

DOCTRINE OF THE CHURCH

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Lecture 1: Introduction

Today we begin our penultimate locus in our survey of Christian doctrine. Before we do, let's pause for a moment so as to reconnoiter and to understand where we are. Let me remind you, first of all, of the threefold purpose of our Defenders class. Our purpose is:

1. *To train Christians to understand, articulate, and defend basic Christian truths.* Our goal is to help 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 anybody who should ask for the reason for the hope that is within us.* So the second purpose of the class 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 love.* Defenders is, as it were, our church within the church, so to speak, as we come together to know each other personally and mutually encourage and pray for one another as we grow in our Christian lives.

So those are the basic 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 literally the “common places” (or the chief themes) of systematic theology. Our class is structured in 15 sections, each of which takes one *locus* (or one theme) of Christian doctrine. So we began, for example, with the Doctrine of Revelation and looked at how God reveals himself in nature, in Scripture, and in Christ. We then spent a good deal of time on the Doctrine of God, understanding God's existence and nature as well as the Trinity. We discussed the Doctrine of Creation – including God's providence over the world and his miraculous acts in the world. We talked about the Doctrine of Christ, both the person and the work of Christ. Just recently we've completed a section on the Doctrine of Salvation where we looked at such topics as justification by faith, the new birth, mystical union with Christ, perseverance, and so forth.

Now today we're starting a new section, the second-to-the-last locus of our course. This is on Doctrine of the Church. So we are really rounding the bend now and coming into the home stretch! Following the Doctrine of the Church, we'll look at the Doctrine of the Last Things to complete our Defenders series. That will be the third time since the year 2000 that we have run through the entire series. That averages roughly seven years per series.

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. I hope that this will

serve you well if you are called upon to teach a Sunday school lesson or to lead a Bible study at some point. You can pull out your notebook and share some of this material.

Now I have to confess that the Doctrine of the Church is one of the loci of systematic theology about which I know the least. So we're going to focus on the subject of the church's sacraments or ordinances, and omit other topics with which I am less familiar like church government.

The first thing that we'll want to talk about with respect to the church's *sacraments*, or alternatively, *ordinances* is the definition of these words. What do we mean by a sacrament? A sacrament is a means of grace which belongs to the church. By contrast, an ordinance is not a means of grace. Rather it is a sign or evidence of grace. 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, or perhaps certain other activities, are these means of grace which the church administers or are these merely signs of things that the church carries out?

The answer to that question will largely depend upon your view of what you think the church itself is. Is the church the means of salvation that God has given to mankind? Is the church itself a sort 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? In that case it is not a special channel of God's grace that he has instituted, but rather it is 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 usually don't actually believe that baptism or the Lord's Supper, for example, are sacraments. They usually think that they are ordinances rather than means of grace.

So what constitutes an ordinance or a sacrament? It will typically be the Word of God conjoined with some sort of visible element. It will be the conjunction of the Word of God and a visible element. For example, water in baptism or bread and wine in the Lord's supper is the visible element that is conjoined with the Word of God that is proclaimed.

We now want to ask how are these sacraments or ordinances to be understood in terms of their efficacy? What do they actually *do*? What actually *happens* as a result of participating in a sacrament or ordinance? Here, as you might expect, 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, we saw that on a Catholic view justification involves the actual infusion of God's grace into an individual person. This

happens through the sacraments. By being baptized, going to Mass and taking the Lord's Supper, and participating in certain other sacraments, God's grace is infused into the believer through these sacraments.

The Lutheran view is slightly weaker. On the Lutheran view, the sacraments are a means of grace by virtue of the Word of God which is bound up with the sacrament. Remember we saw that a sacrament is constituted by the conjunction of the Word of God with some visible element. For the Lutheran, these sacraments are means of grace, but it is in virtue of the Word of God that they impart grace to those who partake in them.

