publicly portrayed as crucified? Let me ask you only this: Did you receive the Spirit by works of the law, or by hearing with faith? Are you so foolish? Having begun with the Spirit, are you now ending with the flesh? Did you experience so many things in vain?—if it really is in vain. Does he who supplies the Spirit to you and works miracles among you do so by works of the law, or by hearing with faith?

Then in verse 14 he refers to “the blessing of Abraham might come upon the Gentiles [in Christ Jesus], that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith.”

In Galatians again we have these essential elements to conversion. There is preaching. Jesus Christ was publicly portrayed as crucified before the Galatians by Paul and the apostles. There is faith. He says, “You received the Holy Spirit by hearing with faith.” Then there is the reception of the Holy Spirit. He refers in verse 2 to receiving the Holy Spirit and then also in verse 14 “receiving the promise of the Spirit through faith.” So the preaching of the Word, the response of faith, and then the receiving of the Holy Spirit make a person a Christian.

Now, naturally these persons who had become Christians were then baptized. It would be unthinkable for a genuine regenerate Christian to then refuse the act of initiation and refuse to be baptized. So Paul can go on to say in Galatians 3:26-27, “for in Christ Jesus you are all sons of God, through faith. For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ.” So they are sons of God, children of God, through faith. They were then all baptized, of course. Therefore all of them who were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. The two went like a hand in a glove.

Turn over to 1 Corinthians 1:13-17. We alluded to this last time in the discussion time. Here Paul is reminding the Corinthians of his behavior among them in preaching the Gospel. He says,

Is Christ divided? Was Paul crucified for you? Or were you baptized in the name of Paul? I am thankful that I baptized none of you except Crispus and Gaius; lest any one should say that you were baptized in my name. (I did baptize also the household of Stephanas. Beyond that, I do not know whether I baptized any one else.) For Christ did not send me to baptize but to preach the gospel, and not with eloquent wisdom, lest the cross of Christ be emptied of its power.

Without wanting in any way to depreciate the importance of baptism, I think it is undeniable that it is clear that baptism did not lie at the heart of the Gospel for Paul. This wasn't the main concern that he had. He preached the cross of Christ faithfully. People responded. Then he may or may not have baptized some of them. This clearly wasn't at

the heart of the Gospel message for Paul.²²

Turn over then to 1 Corinthians 6:11. This is one of the verses to which the sacramentalist appeals as a baptismal verse to show baptismal regeneration. Paul describes the various sins of the unrighteous and then in verse 11 he says, “And such were some of you. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and in the Spirit of our God.” The washing here is interpreted by the sacramentalist to be a reference to baptism. But there is no reason to take it that way. The washing here is not talking about the physical washing you have in water. It is talking about spiritual cleansing, right? “You were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of Christ through the Holy Spirit.” So this is a spiritual washing or cleansing that takes place.

It is not enough to appeal to the phrase “in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ” to prove that this is a baptismal verse. Remember the sacramentalist points out that people were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, and he takes that as evidence that this is a baptismal verse. But the problem with that argument is that the expression “in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ” appears elsewhere in Scripture – it is not just a baptismal formula. For example, look at Ephesians 5:20. Here Paul says, “Always and for everything giving thanks in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to God the Father.” This is a verse which has nothing to do with baptism but uses this phrase “in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.” Another example would be 2 Thessalonians 3:6: “Now we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you keep away from any brother who is living in idleness and not in accord with the tradition that you received from us.” Here he issues a command “in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.” It has nothing to do with baptism.

So when he says, back in 1 Corinthians 6:11, that “you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and in the Spirit of our God” there is no reason to think that this is a baptismal formula. This is talking about a spiritual cleansing or washing. It is the Spirit who does this. So this would be consistent with what we said about the inner regeneration through the Holy Spirit that takes place in conversion.

What about Romans 6:1ff? Again, this is a passage on which the sacramentalist heavily relies to show that in baptism we are united in Christ’s death and resurrection and therefore come to be members of his body. Well, it seems to me that the person who defends baptism as an ordinance will say that what we have here is a metaphorical description of baptism. Paul says in verse 3,

Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, so that as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life.

He uses the metaphor of burial and rising again to describe what goes on in baptism. This isn’t a literal burial with Christ but metaphorically speaking we are buried with him in baptism. So this serves a symbolic function. It is, as I say, an outward sign of this

²² 10:03

spiritual reality.

Finally, all of the gifts which we saw last time are ascribed to baptism.²³ You will remember that impressive list I read from G. R. Beasley-Murray about all of the blessings that are ours in virtue of baptism. The point that the person who thinks of baptism as an ordinance wants to make is all of these same blessings are ascribed simply to faith. They are all the result of faith. Beasley-Murray himself recognizes this. On page 272 of his *Baptism in the New Testament* (which I quoted last time) he has this to say, “[I]n the New Testament, precisely the same gifts of grace are associated with faith as with baptism.” The same gifts of grace that are ours in virtue of being baptized are ours in virtue of our faith. Then he begins to enumerate this.

Forgiveness, cleansing and justification are the effect of baptism in Acts 2:38, 22:16, 1 Corinthians 6:11; in 1 John 1:9, forgiveness and cleansing attend the believing confession of sin, while the doctrine of justification by faith in Romans 3-4 scarcely needs citation. Union with Christ comes through baptism in Galatians 3:27 and is accorded to faith in Ephesians 3:17. Identification with Christ in his death and resurrection is rooted in baptism in Romans 6:3ff, Colossians 2:11f; faith alone is in view in Galatians 2:20, and in Colossians 2:12 faith is the means whereby new life is gained in baptism. Participation in Christ’s sonship is bound up with baptism in Galatians 3:26f since it becomes possible through union with Christ; but in verse 26, faith is explicitly mentioned as the means whereby sonship is possible, and in John 1:12 faith alone is in view. Membership in the Church, the Body of Christ, is through baptism in 1 Corinthians 12:13, Galatians 3:27ff; while it is quite certain that in the New Testament Church membership would have been normally dated from baptism (the Acts [of the Apostles] shows that exceptions were for a time possible), faith is so strongly the hall mark of the Church that it can be called ‘the household of faith’ (Galatians 6:10), and union with Christ is, as we have seen, through faith. The Spirit is given through baptism according to Acts 2:38, 1 Corinthians 12:13, but to faith in Galatians 3:2, 14. The new life of the Spirit is given in baptism according to Titus 3:5, John 3:5, but to faith in John 1:12-13. The inheritance of the kingdom is for the baptized in John 3:5 but for faith in Mark 10:15, John 3:14-18, 5:24, 20:31. One New Testament writer makes the summary statement, ‘Baptism saves you’ (1 Peter 3:21); another makes the yet more characteristic assertion, ‘By grace you have been saved through faith’ (Ephesians 2:8); the former asseveration had to be qualified by the writer, but the latter stands luminously self-evident!²⁴

In that lengthy passage, I think you can see that all of these wonderful blessings and graces that are ours in virtue of being baptized are said to be ours in virtue of our faith in Christ. I think the reason for this is simply that baptism and conversion are so closely linked in the New Testament as conversion and initiation that they are described as one. You could ascribe these blessings either to one half of the process or to the other half of the process.²⁵ They are united. It would be unthinkable that there would be born again,

²³ 15:01

²⁴ G. R. Beasley-Murray, *Baptism in the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1973), pp. 272-73.

²⁵ 20:05

regenerate Christians who would refuse to be baptized and would therefore not undergone initiation. So all Christians, having been duly baptized, could ascribe these wonderful blessings that are theirs in virtue of their conversion and initiation either by ascribing them to baptism or to the fact that they have had saving faith in Christ.

That is the first point: that conversion and initiation in the New Testament involved repentance and faith, reception of the Holy Spirit, and then water baptism. These are, as I say, rather like a hand in a glove. The one is the outer skin of this inner life and animation through the Holy Spirit.

The second point that the person who defends a non-sacramental view of baptism will want to make is that when you look more closely at the New Testament, you find that water baptism does not necessarily coincide with Spirit baptism. Remember for the sacramentalist, these are co-incident. It is in water baptism that one is baptized in the Holy Spirit. These happen at the same time. That is why water baptism is a sacrament – a means of grace. You are baptized in the Holy Spirit when you are water baptized.

But the New Testament doesn't bear that out. Let's just look at examples in the New Testament of baptism. First, begin with John's baptism – John the Baptist – then with baptism as practiced by Jesus himself, as we saw. In those baptisms, the Holy Spirit was not received. The Holy Spirit was not given through John's water baptism or in the baptism that Jesus administered. The Holy Spirit was promised only at Pentecost and in post-Pentecostal experience. The sacramentalist will respond by saying that this was a unique situation. It was after all pre-Pentecost and therefore John and Jesus' baptism was unusual; it was unique in not conveying the Holy Spirit. But notice that when Jesus gives the Great Commission to the disciples to go into all the world and preach the Gospel, he commands them to teach all that he has commanded them, baptizing people in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. So it is a continuation of the baptism that he was carrying out during his ministry, and they probably thought of this practice in exactly the same way. It is an external sign of repentance and faith.

Let's turn then to the baptism of the Holy Spirit that does occur at Pentecost in Acts 2. In Acts 2 we read the story of how the Holy Spirit came upon the New Testament church. Notice that this did not occur in the context of water baptism. The twelve disciples, and those with them, were not being baptized in water when the Holy Spirit came upon them. This was quite apart from that. The sacramentalist will say that this situation is unique because the disciples had already followed Jesus. Perhaps they had already been baptized during his ministry. So there was no need for them to be re-baptized or baptized again. But nevertheless, even if that is true, the point is that Spirit baptism doesn't take place in conjunction with water baptism for these disciples.

Now we skip ahead to Acts 10:43-48. This is the story of the preaching of the Gospel by Peter to a Roman centurion named Cornelius and his household. Notice that the members of Cornelius' household, upon hearing the Gospel, are baptized in the Holy Spirit prior to water baptism.²⁶

While Peter was still saying this, the Holy Spirit fell on all who heard the word. And the believers from among the circumcised who came with Peter were

²⁶ 25:03

amazed, because the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out even on the Gentiles. For they heard them speaking in tongues and extolling God. Then Peter declared, “Can any one forbid water for baptizing these people who have received the Holy Spirit just as we have?” And he commanded them to be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ.

Here we see that these persons, upon hearing the Gospel and believing it, received the Holy Spirit and then water baptism followed as a subsequent act. So they are not simultaneous. The sacramentalist will say that this was an exceptional circumstance because this is the first reception of the Gospel by the Gentiles. It was to show that the Gentiles are also acceptable to God as well as Jews. Granted. But once again we see that water baptism and Spirit baptism don’t coincide.

Let’s look at the case of the Ephesian disciples as opposed to Apollos in Acts 18:24-19:7. We alluded to this last time.

Now a Jew named Apollos, a native of Alexandria, came to Ephesus. He was an eloquent man, well versed in the scriptures. He had been instructed in the way of the Lord; and being fervent in spirit, he spoke and taught accurately the things concerning Jesus, though he knew only the baptism of John. He began to speak boldly in the synagogue; but when Priscilla and Aquila heard him, they took him and expounded to him the way of God more accurately. And when he wished to cross to Achaia, the brethren encouraged him, and wrote to the disciples to receive him. When he arrived, he greatly helped those who through grace had believed, for he powerfully confuted the Jews in public, showing by the scriptures that the Christ was Jesus.

While Apollos was at Corinth, Paul passed through the upper country and came to Ephesus. There he found some disciples. And he said to them, “Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?” And they said, “No, we have never even heard that there is a Holy Spirit.” And he said, “Into what then were you baptized?” They said, “Into John’s baptism.” And Paul said, “John baptized with the baptism of repentance, telling the people to believe in the one who was to come after him, that is, Jesus.” On hearing this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. And when Paul had laid his hands upon them, the Holy Spirit came on them; and they spoke with tongues and prophesied. There were about twelve of them in all.

Notice the similarity between Apollos and these Ephesian disciples. They only knew the baptism of John the Baptist. They had not been baptized in Jesus’ name. But the Ephesian disciples were compelled to be water baptized – to be re-baptized – because John’s baptism was not adequate. But in the case of Apollos they didn’t rebaptize him, did they? He knew John’s baptism but they didn’t baptize him in the name of the Lord Jesus. Why not? The difference is that Apollos was “fervent in the Spirit.” He had the Holy Spirit. He was regenerate. But the Ephesian disciples hadn’t even heard that there is a Holy Spirit. Therefore, they needed to submit to water baptism in Jesus’ name. It was the presence of the Spirit that made the difference in whether or not a person was a genuine regenerate Christian. It shows that the key to being a Christian is the presence of the Holy Spirit in a

person's life.²⁷

The sacramentalist would say, in response to this, that in Acts 18:25 when it says that Apollos was “fervent in Spirit” that is not the Holy Spirit, it just means he was zealous – he had a spiritual disposition as in, for example, Romans 12:11 which says, “Never flag in zeal, be aglow with the Spirit, serve the Lord.” The problem I think is that Romans 12:11 does refer to the Holy Spirit. That is what this is about. Similarly, with Acts 18:25, it is talking about a person who is filled with the Holy Spirit. That was the case for Apollos. So both of these – Romans 12:11 and Acts 18:25 – are talking about the presence of the Holy Spirit and shows that it was this that was key to being a Christian. Notice again that the Ephesian disciples did not receive the Holy Spirit in the act of water baptism. Again, it was after they were baptized in water that Paul laid hands on them and they received the Holy Spirit.