The Reformed view is still weaker. It holds that the sacraments are a confirmation of God's grace by means of a visible sign. So when you participate in a sacrament, what you see is a visible sign confirming the grace which God has imparted to you.

Finally, on the Baptist view, which is the weakest of all, the act is simply a confessional act on the part of the believer. In baptism, you give a public confession of your allegiance to Christ and to your conversion to the 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.

What about the number of the sacraments? Again, Protestants and Catholics differ on this question. On the Catholic view, the Council of Florence (which dates from 1439) 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 of sin 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 before you die as the Last Rites are administered to you by the Church to ensure that you die in a state of grace and are therefore ready to meet God.

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

Next time we'll look more closely at the rite of baptism. What does baptism accomplish and to whom should it be administered? Those are the questions that I am looking forward to discussing with you the next time we meet.¹

¹Total Running Time: 13:30 (Copyright © 2020 William Lane Craig)

Lecture 2: Baptism

Thank you for joining us in Defenders.

Last week we began a new locus of our course on the doctrine of the church. We introduced the subject of the sacraments or the ordinances administered by the church. Today we want to look more closely at the practice of baptism.

When you look at the biblical data concerning baptism it is remarkable how much of the New Testament data speaks to the issue of baptism. Just from the number of passages dealing with baptism in the New Testament, you could already infer that this is an extremely important practice 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 writes,

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

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 before the commencement of his own ministry.

Thereafter Jesus continued the practice of baptizing others, interestingly enough. He, himself, was involved in carrying out a ministry of baptism. We wouldn't know this fact apart from a brief passage in the Gospel of John which John records in John 3:22-24. He writes,

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.

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" – Jesus' ministry was becoming so successful that more people were coming to Jesus to be baptized than were coming to his cousin John. John then adds this parenthetical comment, "(although Jesus himself did not baptize, but only his disciples)." So he was apparently delegating the duty of baptizing to his disciples. Then John says, "He left Judea and departed again to Galilee." Here, again, we see Jesus' ministry of baptizing people, 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 the practice of baptism did not disappear. Baptism was not something that simply belonged to that early time of the earthly 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 the practice of baptism continued in the early church.

Look at Acts 2:37-38, 41. This concerns 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.

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 a Christian named Ananias comes to meet Saul and to carry out the Lord's instructions to Ananias. We read in Acts 9:17ff:

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.

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. For the first time 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 baptism is linked with Christian conversion in that sentence. “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 submit to Christian baptism. That would have simply 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 New Testament passages that speak to the question of the meaning of baptism. We’ll talk more about these later but I just want to get these passages out on the table at this time.

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.

Next, 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. But here in Colossians, it makes it explicit that baptism is not only an identification with Christ’s death, it is also 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 are identified not only with the death and crucifixion of Christ but also with his resurrection.

The final passage is 1 Peter 3:21. He writes, “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 serves us, not as an external washing, but rather it is an appeal to God for a clear conscience.

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 the meaning of baptism. Until then, may God fill you and guide you with his Holy Spirit.²

²Total Running Time: 16:24 (Copyright © 2021 William Lane Craig)

Lecture 3: Baptism as a Sacrament

We are talking about the doctrine of the church. Last time we looked at some of the biblical data concerning baptism. Today we want to raise some serious theological questions about the nature of baptism.

The first and foremost question that needs to be addressed is this: Is baptism a sacrament or is it an ordinance? You will remember how a sacrament differs from an ordinance. A sacrament is literally a means of grace. It is like a channel through which God's grace comes to you, much in the same way that water might flow through a pipe. On the sacramental view we receive God's saving grace via baptism. Baptism serves to mediate God's grace to us. By contrast, on the view of baptism as an ordinance, baptism serves merely as 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 then that accomplishes the reception of God's grace. It is merely a sign 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, Roman Catholics or Lutherans or others who take a sacramental view of baptism. We'll look at two main points.

The first point that the sacramentalist will make 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, the very essence of Christian salvation. Let's look again at Romans 6:1ff which is one of the key New Testament passages on baptism. Paul writes,

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 that, 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. The sacramentalist will say that this is not just some sort of a symbolic expression. This is what actually happens. We who have been baptized were baptized into Christ's death, being buried with him in baptism, and then raised from the dead so that just as Christ was raised, we, too, 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. Here Paul writes,

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 . . .

According to the sacramentalist, 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.

Now look at 1 Corinthians 6:11. Paul speaks here of sinners who 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. For example, look at Acts 22:16. Ananias 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.

So the idea of being washed in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ shows its connection with baptism. So does the mention of the Spirit of God because, as we shall see later on, Spirit baptism is linked with water baptism. The sacramentalist will say that when you undergo water baptism, you are also baptized in the Holy Spirit. So this verse teaches that in baptism you are given the grace that justifies and sanctifies you.

G. R. Beasley-Murray, who is a Baptist New Testament scholar, has written a very, very thorough book *Baptism in the New Testament*. In this book Beasley-Murray writes, "The inference cannot be avoided that the reality signified by justification and sanctification is apprehended *in baptism by faith*."³ This statement is all the more remarkable in that it comes from a Baptist theologian who takes a sacramental view of baptism in the New Testament against what would normally be his own tradition.

In fact, the sacramentalist will say 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

³G. R. Beasley-Murray, *Baptism in the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1973), p. 166.

in virtue of being baptized. Again, I quote from Beasley-Murray's book *Baptism in the New Testament*, he writes,

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, 4:30.⁴

These are the gifts that are said to be ours in virtue of our baptism.

I think you'll agree that that's a pretty impressive list of blessings that are said to be ours in virtue of baptism. You can see the close link that exists in the New Testament between baptism 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 to you through baptism! 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, we saw that baptism in the Holy Spirit results in regeneration and being born again to new life. Whereas before a person was spiritually dead, after being baptized in the Holy Spirit he has the Spirit living within. Baptism is linked with being baptized in the Holy Spirit.

⁴Beasley-Murray, *Baptism in the New Testament*, pp. 263-64.

Look, for example, at Acts 2:38. This has to do with 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 is very much like the verse we read previously [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 water 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.

Not only do we have the book of Acts supporting this tight link between water baptism 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 (that is to say, 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 here the emphasis 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 Paul 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 coincident. As one is baptized in water in the name of Jesus, one is baptized by 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 his 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 is 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. “He saved us . . . by the washing of regeneration and renewal in the Holy Spirit.” This is taken to be a reference to baptism. Notice what is obtained through this washing: regeneration, renewal in the Holy Spirit, and justification by grace so that we become heirs of eternal life. So this passage again shows 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 that 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” (1 Peter 3:21). So we have regeneration and justification through the Holy Spirit occurring co-incidentally or simultaneously with our water baptism. Therefore, baptism is just absolutely critical on the sacramentalist view in the process of becoming a Christian.

Next week we’ll look at the view of baptism as an ordinance. Until that time I wish you God’s greatest blessing.⁵

⁵Total Running Time: 21:46 (Copyright © 2021 William Lane Craig)

Lecture 4: Baptism as an Ordinance

We have been talking about the nature of baptism – is it a sacrament or is it an ordinance? Last time we looked at arguments in favor of the view that baptism is a sacrament, a means of grace by which one is born again spiritually, united with Christ in his death and resurrection, and incorporated into his body, the church.

Today we want to look at an alternative understanding of baptism. This alternative views baptism as an ordinance, not as a sacrament or special means of grace. We'll look at two arguments in support of the view of baptism as an ordinance.