Look then at Acts 9:17-18. This is Paul's own conversion.

So Ananias departed and entered the house. And laying his hands on him he said, “Brother Saul, the Lord Jesus who appeared to you on the road by which you came, has sent me that you may regain your sight and be filled with the Holy Spirit.” And immediately something like scales fell from his eyes and he regained his sight. Then he rose and was baptized, and took food and was strengthened.

Here, again, Paul first receives the Holy Spirit and then he is water baptized. They are not co-incident. Water baptism follows Spirit baptism.

Look at Acts 8, which is the reception of the Gospel by the Samaritans. Acts 8:4-8, 14-17:

Now those who were scattered went about preaching the word. Philip went down to a city of Samaria, and proclaimed to them the Christ. And the multitudes with one accord gave heed to what was said by Philip, when they heard him and saw the signs which he did. For unclean spirits came out of many who were possessed, crying with a loud voice; and many who were paralyzed or lame were healed. So there was much joy in that city.

Now when the apostles at Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the word of God, they sent to them Peter and John, who came down and prayed for them that they might receive the Holy Spirit; for it had not yet fallen on any of them, but they had only been baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. Then they laid their hands on them and they received the Holy Spirit.

This is so strange a passage it is difficult for any view of baptism to understand! What you have here is people who believed in the Gospel, they were baptized in water in the name of the Lord Jesus (this was authentic Christian baptism), but they didn't receive the Holy Spirit until the apostles came down from Jerusalem and laid hands on them. But whatever view you take of this unusual circumstance, the undeniable fact is that water baptism in the name of Jesus Christ was not co-incident with their reception of the Holy Spirit. Spirit baptism came later in this case, after water baptism.

So when you look at the book of Acts carefully what you discover is that Spirit baptism *never* coincides with water baptism! *Never!* There isn't any case in which water baptism

²⁷ 29:52

and baptism in the Holy Spirit are coincident. Rather, baptism serves as the culmination of a person's act of faith. It is the climax of a person's act of faith in coming to Christ.²⁸ Here we might compare 1 Peter 3:21. The author says, "Baptism . . . now saves you, not as a removal of dirt from the body but as an appeal to God for a clear conscience, through the resurrection of Jesus Christ." Baptism now saves you as an appeal to God for a clear conscience. Baptism is an expression of the believer's faith. It is an appeal to God. Baptism is an act of calling upon God. So baptism is not a means of grace. It is a means of faith. It is an expression of a person's faith in Christ and his being initiated into the Christian faith. Baptism on the ordinance view then is not God's gift to man, rather it is man's call out to God – an appeal to God. It is placing one's faith in him.

On this second point then, to summarize: water baptism just doesn't necessarily coincide with Spirit baptism. In the book of Acts, it can come before, it can come after. There is no suggestion that through being water baptized you are baptized in the Holy Spirit and regenerated. So baptismal regeneration just doesn't have any support, it seems to me, in these instances in the book of Acts. Coupled with the first point that was made (that all of these blessings are ours in virtue of faith alone) it seems to me that the view of baptism as an ordinance makes good sense. It is the culmination of a person's faith in God; an expression of that initiation into the Christian faith that is a sign of this inward conversion that has taken place.

DISCUSSION

Question: Looking at baptism as a sacrament rather than an ordinance – is that where people feel like it is a necessary part of salvation?

Answer: Yes. Because it is a means of grace; it is the way in which you receive saving grace and are united with Christ. You are united with him in baptism, with his death, and resurrection. So you need to be baptized in order to be saved, unless by some miracle of God (like the thief on the cross, for example). God would make an exception. But the normal practice for the sacramentalist is that baptism is the means by which salvation is given to us.

Followup: So would the people that believe that that is not the case feel like, by including baptism as a part of the plan of salvation, that is denying that faith is necessary?

Answer: No, no. You will notice I didn't do that in any way. I didn't make the charge that the sacramentalist view is works-righteousness. The sacramentalist will insist that there needs to be an exercise of faith. This will then get us into the question of infant baptism, which we will talk about next time. But to have a sacramentalist view is not to deny the necessity of faith.

Followup: So is that a false way of looking at baptism – this sacramentalist view?

Answer: I am not persuaded that it is correct. It seems to me that the ordinance view (for the reasons that I explained) is the correct interpretation. So I would regard baptism as an ordinance and not as a sacrament.

²⁸ 35:02

Followup: So it wouldn't have to be done to be saved?

Answer: Oh! Well, now, I didn't say that! The person who refuses to undergo baptism – that would just be incomprehensible to the New Testament Christians because this would be to refuse to be initiated into the Christian church and would be to refuse publicly to acknowledge Christ in this way. He is living in disobedience and sin and therefore you would need to question, “Where is that person's heart?” What sort of a wicked heart would refuse to follow Christ in Christian baptism?²⁹ So this may well be something that is very, very important – if not essential – to salvation in the normal scheme of things (except in extraordinary circumstances like the thief on the cross).

Next time we can begin with discussion of these points.³⁰

²⁹ 40:14

³⁰ Total Running Time: 41:14 (Copyright © 2014 William Lane Craig)

§ IX. DOCTRINE OF THE CHURCH

Lecture 4

Infant Baptism

We are talking about the Doctrine of the Church and particularly the question of the sacraments or ordinances of the church. We focused our attention so far on baptism. We looked at the case for a sacramental view of baptism and then last time at a view of baptism as an ordinance.

DISCUSSION

Question: Just a comment about baptism – I wonder about your reaction. You just covered before this topic the warnings against apostasy. In the first century you had Christianity which was one of a chaotic number of competing ideologies and religions. To make sure that people who followed Christianity didn't turn out to be just temporary believers like chasing the flavor of the day do you think that one reason for baptism was to have a public ceremony so that the believer would identify with Christ and be less likely to apostatize? It seems like all the baptisms that we see in the New Testament were public events. An analogy might be that if somebody becomes a citizen of this country, typically they go through a ceremony and they have an oath and that creates some sort of a public expression of loyalty. It makes it less likely that they are going to become disloyal.

Answer: It is hard to speculate about the motivations psychologically. I think what you are saying makes sense in that baptism is the culmination of one's conversion-initiation process to Christianity. So it would be a public proclamation of one's identification with Christ. That would certainly tend to seal that initiation process. But in terms of the motivation, it seems to me that the motivation would lie more in the ministry of Jesus and a continuation of the activity of baptism that Jesus himself exercised. His command to go into all the world and make disciples of all nations teaching them whatever he has commanded and baptizing them.³¹ So I would see the primary motivations behind the early church's practice of baptism to be a continuation of Jesus' own ministry of baptism now in the Spirit age. But it would have the effect one would expect of sealing and solidifying one's commitment in virtue of its public nature.

Question: Do you see any connections between this and, say, the washing with water in the old covenant. For example, a woman who has her menstrual period afterward has to purify herself through washing with water. This is done in modern Judaism to this day. Anytime you are separating one part of your life from another. Do you think that's related?

Answer: In his book that I referred to – *Baptism in the New Testament*, by George Beasley-Murray – he has quite a long discussion of Jewish lustrations, or washings, for, as you say, ritual cleanness. Then also very significant (and I didn't mention this) would

³¹ cf. Matthew 28:18-20

be Jewish proselyte baptism where they would, again, have a Gentile convert to Judaism go through a kind of washing ceremony. The reason I didn't mention those is because, even though those are interesting analogies, at the end of the day I don't think they are as intimately connected with the early church practice of baptism as the baptism of John the Baptist and then Jesus' ministry of baptism during his public life. It seems to me that those are the roots of Christian baptism. These Jewish lustrations and ritual washings are an interesting analogy but I don't think they are genealogically connected to Christian baptism in the way that John's baptism and Jesus' practice of baptism was.³² For that reason I left them out. But if you are interested in this, certainly you could look at Beasley-Murray's book. He has a good discussion of those.

Question: In this section on sacraments and ordinances – I guess it must be my background – I don't think there are any sacraments. I don't think there is something we do to apprehend the grace from God. I look at baptism and the others – there's lots of others that are around that are called sacraments – and I wonder as we study these individual things if we can generalize and say, "Is there something we do where we can command God to give us grace?"

Answer: Well, now, of course, let's be fair. That is not what the sacramentalist says. What the sacramentalist says is that God has instituted in the church certain, shall we say, pipelines to God through which God's grace flows. The sacramentalist will approach those with great humility and thankfulness and gratitude to God. He won't be commanding God to send him grace in any way. They would be received with thanks and humility. But I don't want to answer your question because it would prejudice what we want to talk about when we get to the Lord's Supper. Is the Lord's Supper a means of grace as certain Catholic and Protestant groups believe, or is it just an ordinance again, a kind of remembrance or memorial meal? I don't want to prejudge that question until we get to it. But I have argued that at least with respect to baptism, I don't think that baptism is a means of grace in the way that the sacramentalist intends it. Of course, as you say, if you think of God's grace as dispensed through various means, why sitting under the preaching of the Word is a means of grace. Bible reading and prayer and meditation could be means of grace. In that general sense there is just an indefinite number of these means of grace. But those aren't sacraments in the sense that we are talking about here. We will hang on to your question until we talk about the Lord's Supper.

Infant or Believer's Baptism?

Now we want to turn to the subject of *infant baptism*. Here, again, I want to contrast two competing views. I will present each view as fairly and convincingly as I can, and then at the end of the day you need to make up your mind as to which view you find more persuasive.

The first view that we want to look at is called *pedobaptism*, or infant baptism – baptism of children. "Pedo-" (for child or infant) "-baptism." What arguments might be offered on behalf of pedobaptism?

1. The advocate of infant baptism will appeal to the *Jewish notion of the solidarity of the*

³² 5:07

family and then in the New Testament church of *household baptism* where every member of the household was baptized because of the solidarity of the family unit. The family was seen as a unit and therefore was treated together. So if a father, in particular, turned to Christ, his entire household would be baptized and would be considered to be Christian. Look for example of Acts 16:30-33. This is the well-known story of the Philippian jailer who turns to Christ in verse 30 and says to Paul and Silas,

“Men, what must I do to be saved?” And they said, “Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved, you and your household.” And they spoke the word of the Lord to him and to all that were in his house. And he took them the same hour of the night, and washed their wounds, and he was baptized at once, with all his family.

Undoubtedly in that day and age a man like this would have children – small members of his family – and they were all baptized presumably, too.³³ When the head of the family made a decision for Christ, he acted on behalf of the entire family. He was the head of the household, and the household followed him in his decision. So when a man, like this jailer, turns to Christ and is baptized, all of his family members it says were baptized along with him. That would include any children that might have been in the family.

2. The advocate of pedobaptism will appeal to *Jesus’ own attitude toward children*. In Mark 10:13-16 we read the story of how people were bringing little children to Jesus to bless them, and how the disciples would turn them away. The disciples didn’t want Jesus to be bothered with these little children that people were bringing to him. In Mark 10:13-16 we read,

And they were bringing children to him, that he might touch them; and the disciples rebuked them. But when Jesus saw it he was indignant, and said to them, “Let the children come to me, do not hinder them; for to such belongs the kingdom of God. Truly, I say to you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God like a child shall not enter it.” And he took them in his arms and blessed them, laying his hands upon them.

Here we see that Jesus’ attitude toward these little children who were being brought to him for his blessing was one of welcoming them, not saying they are not old enough or don’t bother me with these little ones. Instead, he received them and blessed them and laid hands upon them. So the encouragement here is: bring the little children to Christ! One might therefore do that in baptism.

3. The third argument is one that is offered particularly by our Reformed brethren. That is the parallelism between circumcision in the old covenant and baptism in the new covenant. A sort of parallel exists between circumcision as a sign of the old covenant, and baptism as a sign of the new covenant. Look at Colossians 2:11-12 – verses that we’ve already read but we will now read again,

In him also you were circumcised with a circumcision made without hands, by putting off the body of flesh in the circumcision of Christ; and 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.

³³ 10:03

Here Paul draws a kind of parallel between circumcision and baptism. He says that in Christ you were circumcised with a sort of spiritual circumcision being buried with Christ in baptism. Just as circumcision was a sign in the old covenant – of those who were members of the covenant – so in the New Testament baptism is a sign of the covenant for those who were part of it. Circumcision was obviously practiced upon infants.

Circumcision was done within a week or so after the birth of the male child, and so just as circumcision was done to infants so baptism can also be done to infants. Circumcision was a sign that this infant was part of the covenant family, part of God's elect people. In the same way, infant baptism serves to mark that child off as a member of the covenant family in virtue of being raised in a Christian home by believing parents and brought to have this sign of the new covenant performed on him.