1. Those who think of baptism as an ordinance rather than a sacrament remind us that *Christian conversion and initiation in the New Testament is a process* – a process that involved, first of all, repentance and faith, then receiving the Holy Spirit, and finally water baptism. Conversion is inward. Initiation is outward. Initiation is the public identification of the believer with the Christian church – with the body of Christ. It is a sign, as it were, of the inner work that has taken place in conversion. The key to conversion is 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 is 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 – that work 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. Paul says, "God chose you from the beginning to be saved." Then there is God's calling. Paul says, "To this he called you through our gospel." Then there is faith. He says that through "belief in the truth" they have been saved. And then, finally, regeneration in the Holy Spirit: he says, "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 water baptism. 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 says, “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 we again 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 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. Here Paul is reminding the Corinthians of his behavior among them in preaching the Gospel. He writes,

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 baptism clearly 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. Baptism clearly wasn't at the heart of the Gospel message for Paul.

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. You will recall that 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" 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 Paul 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 verse. 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 can plausibly 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 happens in baptism. This isn't a literal burial with Christ but metaphorically speaking we are buried with him in the waters of baptism. So this serves a symbolic function. It is, as I say, an outward sign of this spiritual reality.

You will remember that impressive list I read last time from G. R. Beasley-Murray about all of the blessings that are ours in virtue of baptism. Well, the point that the person who thinks of baptism as an ordinance wants to make is that 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* 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 Beasley-Murray begins to enumerate these.

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 v. 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 hallmark 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!⁶

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 conversion and baptism follow each other so closely in the New Testament as conversion and initiation that they are described as one process. You could ascribe these blessings either to one half of the process or to the other half of the process. They are united. It would be unthinkable that there would be born again, regenerate Christians who would refuse to be baptized and would therefore not have undergone initiation. So all Christians, having been duly baptized, could ascribe these wonderful blessings that are theirs in virtue of their conversion and initiation by ascribing them either to baptism or to the fact that they have had saving faith in Christ.

In summary of the first point: 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, like a hand in a glove. The one is the outer skin of the inner life and animation wrought through the Holy Spirit.

Next time, we'll continue our discussion by looking at a second argument in favor of viewing baptism as an ordinance of the church. Until then, may God keep you and guide you.⁷

⁶G. R. Beasley-Murray, *Baptism in the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1973), pp. 272-73.

⁷Total Running Time: 21:11 (Copyright © 2021 William Lane Craig)

Lecture 5: Baptism as an Ordinance - Continued

We've been talking about baptism as an ordinance of the church. Last time we saw that those who believe that baptism is an ordinance argue that all of the spiritual blessings that are attributed to baptism are also attributed to faith alone. The second argument that is often given by those who defend a non-sacramental view of baptism is that when you look more closely at the New Testament, you find that water baptism does not necessarily coincide with baptism in the Holy Spirit. Remember that 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 some examples of baptism in the New Testament. First, let's begin with John the Baptist's baptism and then the baptism as practiced by Jesus himself. 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 himself 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 only after Pentecost that the Holy Spirit was given. These baptisms were all pre-Pentecostal and therefore of course John and Jesus' baptism was unique in not conveying the Holy Spirit. But notice that when Jesus gives the Great Commission to the disciples to go out 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 Jesus was carrying out during his ministry, and the disciples probably thought of this practice in exactly the same way. It is an external sign of repentance and faith.

Let's turn now 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. It was quite apart from baptism.

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 baptized again. But even if that is true, the point remains that Spirit baptism didn'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 their water baptism.

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 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. 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 now at the case of the Ephesian disciples in contrast to Apollos in Acts 18:24-19:7.

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 did *not* re-baptize him, did they? He knew only 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 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. This shows that the key to being a Christian is the presence of the Holy Spirit in a person’s life.

The sacramentalist would respond that in Acts 18:25 when it says that Apollos was “fervent in Spirit,” that is not a reference to the Holy Spirit; it just means that Apollos was zealous – he had a spiritual disposition just as, for example, in Romans 12:11 Paul says, “Never flag in zeal, be aglow with the Spirit, serve the Lord.” The problem with this response is that Romans 12:11 does refer, I think, to the Holy Spirit. Similarly, Acts 18:25 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 in a person’s life. This shows that it is the presence of the Holy Spirit that is the key to being a Christian. Notice, moreover, that when the Ephesian disciples did receive water baptism they did *not* receive the Holy Spirit in the act of water baptism. It was only *after* they were baptized in water and Paul laid hands upon them that they then received the Holy Spirit.