So circumcision and baptism are signs of being in the covenant. Just as circumcision was practiced on infants of believing families so baptism should be practiced upon the infants who are members of believing families.³⁴

4. Finally, what about number four: *baptism and faith*? What is the relationship between baptism and faith? On the Reformed view, in particular as we've seen, faith is a gift of God without our knowledge or will. If you'll remember our discussion of regeneration on the Reformed view, regeneration actually precedes, logically at least, the act of faith. Remember a spiritually unregenerate, spiritually dead person cannot exercise faith in God on the Reformed view. Faith can only be exercised once the work of regeneration has been wrought in a person's heart. So that regenerating work of the Holy Spirit takes place apart from our knowledge and will. Therefore, if baptism of infants takes place apart from the knowledge and the will of the infant, that is simply an extension of what happens in every case when every believer is regenerated by God and placed into the family of God. It takes place apart from our knowledge and will and so the infant is really no different than the rest of us on the Reformed view of salvation.

Moreover, at least Luther and Calvin believed that the infant does, in fact, have faith. They would deny the assumption that an infant brought to baptism has no faith. They would say that little infants do in some way exercise faith in God, and therefore it is quite appropriate for these infants to be baptized.

Some time ago Jan and I attended an Anglican baptismal service, and it was very interesting to note that in the Anglican service the parents act as surrogates for the infant so that they answer the questions posed by the priest on behalf of the infant. It is a sort of surrogate faith. Prior to the baptism the parents and godparents stand and the priest says to them these words: "Those who bring children to be baptized must affirm their allegiance to Christ and their rejection of all that is evil. It is your duty to bring up these children to fight against evil and to follow Christ. Therefore, I ask you these questions which you must answer for yourselves and for these children." So the parents are answering not only for themselves, they are answering for the children. Then the priest asks them, "Do you turn to Christ?" And the parents respond, "I turn to Christ." The priest asks, "Do you repent of your sins?" And the parents answer, "I repent of my sins." The priest says, "Do you renounce evil?" And the parents answer, "I renounce evil." Then the priest performs the sign of the cross on the forehead of the infant and then the infant

³⁴ 15:09

is baptized. So in a case like this you can see that, although the infant may not himself be able to answer the questions and repent and exercise faith, this is done for him by the parents.

So on the basis of these arguments Catholics, Reformed churches, and Lutheran churches practice infant baptism as part of their regular practice of baptism.

DISCUSSION

Question: Is infant baptism considered the same thing or synonymous with confirmation?

Answer: Ah. Good question. No, and particularly in the Catholic Church confirmation is a separate sacrament, a separate means of grace, from infant baptism. So the infant receives God's justifying grace at the moment of water baptism, but then as he grows older and reaches an age of understanding he needs to confirm that decision that was made as an infant, and he will receive additional grace from God.³⁵ Even in other churches that practice pedobaptism who may not view it sacramentally – like Reformed churches – they will still often have catechism classes that will result in confirmation where that decision is confirmed; the decision either made by the parents or the decision that is imputed to the infant is confirmed when the infant grows up and comes of age to be able to do so. So confirmation would be extremely important for these churches that practice infant baptism.

Question: I went to a Lutheran school through eighth grade and, of course got baptized as a child. The minister in eighth grade – we practically learned the catechism and had it memorized. But confirmation after eighth grade was considered a re-affirmation of your childhood baptism. In that light, I always thought that I was baptized as a child but then I reaffirmed it when I was in eighth grade.

Answer: Right. So you would say that, in a sense, validated the baptism that you had undergone as a child. That would be a good illustration of what confirmation ideally is supposed to do. Sadly, as some of us know, very often it becomes a kind of routine thing that children go through that isn't really meaningful. But in a case like this it sounds as though that it was what it was supposed to be in your life.

Followup: OK. Let's take Johnson Ferry [Baptist Church] for an example. You have children – you'll see them on the screen sometime – they are six or seven years old. They got baptized because they believe in Jesus. Well, that was what confirmation was. You learned all about Jesus. By the time you got finished you really had your faith in Jesus.

Answer: Yes. Now, the difference, of course, with some place like a Southern Baptist church is that they would not practice baptism upon children who were incapable of making a conscious, voluntary decision to believe in Christ. It would not be a sort of confirmation for the children in a Baptist church. This would be their initiation, their first entry, into identification with Christ.

Question: Is this baptism a sacrament or an ordinance? And how does it relate to the Catholic view of this baptism removes you from original sin?

³⁵ 20:03

Answer: I will say something about that later on when I give some assessment. But pedobaptism is practiced both by groups that see it as the moment at which one becomes a Christian. This is when you receive justifying grace and become regenerate. But then also views like in the Reformed church where it may not be the moment at which one is saved but it is a seal or a sign, as I say, of being part of the covenant – that the children are children of elect parents for part of the covenant even if it isn't the moment at which baptism of the Holy Spirit takes place. So there can be a range of views on what baptism is as practiced by pedobaptists. It can be seen as salvific where you actually are regenerated, that Holy Spirit baptism takes place co-incident with it. Or it could be seen more as simply a sign or a seal that shows this infant as the child of elect parents as part of the covenant.

Question: Something that I kind of thought of when we were talking about this is: is there any kind of historical reason possibly why infant baptism kind of became popular? Because, of course, the life expectancy wasn't as great as it is now in, say, the Middle Ages or something like that. Of course a lot of children died very early on because they were more susceptible to diseases. I was just curious that maybe they wanted to make sure they got saved or they got baptized before any of that could have possibly happened.³⁶

Answer: Of course the question presupposes that infant baptism wasn't part of the New Testament church – right? – that this was a later practice. Pedobaptists would deny that. They would say this was practiced right from the beginning. But I think the doctrine of original sin would certainly be an incentive for this practice because this way the infant's stain of original sin is remitted by the grace that is received when this child is baptized. Therefore, it would be very important for the child to be baptized before he dies. So that would be an extra incentive.

Let me go on then to contrast a quite different view, and this is *believer's baptism*. Notice I did not say “adult” baptism. The contrast to pedobaptism is not adult baptism. It is believer's baptism. That is to say that only someone who has consciously exercised faith in Christ is a legitimate candidate for baptism. Again, several arguments can be offered for this view.

1. First and foremost is that *confession and faith are essential to salvation and baptism*. They are essential components of salvation and hence baptism.

1 Peter 3:21, again a verse that we have read before, says, “Baptism . . . now saves you, not as a removal of dirt from the body but as an appeal to God for a clear conscience, through the resurrection of Jesus Christ.” Here baptism is seen as an appeal of the person to God for a clear conscience. Therefore, this is something that requires a conscious decision in order to undergo to make such an appeal to God.

Similarly in Acts 2:38 we have the pattern for Christian baptism described in Peter's Pentecostal sermon. “And Peter said to them, ‘Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins.’” So the pattern there is:

³⁶ 25:02

repent and be baptized. That act of repentance is an act of confession and of course then faith in Christ. So this is something that an infant simply cannot do. An infant cannot exercise confession and faith and therefore isn't a legitimate candidate for baptism.

2. What about the argument based on household salvation? Certainly in the Jewish context and in the Old Testament you have the idea of the solidarity of the family as a unit. But notice that even in the Old Testament, the law of individual retribution still stands. As both Jeremiah and Ezekiel emphasize, each person is responsible for his own sin. Ezekiel will say, "Why do you quote this proverb that the fathers have eaten sour grapes and the children's teeth are set on edge? The soul that sins shall die."³⁷ Each person is individually responsible before God, and therefore it isn't true that once being a member of a household or of a solid unit, this sort of solidarity, overrides your individual responsibility. Each person is responsible before God to respond in faith and repentance.

When you look at the New Testament, it is clear that Christ's message did divide families – they were not always unified. For example, in 1 Corinthians 7:12-16, Paul gives instructions for Christians who are married to unbelievers and how they should handle this situation, whether the unbelieving partner wants to live with the Christian or whether that unbeliever wants to separate, and how to deal with this. He says in verse 14 that the unbelieving spouse is "consecrated" through the believing spouse, "otherwise, your children would be unclean, but as it is they are holy." So the Christian message was one that did divide families. It is not true that simply because of the decision of the head of the household everyone was treated as a Christian.³⁸

The bottom line is that there is no baptism of infants anywhere to be found in the New Testament. The defense of household salvation and baptism is all based upon an argument from silence. There is no suggestion anywhere that little infants were taken out of their cradles and brought to be baptized.

So the argument from household salvation really doesn't go through, the defender of believer's baptism would say. Indeed, it doesn't meet the prerequisites for legitimate baptism.

3. What about Jesus and the children and his blessing them? In the first place, it is not clear that these are infants. Rather, these seem to be little children who are exhibiting love and faith in Jesus and who believe in him. The lesson that Jesus wants to teach here about the children is that this is the same way that we need to come to Christ. We need to come to him in love and faith and with the sort of childlike trust that a little child has in his or her parents. We should also be childlike in our faith and trust in Jesus. In any case, even if they were bringing little infants for Jesus to lay hands on and to bless or pray for, prayer and blessing is just not the same as baptism. This isn't in any way to suggest that these little children should be baptized. On the contrary, as I've said, faith and repentance are prerequisites for Christian baptism.

4. The argument based upon circumcision. It is important here to understand that the way in which one enters the covenant, as we've seen, is by faith. It is not through some sort of act like circumcision or baptism. You enter the covenant by faith and, as we saw when we

³⁷ cf. Ezekiel 18:2-4. See also Jeremiah 31:29-30.

³⁸ 30:15

looked at the New Perspective on Paul, the way you stay in the covenant is by faith. There isn't some sort of means by which you enter and stay in the covenant apart from faith. The fact that circumcision and baptism were not seen as parallel or baptism replacing circumcision is the fact that in Palestine they were both practiced. Both continued to be practiced. Jewish children who were children of believing families and who were part of the Jesus movement – part of the church – were still circumcised. It is not as though baptism replaced circumcision in the New Testament church. For Jewish believers in Jesus, both circumcision and baptism were practiced. So there is no reason to think that infant baptism began to take the place of circumcision among Jewish believers.

Indeed when you look at Colossians 2:11, what corresponds to circumcision there is not baptism. What corresponds to circumcision is Christ's death on the cross. When it talks about putting away the body of flesh in the circumcision of Christ, it is talking about Christ's death. It is his atoning death on the cross that is this spiritual circumcision that puts away the body of death. Then we are united with Christ in his death and resurrection in baptism. There is no suggestion in Colossians 2:11-12 that infant baptism should somehow replace the circumcision of infants as a sign of the new covenant.

So it would seem on the basis of these arguments that the practice in the New Testament is believer's baptism. As was alluded to a moment ago, this might be children. There might be youngsters who have come to consciously place their faith in Christ and believe and so would be legitimate candidates for baptism. But what would not be acceptable would be the baptism of little infants who have no conscious volition or faith in Christ to exercise.³⁹

Sacramentalism and Infant Baptism: A Dangerous Combination?

Let me just say one thing in conclusion that relates to a question that was posed a moment ago. I have argued against a sacramental view of baptism, and also I think that the case for pedobaptism is very weak. It is based basically upon silence. The argument for confession and faith as essential to baptism seems to me to be powerful. Nevertheless I could see where one could have one or the other without great injury to the church. If you had a sacramental view of baptism like G. R. Beasley-Murray but you reject pedobaptism, well, that might be mistaken but nevertheless it wouldn't be injurious to the church because once people exercised faith in Christ and submitted themselves as candidates for baptism then they could be baptized and they might believe that at the moment of their water baptism they were baptized into the Holy Spirit and became regenerate believers. That might not be right, but it wouldn't do any great harm.

Similarly, if you have a non-sacramental view of baptism and you just view baptism as a sort of sign or external seal of the covenant then even if you were to be baptizing little children you wouldn't be regarding that as the moment of which they were saved and received justifying grace. It would just be an external sign. So even if this were incorrect there would still be seen the need for these little children (when they grow up) to exercise repentance and faith and receive justifying grace and become regenerate Christians. So even if pedobaptism were practiced, on a non-sacramental view it wouldn't be a terrible injury to the church.

³⁹ 35:04

But it does seem to me that what is truly disastrous for the church is to combine sacramentalism with pedobaptism because then what you have is people falsely thinking that in virtue of being baptized as an infant apart from their knowledge or will that they are therefore regenerate Christians who are recipients of God's justifying and saving grace. This leads to a church that is filled with non-Christians who have never themselves actually exercised saving faith in Christ but are simply trusting in a ritual which was done to them unwittingly as tiny infants. So while sacramentalism or pedobaptism might be practiced independently of each other without great harm to the church, it seems to me that when these are combined then the results really are disastrous for the health of the church because it will basically lead to a church that is filled with unregenerate people falsely thinking that they are in fact regenerate and justified Christians.

DISCUSSION

Question: I thought I would add another comment about people thinking that there is a connection between circumcision and baptism, which I think maybe has some merit to it but what we need to remember is that when you become a Christian you are born again. Baptism happens when you are born again as a Christian. It doesn't seem to me that it makes sense to associate that with physical birth, rather than spiritual birth which Jesus talks about in great length with Nicodemus.

Answer: The idea there is that being circumcised really marked a Jew off as a Jew in the ancient world, right? This was a sign of your Jewish identity; that you were part of this people, part of this covenant. This was from infancy on. So the argument is that baptism is similarly a sign or seal of members of the new covenant. But, as I've already argued, it seems to me to try to draw that close parallel between them is really pushing Colossians beyond the bounds of what that text contemplates.⁴⁰

⁴⁰ Total Running Time: 40:09 (Copyright © 2014 William Lane Craig)

§ IX. DOCTRINE OF THE CHURCH

Lecture 5

The Lord's Supper (Biblical Data)

Lord's Supper

We are discussing the Doctrine of the Church. Today we turn from a discussion of baptism to a discussion of that other major sacrament or ordinance of the church, namely, the Lord's Supper.

As we do so, one difference between baptism and the Lord's Supper becomes immediately evident; namely, baptism is a unique act never to be repeated whereas the Lord's Supper is something that is regularly commemorated and repeated. Baptism, you will remember, is the climax of the conversion initiation process of becoming a Christian. So when a person undergoes baptism, this is the pinnacle of his initiation into the Christian faith – his identification with the death and resurrection of Christ and with the church, the body of Christ. Therefore this is something that is never to be repeated.

I think that it is very important that we understand the significance of that act. A few years ago when Reasonable Faith first sponsored a trip to Israel, John Herring approached me and said, "Bill, some people have expressed an interest in being baptized in the River Jordan during this trip." And I said, "But John, have they already been baptized?" And he said, "Yes, but they want to repeat this and do it in Israel." And I said, "John, we can't do that. That would be completely inappropriate." To repeat your baptism is to invalidate the earlier baptism that you underwent. It is to say, "That wasn't really my initiation into the Christian faith and identification with the body of Christ. This act is." Therefore, you are invalidating the baptism you underwent before. He said, "Well, think about it. It could just be a re-commitment of their lives to Christ." I said I would think about it, but as I did so I just became all the more convinced at the inappropriateness of such an action. Baptism is a unique event whereby you identify yourself with the body of Christ and with his death and resurrection. It is an act of initiation. Therefore, to do it again is to in effect repudiate that earlier act of initiation that you underwent. So I said, "What we will do, John, is offer baptism to anyone who hasn't undergone believer's baptism already. Someone who has never been baptized or perhaps was baptized without their consent as an infant and now wants to undergo believer's baptism as this act of initiation." And there were some on the trip that wanted to do that. There was one Catholic family from Australia in particular who had young sons about eight years old who wanted to be baptized. So they were baptized by John in the Jordan River. They loved this because they could now go back and tell their friends that they had been baptized in the Jordan River by "John the Baptist." *[laughter]*

Biblical Data

But now we want to look at the Lord's Supper. And as our traditional methodology, we will first look at the biblical data concerning the Lord's Supper.

The Lord's Supper is first of all instituted by Jesus himself. Jesus of Nazareth instituted

the practice of the Lord's Supper. Let's look at the account found in the earliest of our Gospels, the Gospel of Mark 14:22-25. Mark says,

And as they were eating, he took bread, and blessed, and broke it, and gave it to them, and said, "Take; this is my body." And he took a cup, and when he had given thanks he gave it to them, and they all drank of it. And he said to them, "This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many. Truly, I say to you, I shall not drink again of the fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new in the kingdom of God."

Here Jesus, in initiating the Lord's Supper, refers to "my blood of the covenant" which he identifies or says is represented by the cup of wine which they drink.⁴¹ This phrase recalls Exodus 24:8. Look back at Exodus 24:8. Here Moses is explaining how the old covenant – the Mosaic covenant – is sealed with blood. In verse 8 of chapter 24 of Exodus it says, "And Moses took the blood and threw it upon the people, and said, 'Behold the blood of the covenant which the Lord has made with you in accordance with all these words.'" Here you have this phrase "the blood of the covenant" which expressed the sanctifying blood in the Old Testament. And now Jesus takes this cup while celebrating Passover and says, "This is *my* blood of the covenant which is poured out for many." He thereby institutes the Lord's Supper.

Secondly, let's look at the tradition that the apostle Paul hands on concerning this event. This is one of the events in the life of Jesus that we read about not merely in the Gospels but in Paul's epistles. In 1 Corinthians 11 Paul gives some instructions concerning the celebration of the Lord's Supper. In 1 Corinthians 11:23-25 Paul says, "For I received from the Lord what I also delivered to you." Now before I go on, this is interesting phraseology. This is the same phraseology Paul uses in chapter 15 when he says, "For what I received, I also delivered to you" and then he quotes this old four-line tradition concerning the major events of the Passion and resurrection – that Christ died, was buried, was raised, and appeared. So what this indicates here is that Paul is handing on historical tradition about Jesus concerning his Last Supper. He says,

I also delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus on the night when he was betrayed took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it, and said, "This is my body which is for you. Do this in remembrance of me." In the same way also the cup, after supper, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me."

Here is a little apologetics aside on this passage that is interesting. Notice this phrase, "on the night when he was betrayed." Even though Paul is not handing on the historical tradition of Jesus' betrayal by Judas Iscariot – he is merely talking here about the Last Supper – nevertheless this remark shows that Paul was aware of the historical context of the traditions that he delivered to his churches. These weren't just isolated sayings without a context or historical meaning for Paul. Paul knew the historical context of the traditions that he handed on to his churches. That is seen here in his knowledge about Jesus' betrayal in the context of delivering these traditions about the Last Supper. So what we have in the Pauline epistle, says one scholar, is just the tip of an iceberg. We see

⁴¹ 5:11

Paul's knowledge of the historical Jesus only insofar as he is called upon to draw upon it in dealing with the situation in his local churches. If it hadn't been for the fact that certain people in Corinth were getting drunk at the communion service, we wouldn't have any reference in the Pauline epistles to the Lord's Supper. Someone would surely say in that case that the Pauline churches did not celebrate the Lord's Supper; that this was a later tradition that came to be embodied in the Gospels. But because of the accident of history that the Lord's table was being abused in Corinth, we see here Paul's knowledge of the historical Jesus and the context of the traditions that he hands on.⁴² So what we get in the Pauline epistles is just, as I say, the tip of the iceberg. What Paul knows about the historical Jesus is much, much more vast than what you see appear in these epistles where it will just be a matter of accident in a sense that this knowledge is disclosed. So that is just an apologetics aside about the reliability and the credibility of the historical traditions that Paul hands on.

The more important point here is that we see in the letters of Paul a very similar tradition to what we read in Mark; namely, about Jesus taking bread and saying, "This is my body," and then also the cup identifying this as "the new covenant in my blood."

In fact, the Pauline tradition of the Last Supper is actually much closer to Luke's version of the Last Supper than it is to Mark's. Turn over to Luke 22:19-20. Luke says,

And he took bread, and when he had given thanks he broke it and gave it to them, saying, "This is my body which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me."

[Here you have the command to celebrate this memorial supper which isn't in Mark but it is in Paul and it is in Luke.]

And likewise the cup after supper,

[That again is something that characterizes Paul's tradition but not Mark's. The cup was taken after supper.]

saying, "This cup which is poured out for you is the new covenant in my blood."

So you have in Paul and Luke very close traditions of the Last Supper that they hand on about how Jesus said that this is his body and blood and we are to celebrate this in remembrance of him.

In addition to this historical tradition that we find in Paul as well as in Mark in the Gospels, Paul gives some instructions that are noteworthy to the church in Corinth about how to celebrate the Lord's Supper. Let's look at those. This will be from 1 Corinthians 11:17-34. Here Paul is obviously very upset with what is going on in Corinth. He says,

But in the following instructions I do not commend you, because when you come together it is not for the better but for the worse. For, in the first place, when you assemble as a church, I hear that there are divisions among you; and I partly believe it, for there must be factions among you in order that those who are genuine among you may be recognized. When you meet together, it is not the Lord's supper that you eat. For in eating, each one goes ahead with his own meal, and one is hungry and another is drunk. What! Do you not have houses to eat and

⁴² 10:04

drink in? Or do you despise the church of God and humiliate those who have nothing? What shall I say to you? Shall I commend you in this? No, I will not.

[He is clearly angry at what is going on in Corinth]

For I received from the Lord what I also delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus on the night when he was betrayed took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it, and said, “This is my body which is for you. Do this in remembrance of me.” In the same way also the cup, after supper, saying, “This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me.” For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord’s death until he comes.

Whoever, therefore, eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of profaning the body and blood of the Lord. Let a man examine himself, and so eat of the bread and drink of the cup. For any one who eats and drinks without discerning the body eats and drinks judgment upon himself. That is why many of you are weak and ill, and some have died. But if we judged ourselves truly, we should not be judged. But when we are judged by the Lord, we are chastened so that we may not be condemned along with the world.

So then, my brethren, when you come together to eat, wait for one another— if any one is hungry, let him eat at home—lest you come together to be condemned. About the other things I will give directions when I come.

That is the biblical data concerning the practice of the Lord’s Supper.⁴³

DISCUSSION

Question: Just looking at verse 23 where Paul says, “For I received from the Lord,” do you have any insight as to what that might mean? How did he receive it from the Lord?

Answer: I don’t, except to say that when you look at the 1 Corinthians passage where he uses similar language about “What I delivered to you I also received” it is not something that is by just divine revelation as one might think. That passage is full of what are called Aramaisms; that is to say, linguistic traces of an Aramaic original. So it doesn’t appear to have been originally composed in Greek. This looks like an Aramaic tradition translated into Greek that goes right back to the earliest church in Jerusalem. Most scholars think that that tradition in 1 Corinthians 15 goes back to within a few years of the crucifixion, if not a few months. So when he says “from the Lord” I don’t think he means by divine revelation. He was taught the Jesus traditions when he was in Damascus before going back to Jerusalem. He does say later on that “the Gospel which I preach did not come through men but through a revelation of the Lord,”⁴⁴ but when you look at the context what he is talking about there is his Gospel of salvation for Gentiles as well as Jews. He is saying that insight into the Gospel is original to him, or it is given to him by divine revelation. The Gospel is for Gentiles as well as Jews, and so he was the apostle to the

⁴³ 15:41

⁴⁴ cf. Galatians 1:12

Gentiles. But in terms of the traditions about the historical Jesus, I think he learned these from those who were in Christ before him and who taught him. He was catechized as it were by early Christians who shared with Paul these Jesus traditions.

Question: It appears when they ate the Lord's Supper, is that like a full meal that they are eating or is it more of the ceremonial type of thing that we do today?

Answer: It certainly looks like a meal, doesn't it? Because you don't get drunk having a little vial of wine. It was evidently a meal that they celebrated just as the original supper that Jesus ate with the disciples prior to his arrest was a meal. So this wasn't the sort of Lord's Supper that we celebrate today in terms of its quantity.

Theological Interpretations

Obviously, these biblical passages about the Lord's Supper have been the subject of varying theological interpretations, and different confessions within Christendom understand the Lord's Supper very differently from one another. Some interpret these sacramentally; that these passages indicate that in the Lord's Supper we are accessing God's grace in a special way. There is a means of grace here. Others think of this as merely a memorial meal that is done in remembrance of Christ. So let's look at some of the various theological interpretations of the practice of the Lord's Supper.

Transubstantiation

First, the strongest, and I think we can say most radical, interpretation of the Lord's Supper will be the doctrine of *transubstantiation*. This is the doctrine which is taught by the Catholic Church. According to the doctrine of transubstantiation, the elements of the wine and the bread are actually turned into the body and blood of Christ.⁴⁵ Now, you might say, but it certainly doesn't look that way! If you were to analyze these biologically, it is bread and it is wine! It is not blood and human flesh that is there. But here Catholic theologians have distinguished along the lines of classical Aristotelian metaphysics between substance and its accidents, or contingent properties. The substance of a thing is the thing itself – its essence. The accidents are properties that the thing has but doesn't have to have in order to be that substance. For example, I am a human being. I am essentially a human being. But I have a certain weight, a certain skin color, a certain number of hairs on my head, a certain height. These are all accidental properties which I possess which are not necessary to me. In transubstantiation the claim is that what happens is that the substance of the bread and the wine turn into the substance of Christ's body and blood. The bread and the wine actually become Christ's flesh and blood in a literal sense. But the accidents of the bread and the wine remain so that it looks like bread and wine because the color, the taste, the consistency, the porousness, the liquidity, the other properties of the bread and the wine are held constant even though it has undergone a substantial change. So in the doctrine of transubstantiation we have this very radical view that the elements of the Eucharist (i.e. the Lord's Supper) actually are transformed into the body and blood of Christ even though they retain the accidental properties of bread and wine.