Look now at Acts 9:17-18. This is the story of 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 that 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 an authentic Christian baptism), but they didn't receive the Holy Spirit until the apostles came down from Jerusalem and laid hands on them. Whatever interpretation you take of this unusual circumstance, the undeniable fact is that water baptism in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ was not co-incident with their reception of the Holy Spirit. Spirit baptism came later in this case, after water baptism.

In summary, 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 one case in which water baptism and baptism in the Holy Spirit are co-incident. Rather, baptism serves as the culmination of a person's act of faith. It is the climax of a person's conversion to Christ.

We might compare in this regard 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 his 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 calling out to God – an appeal to God. It is placing one's faith in him.

To summarize this second point then, water baptism 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 by 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 we talked about last week that all of the blessings attributed to water baptism are ours in virtue of faith alone, it seems to me that the view of baptism as an ordinance makes the best sense. It is the culmination of a person's conversion-initiation; an expression of that initiation into the Christian faith that is a sign of the inward conversion that has already taken place.

Next time we'll look at the question of who should be baptized – a question that also divides Christians. I look forward to being with you again next Sunday.⁸

⁸Total Running Time: 18:34 (Copyright © 2021 William Lane Craig)

Lecture 6: Infant Baptism

We've been talking about the doctrine of the church and in particular the sacraments or ordinances of the church. Thus far we focused our attention on baptism. We examined a case for a sacramentalist view of baptism and then last time a case for viewing baptism as an ordinance.

Today we want to take up a different question – the question of *infant baptism*. Once again, I'll want to present two competing views. I will try to present each one as fairly and convincingly as I can, and then at the end of the day you'll need to make up your own mind as to which view you find the most plausible.

The first view that we want to look at is called *pedobaptism*, or infant baptism. “Pedo” is the word for child or infant. Pedobaptism is practiced by both sacramentalists and non-sacramentalists. Catholics, for example, see infant baptism as the moment at which one receives justifying grace and becomes regenerate. But in the Reformed church infant baptism may not be the moment at which one is saved, but rather it serves as a sign or a seal of being part of the covenant. So there is a range of views on what baptism is as practiced by pedobaptists. It can be seen as salvific where you actually are regenerated in baptism or it could be seen as simply a sign or a seal that shows that this infant, as the child of elect parents, is part of the covenant.

What arguments might be offered on behalf of infant baptism?

1. The advocate of infant baptism will appeal to the *Jewish notion of the solidarity of the family* and then *household baptism* in the New Testament church, where every member of a 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 at Acts 16:30-33. This is the well-known story of the Philippian jailer who turns to Christ. In verse 30 he 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 presumably baptized, too. 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 his 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 were turning 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 Jesus' attitude toward these little children who were being brought to him for his blessing. It was one of welcoming them, not saying they were not old enough or "*Don't bother me with these little ones!*" Instead, he received them and blessed them and laid his 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 for pedobaptism is one that is offered particularly by our Reformed brethren. This is the parallelism between circumcision in the old covenant and baptism in the new covenant. A sort of parallel exists between circumcision as the sign of the old covenant, and baptism as the sign of the new covenant. Look at Colossians 2:11-12 – verses that we've read earlier but 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.

Here Paul draws a sort 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 new 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, a 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 infants who are members of believing families.

4. Finally, what about *baptism and faith*? What is the relationship between baptism and faith? On the Reformed view, 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 by the Holy Spirit. 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, exercise 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 tradition 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 the 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 the infant 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.