⁴⁵ 20:04

Now this occasions a question: when the communicant takes the blood and the body of Christ and eats them and digests them, why isn't the body and blood of Christ sort of eaten up after a while? Is there a sort of infinite body and blood? Remember we are talking about the human nature of Christ, not the divine nature. In his divine nature, the second person of the Trinity is immaterial. He doesn't have a body. So we are talking about the human⁴⁶ nature of Christ. So as communicants eat the body of Jesus and drink his blood, one might ask, "Why isn't it all consumed? Why isn't he eaten up?" And I asked this question once of a Fordham University philosopher who is a priest, and he said, "You don't consume the substance in the Lord's Supper. You only eat the accidents." And it was like the veil fell from my eyes. I suddenly understood. When the communicant takes the elements in, he doesn't really consume or digest the body and blood of Christ. He only consumes the accidents. And that is why it is not used up. That puts a somewhat different spin on transubstantiation. I remember one Catholic girl saying to me once that she liked the doctrine of transubstantiation because it made her feel so close to Christ, that she was actually eating his flesh and drinking his blood. It was such an intimate union. Well, that is not really true on the classic doctrine. She is really only consuming the accidents of the bread and the wine, not the substance of the Lord's body and blood.

So this is the most radical view of the Lord's Supper. The elements of the bread and the wine are turned into the body (or flesh) and the blood of Christ and then taken by the communicant. As such, this is a means of grace.⁴⁷ You are receiving the body and blood of the Lord. This is a sacrament whereby you receive the grace of God. So the Second Vatican Council, in their document "The Church," section 11 says the Eucharistic sacrifice is "the fount and apex of the whole Christian life."⁴⁸ That is a strong statement. The fount (that is, the source), the apex (that is, the pinnacle) of the whole Christian life is found in the Mass, in the Eucharistic sacrifice. This becomes the center of the Christian life because you are receiving Christ in taking it.

Let's say a word about the history of this doctrine of transubstantiation. Early church fathers such as Justin Martyr, Irenaeus, Tertullian, had used language of the real presence of Christ in the Eucharist. There was a real presence of Christ there. But the church father Cyprian, at least, took these elements of the bread and the wine to be at best symbolic of the body and blood. They weren't transformed into the body and blood of Christ. They were simply symbolic. But then during the third century after Christ, and especially in the East in the Greek speaking part of the Roman Empire, the view of the elements as signs, types, or figures, gave way to a substantial identification of the elements with the body and blood of the Lord and an actual change of the elements into the body and blood of the Lord.

Cyril of Alexandria, for example, asserts that the elements are transformed into the body and blood of Christ. An especially important figure is St. John of Damascus (or John

⁴⁶ Dr. Craig misspeaks and says we are talking about the divine nature of Christ, but clearly he means the human nature of Christ.

⁴⁷ 25:02

⁴⁸ cf. "Lumen Gentium," Chapter II "On the People of God," §11. See http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_const_19641121_lumen-gentium_en.html (accessed May 26, 2014).

Damascene) – his dates are 675 to 749. In John Damascene we have the full-fledged doctrine of transubstantiation. He denies that there is any sort of dual reality there of bread and wine along with body and blood. Rather, the elements are actually changed into, transformed, and become the body and blood of Jesus.

By contrast, in the West, Augustine and most of the Western theologians tended to be symbolists – that there wasn't an actual transubstantiation taking place, but that these elements represented the body and blood of Christ. But in the East the view of transubstantiation gained ground and later, as we will see, was ratified as official Catholic doctrine.

The controversy between a symbolic understanding and a substantial understanding of the elements occurred again in the 9th and in the 11th centuries. They became a matter of theological dispute. In the 9th century, Radbertus and Ratramnus disputed the nature of the elements. That was around 860. Radbertus was a realist and held that this really was the body and blood of the Lord. By contrast, Ratramnus said that these were mere symbols of the body and blood of the Lord. So there was controversy. This controversy broke out again in the 11th century, this time between Lanfranc (his dates are around 1089; he was a realist and believed in the transformation into the body and blood) and Berengarius (he was the symbolist in this dispute and his date is about 1088.)⁴⁹ So the debate between symbolists and realists has cropped up historically in the Roman Catholic Church periodically. But in the year 1215 the Fourth Lateran Council promulgated transubstantiation as official Catholic doctrine. In 1215 the Fourth Lateran Council said that the substance of the bread and the wine literally become the flesh and the blood of Christ. So that is official Catholic doctrine.

DISCUSSION

Question: I would just challenge the notion of Tertullian. If you read enough of him, he says that the bread and wine are figures – like, “This is a figure of my body.” That is, it turns figuratively into his body and blood. He has two senses of the word “figure.” One is a mere symbol; the second is like imagery as in visions. So both of them are non-realist uses. You look at “figuratively,” every time he uses it in his writings it means a mere metaphor. There is not one exception in all of his known writings. I went through this for an assignment.

Answer: Good! When I said that these early church fathers spoke of the real presence of Christ in the Eucharist, that isn't necessarily to say that they believed in his physical, bodily presence in terms of the body and blood of Christ. As we will see when we get to Reformed churches, they would agree that there is a real presence of Christ in the Lord's Supper. But they would deny any sort of transubstantiation or consuming of the blood and the flesh of the Lord. So all I was saying there was that you have the notion in some of these early church fathers of a real presence. But then how that is to be interpreted, that gets unfolded later on as the doctrine of transubstantiation develops.

Question: Aside from the many problems of that, the one right at the start is when Jesus is

⁴⁹ 30:05

observing the first Lord's Supper, they are under the Law. The apostles are under the Law so if it was his body and blood then they would all have been guilty of breaking the Law by eating blood.

Answer: Well, we will get to the question of assessment of these views later on. First I want to lay out all the views as fairly as I can, and then we will talk about assessing them later on. Right now, these are just comprehension questions.

Question: You are saying that this is a Catholic doctrine. Are there any Protestant denominations that also believe in transubstantiation or is this primarily Catholic?

Answer: Not to my knowledge. Now, as we will see, in the Lutheran church, they also do believe that the communicant eats the body and drinks the blood of Christ. But their view is subtly different than transubstantiation. So I am not aware of any Protestant group that believes that the substance of the bread and the wine actually turn into the body and blood of Christ.

Question: This may be pretty simplistic, but when he did it the first time - when Jesus presented that - he is there in his full body and he is presenting that bread and wine and saying "This is my body" but in fact he was there fully incarnated at that point in time. Now, I know you said wait for the assessment on that?

Answer: Yes, again, that is not dissimilar from the earlier point. Both of these points are good points but we will take them up later.

Question: In creating a covenant in the Old Testament when they would split the animals in two and there was blood always involved, they never drank any of the blood and eating the flesh of the split animal. A covenant means cut – to cut a covenant – but there was no actual drinking of the blood involved. The covenant wasn't sealed with drinking of the blood; it was the spilling of the blood. So I wonder what the analogy is.

Answer: That does make Jesus' actions radically different in that here he commands them to drink.⁵⁰ "This is my blood, drink ye all of it. This bread, eat it, it is my body which is for you." So you are right, that is dissimilar to what you have in the old covenant which is just the shedding of blood. Again, I see your point. You are saying that is an argument in favor of symbolism, but we will get to assessment later on. Right now we are just trying to understand the doctrine.

Question: In the third century, the Eastern churches tended to be more literal, but are the Orthodox churches still literal?

Answer: As far as I know, that is right. This would be something that would be in Orthodoxy as well. You have the body and blood of Christ.

Question: This might be an assessment question but for me tied up in this doctrine is that the Catholic Church has so elevated this one doctrine so that if we don't believe this one thing then we are anathema and cursed. Did that come at this 1215 conference or was that later that the church said if you don't believe in transubstantiation then you are anathema?

Answer: I don't know whether there were anathemas attached to the Fourth Lateran

⁵⁰ 35:02

Council or not, but you need to understand from a Catholic point of view, again, the church is itself a sacrament. It is a means of grace. This is how God's saving grace is appropriated. So a person who knows that the Catholic Church is the channel of God's grace and deliberately repudiates it separates himself from salvation. That is not to say that there can't be misguided brethren, Protestants say, who don't recognize that the Catholic Church is this primal sacrament, and so who are still saved even though they are separated from the Catholic Church. They would be separated brethren but those who would really be condemned would be those who know that the Catholic Church is God's means of salvation and who will not partake of it and take part of it.

Followup: So if I just don't know that?

Answer: Yeah, if you don't know it, you are better off in this case. It is sort of like that verse in Scripture, "It would be better for them never to have known the way of salvation than having known it and walk away from it."⁵¹ Because with greater knowledge comes greater responsibility.

Followup: So their view would not be that they've cursed me but that I've cursed the Catholic Church.

Answer: Yes, that's right. Exactly. You've repudiated God's grace by pushing it away.

There is one other element of the Catholic doctrine of the Lord's Supper that we will want to look at next time, and that is the extent to which the Eucharist is a repetition of the sacrifice of Christ on the cross. Is the body and blood of Christ being offered again to God as a sacrifice for the sins of the people? As we will see, again, there is ambiguity on this question in the Catholic doctrine.⁵²

⁵¹ cf. 2 Peter 2:21

⁵² Total Running Time: 38:43 (Copyright © 2014 William Lane Craig)

§ IX. DOCTRINE OF THE CHURCH

Lecture 6

Catholic and Lutheran View of the Lord's Supper

We've been doing a series on the sacraments, and last time we looked at perhaps the most radical interpretation of the Lord's Supper which is the Catholic doctrine of transubstantiation. You will remember we explained how, on the Catholic view, when the bread and the wine are consecrated by the priest they are literally transformed into the flesh and blood of Christ. Although this doesn't appear to us to be flesh and blood, it really is in its substance. It merely has the accidental properties of bread and of wine, but in fact it is the body and blood of Christ.

That does not exhaust the importance of the Eucharist (or the Lord's Supper) for Catholics, however, because there is another very important facet of their doctrine that needs to be emphasized and that is the doctrine of the Eucharist (or the Mass) as a *sacrifice* which is offered to God. In early church history the church father Irenaeus, who was the Bishop of Lyons, characterized the Lord's Supper as a thank offering which believers offer to God. It is an offering of thanksgiving to God for what he has done. During the third century after Christ, however, in the West the view of the Eucharist as a rite of thanksgiving began to give way to the belief that this was a propitiatory or expiatory sacrifice offered to God. You will remember when we talked about the Doctrine of Christ, we looked at the work of Christ and we saw that Christ's atoning death is a propitiation for our sins. That is to say, it satisfies the wrath and the justice of God. Christ offers his life to God as a fulfillment of the demands of God's justice. It is also expiatory in the sense that it cleanses us of sin. In the Catholic Church, the doctrine developed that when the Mass is celebrated and the body and blood of Christ are present there they are offered to God as a propitiatory or expiatory sacrifice for our sins.

This doctrine became codified as Catholic doctrine at the Council of Trent during the Counter-Reformation – the response to the Protestant Reformation. This Council met for a number of years between 1545 and 1563 and came to codify standard Catholic doctrine over against Protestantism. At the Council of Trent, the church affirmed that indeed the body and blood of Christ are present in the Eucharist. The bread and the wine are transformed into the body and blood of Christ, but in addition to that the church also said that the body and blood are both present in each element. So when you drink the wine, it is not simply the blood of Christ that you partake of, you also partake of the body of Christ in the wine. Similarly, if you eat the bread you take not only the body of Christ but the blood of Christ as well. Under each element there is a communion with both the body and the blood of Christ. Therefore the church declared that laymen should take the bread only and not drink the cup. That was reserved for the priests. Laypeople only get to participate in eating the bread. But there is no harm done to them because in taking the bread you get both the body and the blood of Christ.

In the 22nd session, chapter 2 of the Council of Trent⁵³, the Council declared that “the

⁵³ An English translation of the Council of Trent's canons and decrees [ed. and trans. J. Waterworth (London: Dolman, 1848)] can be found at <http://history.hanover.edu/texts/trent/trentall.html>

same Christ is contained and immolated in an unbloody manner, who once offered Himself in a bloody manner on the altar of the cross.” In other words, it is the same Christ who shed his blood on the cross who is offered in the Eucharist (in the Mass).⁵⁴ Then it was a bloody manner in that he shed his blood on the cross. Now we don’t see the blood; it is present there but it is offered in a different manner to God. It declared that the sacrifice of the Mass is propitiatory; that is to say, it satisfies the demands of God’s wrath and justice. The only thing different between the sacrifice that is offered in the Mass and Jesus’ original sacrifice is just the manner of offering. It is a different manner of offering but the sacrifice is the same.⁵⁵ Back then Christ offered himself to God but now he offers himself via the priest. The priest consecrates the elements, and God turns them into the body and blood of Christ, and Christ offers himself via the priest. So the Council of Trent declares that the Mass is offered for sins and punishments not only of the living but also of the dead who may not yet be fully purified.⁵⁶ The reference here is to those who are in purgatory – people who have died but who are not yet sufficiently purified to go to heaven. So the Eucharist can be offered on behalf of their sins as well. So the Lord’s Supper is a sacrifice offered to God which is propitiatory for sins and punishments of both the living and the dead.

In Canon 1 of the Council of Trent, the council says that the Mass is a “true and proper sacrifice” which is offered to God. In Canon 3, the Council says the sacrifice of the Mass is not only of “praise and thanksgiving” nor is it “a bare commemoration of the sacrifice consummated on the cross,” it is a “propitiatory sacrifice.” So this is a direct repudiation of Protestant views. The Lord’s Supper is not a mere commemorative meal where you remember Christ in his death and sacrifice, nor is it a sacrifice of thanksgiving such as Irenaeus contemplated. Rather, the Mass is offered to God as a propitiation for sins and punishments.

This doctrine was further unfolded at the Second Vatican Council during the 1960s (aka Vatican II). In the declaration on The Church, section 11, we’ve already seen – and I’ve quoted this before – that the Eucharist sacrifice is the “fount and apex of the whole Christian life.”⁵⁷ I pointed out before how that makes the Eucharist so important to Catholics. It is the fount and apex of the Christian life. But here I want to draw attention to the wording “the Eucharistic sacrifice.” It is a *sacrifice* that is being offered to God and is therefore the fount and apex of the whole Christian life. The Council goes on to say, “for in it people offer the Divine Victim and themselves to God.”⁵⁸ So Christ is offered to God, but also now it adds that the communicant offers himself to God as well. It is an offering not only of Christ but the communicant should also be offering himself to God,

(accessed June 2, 2014).

⁵⁴ 5:18

⁵⁵ “For the victim is one and the same, the same now offering by the ministry of priests, who then offered Himself on the cross, the manner alone of offering being different.” (Council of Trent, Session 22, Chapter 2).

⁵⁶ “Wherefore, not only for the sins, punishments, satisfactions, and other necessities of the faithful who are living, but also for those who are departed in Christ, and who are not as yet fully purified, is it rightly offered, agreeably to a tradition of the apostles.” (Ibid.)

⁵⁷ cf. “Lumen Gentium,” Chapter II “On the People of God,” §11. See http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_const_19641121_lumen-gentium_en.html (accessed June 2, 2014).

⁵⁸ Ibid.

dedicating himself.

In section 28 of the document on The Church, Vatican II says that, “in the Eucharist the priest re-presents” [notice it is not represents, it is re-presents; that is, he presents again or presents anew] “and applies in the Mass the one sacrifice of the New Testament and joins to it the offering of the faithful.”⁵⁹ So in the Mass the priest re-presents the sacrifice made on Calvary to God and then joins with it the offering of the faithful who have come to celebrate the Eucharist.⁶⁰

In the declaration on Liturgy of the Second Vatican Council, the Council declares that Christ offers himself through the priest.⁶¹ So in the Mass Christ offers himself through the priest. Then in the Decree on Ministry and Life of Priests, the Council says, “In the Eucharistic sacrifice the work of our redemption continues to be carried out.”⁶²

So I think you can see why this celebration would be so vitally important to Catholics. It is literally a re-offering to God of Christ’s body and blood for sins. It is a propitiatory sacrifice. It is not a new sacrifice – it is Christ’s sacrifice – but it is being re-presented every time the Mass is celebrated to God for sins and the punishments that sins deserve.

That is a quick summary of the Catholic view of the Lord’s Supper: transubstantiation and the Eucharist as a propitiatory sacrifice offered to God for sin.

DISCUSSION

Question: Were any of these ideas completely new as a response to the Protestants? Or was it simply ideas that were already part of Catholicism and they developed them in a different way?

Answer: Right. This has a long history. I talked a little bit about that last time. I also mentioned that it was in the third century that this view began to develop in the West. So this is not something brand new but Trent is helpful in that it represents a very clear statement of Catholic doctrine in the face of the Protestant Reformation to serve to differentiate what Catholics believe from what Protestants believe. But these are not things that were just thought of *de novo*. There is a long history behind these ideas.

Question: I find this fascinating because if you look at what Christ said on the cross, he died on the cross for our sins and he said, “It is finished.” Yet what I am hearing is that every time they take the Eucharist it is a way of gaining redemption and sacrifice again – it is continual. Doesn’t that fly in the face somewhat of Scripture when Christ paid the price?

⁵⁹ Ibid., Chapter III “On the Hierarchical Structure of the Church and in Particular on the Episcopate,” §28. For this specific translation, see Walter M. Abbott, *The Documents of Vatican II* (New York: Guild Press, 1966).

⁶⁰ 10:19

⁶¹ cf. “Sacrosanctum Concilium,” Chapter II “The Most Sacred Mystery of the Eucharist,” §48. See http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_const_19631204_sacrosanctum-concilium_en.html (accessed June 2, 2014).

⁶² cf. “Presbyterorum Ordinis,” Chapter III “The Life of Priests,” §13. See http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_decree_19651207_presbyterorum-ordinis_en.html (accessed June 2, 2014).

Answer: I think what you said is spoken like a good Protestant. Protestants would find this to be very disturbing, I think. It is a new offering of that sacrifice that Christ has made. It is not as though this is a new sacrifice. For example, in the Old Testament there would be bulls and goats and other things that would be offered anew. This is not a new sacrifice. But it is a continual offering to God of sacrifices. So in a sense, sacrifices continue to go on and continue to be presented to God for sin.

Question: Is it valid within the Catholic Church not because it is based on an understanding of Scripture but with Catholicism they have three grounds of their faith. One is Scripture but also the Pope and then church tradition. Is it coming out of that latter one rather than coming down to a Scriptural reference to support it?

Answer: I think so. It is important to understand that, for the Roman Catholic Church, church tradition has equal authority with Holy Scripture. The Church recognizes two sources of authority for Catholic doctrine. One will be Scripture. The other will be church tradition.

Followup: And the Pope, correct?

Answer: Yes, in that he can also promulgate doctrine when he speaks *ex cathedra*, but he has hardly ever done so (only on a couple of occasions).⁶³ So it will typically come from these sorts of councils like Trent or Vatican II where these doctrines get officially promulgated. So these have an authority for Catholics that is to be regarded with equal reverence and piety as the teaching of Holy Scripture.

Followup: They get that from earlier church . . . I'm just trying to look for the source of the reliability of this. Is it just the early church fathers? But then . . .?

Answer: Well, there were then, of course, the ecumenical councils which met and declared what Christians believed. These came to be vested with great authority. This takes us back to the very first section of this class on Doctrine of Revelation where we asked, "What is the source of authority for Christians?" What is the rule of faith? Of course, Protestants have defended the doctrine of *sola scriptura* which is that Scripture alone is the rule of faith. Scripture is our authority, and although church tradition is very important, it is fallible and isn't to be placed on the same plane as Scripture which is our ultimate source of authority for Christian doctrine.

Question: Speaking of *sola scriptura*, I came across the term *prima scriptura* recently, which I think means that Scripture is primary but tradition secondary. Could you address that *prima scriptura* concept?

Answer: I think that the Catholic Church would say that Scripture has a primary place, but they would say that church tradition isn't something really different from Scripture. It is just an unfolding of the teaching of Scripture. It is like the flower that is contained in the bud. So church tradition, in a sense, is an unfolding of the truths of Scripture. So Scripture would be primary, but church tradition as an unfolding of that teaching of Scripture has an equal authority and is to be regarded with equal reverence and piety.

Question: Two things as far as primacy of Scripture. It seems like the Catholic does the same way with Scripture that the Protestant does because the Protestant believes

⁶³ 15:00

understanding through God's Holy Spirit of the Scripture that is primary. The Catholic is just saying through tradition the people that have walked in the Spirit have revealed to us. So I think they are kind of saying the same thing.

Answer: I think with respect to Scripture you are right. In affirming the authority of Scripture, this is God-given and authoritative. So it is not a denial of the authority of Scripture. It would be the addition of another authority to guide us in the interpretation of Scripture.

Followup: I am thinking they are thinking you can only understand Scripture through the Holy Spirit. So they are saying tradition is the previous prior interpretations of elders that have understood it. We are kind of saying the same thing in a way.

Answer: Well, I think it is quite different to put church tradition on the same level as Scripture. That is very different. The Catholic will criticize the Protestant by saying "Look at the mess that exists among Protestants because you have no conciliar teaching authority and you rely upon the Holy Spirit. Look at the way the church has splintered and fractured. There is no agreement." So without some kind of institutional teaching authority to authoritatively say, "This is what Scripture teaches" they would say the track record of Protestantism is testimony itself to the kind of relativism and doctrinal error that one gets into without having this kind of institution authority.

Followup: I agree with you. The reason they point to the tradition to stabilize is they say that tradition comes from the Scripture through the interpretation of the Holy Spirit.

Answer: Right, yes, of course. That is right. The tradition is not something contrary to Scripture, but flows out of it. Although when you get to doctrines like this you can see how very, very far from Scripture this teaching has evolved.

Followup: The other point was: do you think this is the sacrifice that will be stopped that is referred to in Revelation? This re-presenting of the original sacrifice?⁶⁴

Answer: Oh, don't ask me questions about the interpretation of the book of Revelation because that is one of the most difficult books in the New Testament to understand! So I don't have any firm opinions about that.

Question: Isn't it one step further that the Catholic Church would also say Scripture is only Scripture because the Church declares it to be so, which is a circular argument. It seems to me when you consider the Old Testament . . . I don't know how you deal with that.

Answer: This is a point that is worth making. You are reminding us that in the Catholic view, the way you know which books are in the Canon (that is, which books are scriptural rather than not) is because the Church has declared that these are the books that are inspired by God. Again, the Catholic Church will say that in the absence of such an authoritative teaching you have no way of knowing what books should be in Scripture and what shouldn't. How do you know Jude shouldn't have been left out and 1 Clement included? There is no way to tell, they would say, in the absence of some teaching authority like the institutional church.

⁶⁴ 20:06

Question: Not to derail onto a tangent, but I was just curious: what was the motivation behind restricting wine to just the priests? Was there some charge the Reformists were making that they were trying to counter?

Answer: I do not know the answer to that historically. That is something one would have to look into and I never cared to do so. It is odd – isn't it? – that only one element would be allowed to the laity, but I don't know what motivated that originally. Sorry.

[someone off-mic says, "How about the bubonic plague?"]

Someone suggests maybe disease could have helped to motivate it. I don't know.

Consubstantiation

Let me move on then from the Catholic doctrine of transubstantiation to the Lutheran doctrine which is called *consubstantiation*. How is that different from transubstantiation? At the Formula of Concord, which is the standard Lutheran statement of doctrine, the Formula rejects the view of transubstantiation. It says that the body and blood of Christ are not formed out of the bread and the wine. The bread and the wine are not transformed into the blood and body of Christ. Nevertheless, the Formula also rejects the idea that there is a mere spiritual presence of Christ in the Lord's Supper. That is too weak a view of the Lord's Supper for Lutherans. It has got to be more than a spiritual presence of Christ there. He needs to be present in his human nature, but it is not a transubstantiation either. So what is it? Well, it is in between. It is consubstantiation. What this holds is that the blood and the body of Christ are present along with the bread and the wine. So when the communicant eats the bread and drinks the wine he is drinking the blood of Christ and chewing and eating the body of Christ at the same time. They are there together.

Again, you might say, "But I don't see them. I don't taste them." Why would you think that the body and the blood of Christ are there along with the bread and the wine? This gets back to a doctrine of Luther's that we talked about when we looked at the doctrine of the two natures of Christ. You may remember that Luther had this peculiar doctrine called the *communicatio idiomatum*, or the communication of the attributes. That was the doctrine that in Christ's exaltation the attributes of the divine nature were transferred over, or communicated, to his human nature. So the human nature of Christ took on some of the attributes or properties of his divine nature. One of their favorite illustrations was that of a red hot poker that has been lying in the fire.⁶⁵ The poker normally is cold and dark, but when it is in the fire long enough it becomes glowing and red and hot. It has taken on the properties of the fire properly belonging to the fire. Similarly, the human nature of Christ in his exalted status takes on some of the properties of the divine nature like ubiquity (that is to say, omnipresence). That is a great word if you don't know it! Ubiquitous – it means everywhere. So the human nature of Christ becomes everywhere. It also takes on invisibility, which is a proper property of the divine nature. So when the communicant eats the bread and drinks the wine, Luther emphasizes he is chewing the body of Christ. He is actually eating it and drinking his blood because the human nature, having taken on the attributes of the divine nature, is now there. It is present. It is ubiquitous even though it is invisible and you don't sense it. So on the Lutheran view, I

⁶⁵ 25:03

think you can see there is a kind of middle way between a mere spiritual presence of Christ and transubstantiation that the bread and the wine become the body and blood of Christ. Rather, on the Lutheran doctrine, the bread and the wine are there with the blood and the body of Christ. The blood and the body of Christ are said to be in, under, and through the elements that you take. So, again, you do take the blood and the body of Christ in the Lord's Supper.

DISCUSSION

Question: Did Luther, like Roman Catholicism, believe that there was efficacy in the taking of the host, that it would infuse grace? We don't believe that, but did he? Did Luther believe that?

Answer: Yes, the Lutheran tradition is a sacramental tradition just like Catholicism. So it has means of grace.

Followup: So the Lutheran church teaches that?

Answer: Yes, it is a sacramental church. Baptism and the Lord's Supper are sacraments for Lutherans. They have fewer sacraments than Catholics do. Catholics have things like marriage, ordination, last rites, and so forth. But for those sacraments that Lutherans do recognize, yes, these are means of grace.

Followup: So, in my opinion, it is kind of like pulling up to a gas station and getting your tank filled. This is what you are doing. It is a continuous striving for salvation.

Answer: Yes, I like the analogy. If you don't fill up your tank, you are going to run empty and your Christian life is going to bottom out and come to a halt maybe. So it is vital to be connected to the means of grace and to be constantly getting refueled. Yes.

Question: Back to the mingling of the two natures of Christ. The quick research I did on that – Monophysitism was condemned in Ephesus and Council of Chalcedon. It said by that logic should not that co-mingling of the divine and human in substance of the communion elements also be condemned as unorthodox which they condemned at those two councils – that mingling of the two natures?

Answer: Yes, what you are talking about here – we talked about this when we did the two natures of Christ – Monophysitism says there is one nature in Christ, a kind of blend of humanity and divinity. But Dyophysitism says, no, there are two natures in Christ and these are quite distinct. As I said when we covered the Doctrine of Christ, I think that it is a failing of Lutheran theology that it blurs the natures which you are not to do. The thing that the Council of Chalcedon insists on is that you do not divide the person or blur the natures. You have got to have one person but two distinct natures. In Lutheran theology, I just don't see how he isn't guilty of blurring the two natures of Christ by saying that the attributes of the divine nature are communicated over to the human nature.⁶⁶ That raises the very troubling question, "Why aren't the attributes of the human nature then communicated over to the divine nature as well?" You would really get into a mess then. So I do think you are right that that is problematic and yet a very curious feature of this

⁶⁶ 30:04

great Protestant Reformer and tradition.

Question: Christ's nature though, at least his divine nature, can be present in the ceremony.

Answer: Yes, and this will be the Reformed view. We are starting with the strongest view – transubstantiation. Now I think you can see consubstantiation is somewhat weaker. Then we will look next time at the Reformed view and finally at the sort of Ordinance view that sees it as not a sacrament in any way.

Question: Is that view where the attributes are blurred particular to a post-ascension view of Christ or is it throughout his life and ministry on earth as well?

Answer: As I understand it, this comes with the exaltation of Christ. With his resurrection and ascension the human nature is glorified. Up to the burial, Christ is in what is called the state of humiliation. But then with the resurrection and the ascension to heaven comes the state of exaltation. That is, in my understanding, when the attributes of the divine nature are communicated over to the human nature so that Christ is now omnipresent or ubiquitous, not merely in his divine nature (which he has always been), but now his human nature is ubiquitous, which is really a strange view, I think.

I think you can see how these seemingly small questions about the nature of the Lord's Supper can actually devolve into incredible theological differences between different Christian confessions. We are not done yet. Next time we'll look at yet another interpretation of the Lord's Supper before giving some assessment of these interpretations.⁶⁷

⁶⁷ Total Running Time: 32:57 (Copyright © 2014 William Lane Craig)

§ IX. DOCTRINE OF THE CHURCH

Lecture 7

Reformed View of the Lord's Supper

We have been studying the Lord's Supper, and we looked at the Catholic view which involves transubstantiation – that is to say, the change of the elements of the bread and wine into the body and blood of Christ, which are then presented to God as a sacrificial offering. We saw then the Lutheran view which involves consubstantiation. That is to say, the elements remain bread and wine but the body and the blood of Christ are present with them, in them, through them, under them, and the communicant actually receives the body and the blood of Christ in the Lord's Supper.

Reformed Interpretation

Now we turn to a third view which is yet weaker in its view of the Lord's Supper, and that would be the Reformed view. There are a couple of different Reformed perspectives on the Lord's Supper. Calvin's own view that he practiced in Geneva is that the Lord's Supper involves a spiritual presence of Christ. It is not a transformation of the elements. It is not even consubstantiation. Rather, in the Lord's Supper the sacrament confirms what has already happened in a spiritual way. The body and the blood of Christ are spiritually present. So there is a kind of spiritual communion that takes place at the Lord's Supper by the communicant. So it is still a means of grace, but it is not a physical reception of the body and the blood of the Lord, but rather a spiritual communion with him.

Ordinance Interpretation

A weaker Reformed view, and this would be the fourth view, would be that this is simply an ordinance. It is not a sacrament. It is not a means of grace. This would have been the view of the Swiss Reformer Huldrych Zwingli. Zwingli actually met with Martin Luther to have a very famous colloquy over the nature of the Lord's Supper. For Zwingli, the Lord's Supper didn't even involve the spiritual presence of the body and blood of Christ. Rather, the Lord's Supper is simply a memorial meal that the communicant takes in remembrance of Christ. It is a way of remembering Christ and his sacrifice. Therefore, it is simply an ordinance, not a sacrament. This would be the view that would characterize typically Baptist churches. The Lord's Supper is not a means of grace. It is an ordinance that we participate in on a regular basis in order to remember the Lord's sacrifice, to examine ourselves, and to remember what he has done on our behalf.

So we have these four contrasting views of the Lord's Supper, from a very strong sacramentalism with the Catholic view and the Eastern Orthodox view, right down to the Baptist view: transubstantiation, consubstantiation, spiritual presence and communion with the Lord, or simply an ordinance and memorial supper.

DISCUSSION

Question: Being a Baptist, I am of the ordinance view. But I am curious to understand how that is different from the spiritual presence because if you remember what Christ has done you have a freshness and the Spirit wells up within you. You are filled with the Spirit. You are walking in the Spirit. There is no difference that I can see.

Answer: I have trouble with that as well. I will say something about that in the assessment. Certainly Baptists who celebrate the Lord's Supper wouldn't want to deny the presence of the Lord there with you and a spiritual fellowship with him. How does that differ substantially from Calvin's view? We will talk about that in a minute.⁶⁸

Question: I would like a clarification on the consubstantiation view. If I remember correctly from what you said last time, they believe that the body and blood of Christ are in and around and all that in the elements because they are basically everywhere. So wouldn't that make any food like communion food?

Answer: Right. That is, I think, a difficulty in terms of explaining consubstantiation. It would mean that when Jim takes a bite of his cookie he is also eating the body of Christ. They would have to say that there is something special about the Lord's Supper that enables his body to be ingested and his blood drunk in a way that is not the case when you eat any ordinary meal. For that, you'd need to go beyond this doctrine of the communication of the attributes and the ubiquity of the body of Christ because otherwise you get the conclusion that you've just mentioned. So, yes, I agree with you. If this is meant to explain it, it doesn't do a good job. But maybe they would simply say that that is part of the mystery and that we cannot fully explain how it is that the body and blood is specially present in a way that it is not present anywhere else.

Question: You said that one of the Reformed views is Calvin's. Are there others?

Answer: Zwingli was Reformed, and so the most important contrast would be between Zwingli (who is Swiss) and Calvin (who is French) and their different perspectives. Of course, there are many other Reformed thinkers like Knox and Butzer and others but this is the major rift within Reformed thinking about the Lord's Supper – it would be between Zwingli and Calvin.

Assessment of Alternatives

Let's go now to an assessment of these competing positions.

First, what might we say about transubstantiation? It seems to me that this is a doctrine which does not enjoy plausible scriptural support. I think it is so evident that this is not taught by Jesus at the Last Supper in that when Jesus instituted the Last Supper – when he spoke the words of institution (“This is my body. This is my blood.”) – he was there physically with them. His body was in front of them. His blood was coursing through his veins. So, of course, this is not literal when he shows them the bread and hands them the cup and says, “This is my body; this is my blood.” That is, I think, just evident in the fact that he was corporeally present with them. So the words of institution, I think, do not provide any basis for thinking that he is talking about a literal transubstantiation of the elements before them.

⁶⁸ 5:00

Indeed, this is really a rather typical Semitic use of imagery. Let's look at a couple other examples for Semitic imagery. 1 Corinthians 10:3-4. Here Paul is talking about how the Israelites, as they passed through Sinai, were fed by the manna. Then you will remember God miraculously supplied water for them as well. He says, "all ate the same supernatural food and all drank the same supernatural drink. For they drank from the supernatural Rock which followed them, and the Rock was Christ." Now here you have this image of Christ as the rock from which the water flowed. It doesn't mean Christ is literally a rock or that the rock is literally Christ. It is using this imagery. Similarly, look over at Galatians 4 for another use of this kind of imagery. Galatians 4:25. Here Paul is using Sarah and Hagar as images of the two covenants – the old and the new covenant. In verse 23 he says,

But the son of the slave was born according to the flesh, the son of the free woman through promise. Now this is an allegory: these women are two covenants. One is from Mount Sinai, bearing children for slavery; she is Hagar. Now Hagar is Mount Sinai in Arabia; she corresponds to the present Jerusalem, for she is in slavery with her children.

Here he says Hagar is Mount Sinai, and moreover is the present Jerusalem.⁶⁹ This is an image of the old covenant. Sarah represents the new covenant, the New Jerusalem. Again, obviously, it would be inept to take this in some sort of literal sense – that Hagar is a mountain in Arabia, or that she is a city in Judea. Rather, this is the use of images for these things.

So when Jesus says, "This is my body which is for you," and gives them the bread, or, "This is the cup of the new covenant in my blood," he is doing a symbolic presentation of a prophetic action. Very often in the Old Testament, the prophets would be asked by God to do some sort of an action that would symbolize or be an image of the message that they were proclaiming to Israel. I think that is what you have here in the Lord's Supper – a symbolic, prophetic action which symbolizes the giving of Christ's life. In Isaiah 53:12 we read,

Therefore I will divide him a portion with the great,
and he shall divide the spoil with the strong;
because he poured out his soul to death,
and was numbered with the transgressors;
yet he bore the sin of many,
and made intercession for the transgressors.

Here is a prophecy of how his life would be given. The servant of God would give his life for sin. I think this is what Jesus is representing in giving the symbols of the bread and the wine.

Our more sacramental brethren – Catholics and Lutherans – might say, "But you are ignoring one of the most powerful New Testament passages in support of the real presence in the body and blood of Jesus, namely John 6. You haven't said anything about John 6." Well, that is right because I don't think that this is a Eucharistic passage. I don't think this has anything to do with the celebration of the Eucharist. This is Jesus' discourse

⁶⁹ 10:28

on the bread of life and his telling people that he is the bread of life and that one must therefore eat of this bread in order to experience eternal life. Let's turn to John 6 and look at this passage. John 6 beginning in verse 35 and then we will pick up at 41-42 and then 48-51.

Jesus said to them, "I am the bread of life; he who comes to me shall not hunger, and he who believes in me shall never thirst. . . ."

The Jews then murmured at him, because he said, "I am the bread which came down from heaven." They said, "Is not this Jesus, the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know? How does he now say, 'I have come down from heaven?'"

. . .

"I am the bread of life. Your fathers ate the manna in the wilderness, and they died. This is the bread which comes down from heaven, that a man may eat of it and not die. I am the living bread which came down from heaven; if any one eats of this bread, he will live for ever; and the bread which I shall give for the life of the world is my flesh."

Notice here that Jesus isn't talking about the Eucharist. The context here is not the Last Supper. This is a discourse that Jesus gives during the period of his ministry. The context is not the Last Supper. And we have many other examples in John of where Jesus uses symbols like "the bread of life;" symbols which his hearers misunderstood by taking them too literally. So, for example, look at John 3:3-4, Jesus' discourse on the new birth.⁷⁰ Speaking to Nicodemus,

Jesus answered him, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born anew, he cannot see the kingdom of God." Nicodemus said to him, "How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter a second time into his mother's womb and be born?"

Here Nicodemus' literalism prevented an understanding of what Jesus was talking about – spiritual rebirth. He thought he was talking literally.

Or, turn the page over to John 4:10-12. This is when Jesus meets the Samaritan woman at the city well:

Jesus answered her, "If you knew the gift of God, and who it is that is saying to you, 'Give me a drink,' you would have asked him, and he would have given you living water." The woman said to him, "Sir, you have nothing to draw with, and the well is deep; where do you get that living water?"

Again, she is interpreting what he is saying literally – "How can you draw from the well when you don't have a bucket? Where are you going to get this living water?" It was her literalism that prevented her from truly understanding what Jesus meant.

Similarly in John 4:31-33:

Meanwhile the disciples besought him, saying, "Rabbi, eat." But he said to them, "I have food to eat of which you do not know." So the disciples said to one another, "Has any one brought him food?"

⁷⁰ 15:17

They thought he was talking literally again. They said, “Who brought this guy something to eat? We’re not aware that anybody has given him anything to eat.” Jesus is talking about a different kind of food – a spiritual sustenance.

One more example. John 11:11-12. It is interesting how these are in the Gospel of John, isn’t it? This is before departing to Lazarus’ grave site:

Thus he spoke, and then he said to them, “Our friend Lazarus has fallen asleep, but I go to awake him out of sleep.” The disciples said to him, “Lord, if he has fallen asleep, he will recover.”

No need to risk your life going to Bethany. If he is just asleep he’ll be fine. Then Jesus said, “He’s dead! I need to go and address the situation.”

So I think you can see that John frequently will use symbols to express deeper spiritual truths. This eating and drinking motif that we find in John 6 is plausibly part of this – “eating the bread of life” and “drinking his blood.” In fact, in the Jewish intertestamental literature in the book of Sirach 24:19-21 we have a kind of parallel to this: “Come to me, you who desire me, and eat your fill of my fruits. . . . Those who eat of me will hunger for more, and those who drink of me will thirst for more.” Here we have the idea of eating and drinking of the Lord. So it is not unusual that Jesus would employ this kind of symbolic imagery to talk about a kind of spiritual feasting upon Christ.

This is, I think, the case if these words were actually uttered by the historical Jesus. They are not in a Eucharistic context. These are in the ministry of Jesus. He seems to be speaking here symbolically. But suppose someone says this is later Johannine theology; that this passage represents the early church’s theology in John’s community, and they are looking back on it and writing this in the sense of the Eucharist.⁷¹

So they would say, “Look at verses 52-59.” Jesus refers to his death already in verse 51, but look at 52 to 59:

The Jews then disputed among themselves, saying, “How can this man give us his flesh to eat?” So Jesus said to them, “Truly, truly, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of man and drink his blood, you have no life in you; he who eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day. For my flesh is food indeed, and my blood is drink indeed. He who eats my flesh and drinks my blood abides in me, and I in him. As the living Father sent me, and I live because of the Father, so he who eats me will live because of me. This is the bread which came down from heaven, not such as the fathers ate and died; he who eats this bread will live for ever.”

Now, I think the difficulty in interpreting this as a kind of later retrojection of Eucharistic theology is the question, “Why isn’t the passage inserted into the Lord’s Supper?” Why here in the midst of Jesus’ ministry? Why not put it in the context of the Lord’s Supper? You might say, “But John already has a tradition of the Lord’s Supper and so doesn’t have room for it there.” Ah! That is not true. One of the funny things about the Gospel of John is that it has no Lord’s Supper narrative unlike the other three Gospels. The other three Gospels have the story of Jesus celebrating the Last Supper, giving the bread,

⁷¹ 20:08

blessing the cup – it is not in the Gospel of John. This could have been easily inserted there as a perfect expression of the Eucharist but it is not done so. That suggests that this isn't to be interpreted in those terms.

In fact, the use of the title “the Son of Man,” I think, suggests that this is not later Johannine theology. The Son of Man was Jesus' favorite self-designation. Some eighty times in the Gospels he refers to himself as the Son of Man. But only once outside the Gospels (in the book of Acts) do you find Jesus referred to as the Son of Man.⁷² This was not a church title. This wasn't a title employed in later Christian theology. So that suggests that we are dealing here with a tradition that comes out of Jesus' ministry and should not be interpreted Eucharistically but simply as a kind of symbol of feasting spiritually upon Christ and imbibing the life that he gives.

In any case, even if this were a Eucharistic passage, the question is still to be settled – is it to be taken literally or metaphorically? Does eating the flesh and drinking the blood of Christ mean this in a literal sense or is it to be taken metaphorically? So even this passage interpreted at face value I don't think settles the debate in terms of transubstantiation.

So I don't think that there is good biblical evidence for thinking that in the Lord's Supper the bread and the wine are literally transformed into the body and blood of the Lord. In fact, I want to here press an objection to this point of view. And that is that it confuses the resurrection body of Christ. It seems confused with respect to Christ's resurrection body. Christ's resurrection body is a physical, corporeal, humanoid organism that the disciples could see and touch and that has now departed from our spacetime universe but someday he will personally come again. We shouldn't think of the resurrection body of Christ as some sort of immaterial, spiritual reality. This is to depreciate and fail to understand the physical, corporal nature of the resurrection of the dead, both in Jewish thinking and in early Christian theology. So when you really understand that the body of Christ is his resurrection body, I think you can see that this is obviously not being eaten and his blood drunk by Christians all around the world.⁷³ For one thing, it wouldn't be large enough to feed all the persons who are taking the Lord's Supper at any time in the world. The resurrection body of Christ is a finite, physical, humanoid body, and to spiritualize it away is to fail to do justice to the doctrine of the resurrection.

So I have difficulty with this doctrine, not only because of its lack of biblical support, but because I think it fundamentally runs up against the proper understanding of Christ's resurrection body. So I am not persuaded that transubstantiation is a correct view.

What about consubstantiation? The same objections that I've just shared would apply to consubstantiation as well. We are not literally drinking the blood and eating the body of Christ. But in addition to that, I would also press a further objection against consubstantiation that has already been mentioned in the class, namely, it confuses the two natures of Christ. Remember when we dealt with the person of Christ and talked about the guidelines for legitimate Christological speculation about Christ, we saw that the watchword from the Council of Chalcedon is that you must not divide the person or confound the natures. There is one Christ in two distinct natures; one person in two natures. You must not divide the person so you get two persons. But you must not

⁷² cf. Acts 7:55-56

⁷³ 25:08

confuse the natures so that they become confounded together. That seems to me to be exactly what happens in Lutheran theology with respect to the communication of the attributes saying that the attributes of invisibility, immateriality, and ubiquity are communicated over to the human nature of Christ. This confounds the natures and so is unacceptable Christologically.

What then about the Reformed view, that there is a spiritual presence of Christ in the Lord's Supper? What I would want to say here is that either this doesn't make sense at all or else it is true but it is true of all sorts of various activities in which Christ is spiritually present. If Calvin meant that the real body and blood of Jesus are spiritually present – not corporally or physically or carnally he would say, but spiritually – then frankly I don't know what he is talking about because, as I said, it is inherent to the resurrection body of Christ that it is corporal and carnal (that is to say, carnal in the sense of being made of flesh, not in the sense of being sinful). It is a physical body that Christ rose from the dead with. That body, if it is present non-physically and non-bodily, then isn't a body. That just is nonsense. That is a contradiction in terms. So if you say that Christ is present in his divine nature, in his spiritual nature, I would certainly agree with that; but then that is true of many activities in which we engage, isn't it? He is spiritually present in your devotional time as you read and pray and as you worship in worship services. You sing hymns as you share your faith – Christ is present. We will often experience a deep spiritual communion with him.

So in that sense the Lord's Supper isn't really a sacrament. It is an ordinance. Those who hold to the view of the Last Supper as an ordinance wouldn't deny the spiritual presence of Christ. Of course they would say that he is present. But he would say that he is present not in his human nature (which is ascended to heaven and will not come again until the return of Christ) but he is present in his divine nature – his omnipresent, spiritual, immaterial, divine nature. So in celebrating the Lord's Supper, we commune with Christ in his divine nature, or through the Holy Spirit, but his physical human nature is not present because that is arisen and ascended and will not return until the Second Coming, which will be the final locus that we will talk about in this survey of Christian doctrine – the Doctrine of the Last Things.⁷⁴

So for my thinking, I would go with the ordinance view, not only of baptism but also with respect to the Lord's Supper. It is a memorial celebration in which we remember Christ's death on our behalf, we examine ourselves to see if we are holding to the faith, we confess our sins, and we commune with Christ spiritually as he is spiritually present among us.

DISCUSSION

Question: It almost sounds like your view is almost in between Zwingli and Calvin. I have got a question though. If the Lord's Supper is no different than any other form of worship, why then do we have some instructions in 1 Corinthians 11 where it talks about how serious the Lord's Supper is? It says, "Whoever eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner shall be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord. But a

⁷⁴ 30:00

man must examine himself and in so doing he has to eat of the bread and drink of the cup.” It is talking here about a discernment that we are supposed to apply. It doesn’t say anywhere in the Bible that if you worship in an unworthy manner you are guilty of sinning against the body and blood. Or it doesn’t say if you are doing your devotion wrong. But for this we actually have a warning in Scripture. That to me seems like there is more going on here than just maybe the presence of the Holy Spirit. It sounds like the second person of the Trinity could also be present.

Answer: Again, my objection to that would be what I’ve said about the nature of the resurrection body. For me, the doctrine of the resurrection just lies at the heart of Christianity. It was the subject that I did my doctoral work in Germany on, and so anything that runs up against what I understand to be the correct doctrine of the resurrection of the body is going to be immediately unacceptable. So I cannot see that Christ is present in his resurrection body in the Lord’s Supper. But when Paul talks about discerning the body, as he says, and how important this is, I would think of this as reflecting the importance of what we are doing symbolically there. I am identifying with Christ and his shed blood and his body given for me. This isn’t something to be done lightly or cavalierly. So please don’t understand me to be depreciating the significance of the Lord’s Supper. I think when we undergo this act, just as when we undergo baptism (which I don’t take sacramentally), this is deadly serious. We are identifying with Christ in his death and resurrection, we are remembering him, and we are examining ourselves. To do that in a cavalier or unworthy manner I would say is a serious sin because of what you are symbolically doing. But I am not persuaded that that requires us to say that this involves a real physical presence of Christ’s body and blood.

Question: I have a couple of questions from the live stream. How often and when did the earliest church participate in the Lord’s Supper? Also, did the early church fathers hold to a material view of the Eucharist?

Answer: I’m not sure I understood the second question. I don’t think we know how frequently it was celebrated. It could well have been weekly; that whenever they met for worship on the Lord’s Day that they would eat together. But there doesn’t seem to be any sort of rule or pattern laid down in the New Testament for how frequently this is to be done. Churches that would regard this as a means of grace – sacramental – would obviously see more importance, I think, in doing it more frequently because, as someone said, this is like driving up to the gas station and getting your tank filled. So that would perhaps see it as more vital to sustaining the Christian life and keeping it going.

What was the second question?

Followup: Did the early church fathers hold to a material view of the Eucharist? I think that is the transubstantiation view of the Eucharist.

Answer: We talked about that, I think, two lessons ago. We saw that there were certain church fathers that believed in a real presence though it is not clear if that meant transubstantiation.⁷⁵ That needs to be distinguished. Then there was dispute as well. There were others, such as Cyprian, who didn’t hold to a literal view. We saw that this became a matter of dispute later on in the church. It wasn’t until the Fourth Lateran

⁷⁵ 35:04

Council in 1215 that transubstantiation was actually promulgated as an official Catholic doctrine.

Question: As a Catholic, I have serious problems with your objections.

Answer: I can imagine! *[laughter]*

Followup: There are so many I'm not even going to get started. But I did want to mention or at least bring up a couple of things. Your objection sounds Clinton-esque, if you will, when it says, "This is my body." Remember Clinton said, "Depends upon what 'is' is." Whether Jesus was speaking in Greek or Aramaic at the Last Supper, he had somewhere between 17 to 22 (I've heard) different words in either language that the Holy Spirit could have chosen to represent "symbolizes" or "stands for" or "represents." But the Holy Spirit chose "is." So I will leave that for consideration.

In John 6, you said it is not Eucharistic. When Jesus was talking to those in the crowd, they were taking him literally. Why would a great teacher like Christ allow all of these disciples to depart because they misunderstood if he was only speaking symbolically? They understood him to be speaking literally, and they departed. He didn't say, "No, come back. I was only speaking symbolically." He let them go. He was so emphatic in the first number of times he uses the word "eat" (he uses one word) and when they weren't getting it, he changed the word to *trogos* which means "chew on" – literally, physically chew on. He was trying to emphasize the whole point that he meant "eat." It wasn't allegorical, it wasn't symbolic.

You are talking about the church fathers. Ignatius of Antioch in 107, when he was being taken to Rome to be martyred, wrote letters to the various churches that he passed on the way to Rome. He spoke about the heretics. The main thing about the heretics of the time were the fact that they did not accept the fact that that is truly, physically, our Lord's body and blood. That was the definition of a heretic in the early church.

I could go on, but I'll leave that.

Answer: We can continue this discussion next Sunday. That's the great thing about meeting on a continual basis.

Let me just say, I think the most important point that you raised would be the one about Jesus not correcting their misunderstanding when they take it literally, because they obviously did take it literally. I guess I think that that is basically an argument from silence because we saw several other examples in the Gospel of John where people misunderstand Jesus' speaking in a symbolic way, and he will correct them as he did Nicodemus. But then, on the other hand, if he doesn't correct them in this case, I don't see any reason to think that this isn't part of his pattern of speaking in deeper spiritual truths that the masses misunderstand and, in this case, doesn't bother to correct.

Question: If you go on in John 6, and you go down to verse 60,

Therefore many of His disciples, when they heard this said, "This is a difficult statement; who can listen to it?" But Jesus, conscious that His disciples grumbled at this, said to them, "Does this cause you to stumble? What then if you see the Son of Man ascending to where He was before? It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh profits nothing; the words that I have spoken to you are spirit and are life.

But there are some of you who do not believe.” For Jesus knew from the beginning who they were who did not believe, and who it was that would betray Him. And He was saying, “For this reason I have said to you, that no one can come to Me unless it has been granted him from the Father.”

Answer: So you are saying here he does qualify it.

Followup: Jesus sent those disciples away because he knew they were not believing in him. But his disciples that he is teaching, he is taking them because they are his own. He is saying here, “The words I have spoken to you are spirit and life.”

Answer: Yeah, and that the flesh is of no avail.

We will save this for next time and we’ll continue our discussion.⁷⁶

⁷⁶ Total Running Time: 40:52 (Copyright © 2014 William Lane Craig)