Next week, we'll look at an alternative to pedobaptism – believer's baptism. Until then, I wish you godspeed.⁹

⁹Total Running Time: 13:51 (Copyright © 2021 William Lane Craig)

Lecture 7: Believer's Baptism

We've been talking about the practice of pedobaptism. Today we are going to talk about an alternative view – believer's baptism. But before we do, I just wanted to share with the class members a heart-warming testimonial that came in this week that I found particularly meaningful. This is from a fellow named Isaiah. He says,

Hello Dr. Craig and Reasonable Faith Ministry team! I really just want to say a heartfelt thankyou for all the ways in which you have contributed to my confidence in the truth of my Christian confession, my understanding of Christian doctrine and God, and my personal relationship with Christ, and the other persons of our wonderful triune God! I responded to his gracious call and surrendered my life as a 20 year old, while on a short term missions trip during a gap-semester. The most significant factors in my journey of sanctification have been reading the Word, prayer and engaging in fellowship with other believers, even those who I've never met in your Defenders classes. How your work has helped to make me unashamed of the work of our Saviour and Lord Jesus! I have listened to the last one and a half defenders series over the last year, and really appreciate that class! Overall, you have helped to ignite a passion for biblical theology and apologetics, and a keen interest in philosophy. I would also say that you have strongly influenced my decision to go into "full-time Christian service,"; as a pastor-teacher-theologian-musician of some sort! May the Lord bless you and keep you, your family, and your ministry Dr. Craig! Sincerely, Isaiah

What an encouragement to hear of how the Defenders class is touching people's lives in a very personal and significant way!

Today we want to talk about the subject of believer's baptism. Notice that I did not say "adult baptism." The alternative to pedobaptism is not adult baptism. It is believer's baptism. That is to say, only someone who has consciously exercised faith in Christ is a legitimate candidate for baptism.

Again, several arguments can be offered on behalf of this view.

1. *Confession and faith are essential to salvation and baptism.* They are essential components of salvation and therefore of baptism. 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 here is to repent and be baptised. That act of repentance is an act of confession followed by 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.

1 Peter 3:21 (a verse that we previously read) 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 make such an appeal to God – a decision that cannot be exercised by an infant.

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. (Ezekiel 18:2-4)

Each person is individually responsible before God, and therefore it isn't true that one's being a member of a household overrides your individual responsibility. Each person is responsible before God to respond in repentance and faith.

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. 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 is one that did divide families. It is not true that simply because of the decision of the head of a household everyone was treated as a Christian.

The bottom line is that there is no baptism of infants recorded anywhere in the New Testament. The defense of household salvation and infant baptism is based upon an argument from silence. There is no suggestion anywhere in the New Testament that little infants were taken out of their cradles and brought to be baptized. So the defender of believer's baptism would say that the argument from household salvation doesn't really go through. Indeed, infant baptism 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 little children is that this is the same way in which we need to come to Christ. We need to come to him in love and faith and with the same 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 people were bringing little infants to Jesus to lay his hands upon them and to bless or pray for them, prayer and blessing just is not the same as baptism. There's no suggestion that these little children should be baptized. On the contrary, as I've said, repentance and faith are prerequisites for Christian baptism.

4. *What about 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 as though some act like circumcision or baptism makes you a member of the covenant. You enter the covenant by faith and, as we saw when we 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 is shown by the fact that in Palestine they were both practiced. Jewish children who were children of believing families that were part of the Jesus movement (that is, 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 is not baptism. Paul writes,

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 [. . .].

What corresponds to circumcision is Christ's death on the cross. When it talks about "putting off 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 a 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 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, these believers might be children. There might be youngsters who have come to consciously place their faith in Christ and believe and so who 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.

Finally, I'd like to say a word in conclusion about the combination of sacramentalism with infant baptism. I've argued against a sacramentalist view of baptism, and I also think that the case for pedobaptism is very weak. The argument for confession and faith as essential to baptism seem to me to be powerful. Nevertheless I could see where one might have one or the other practiced without great injury to the church. If you had a sacramentalist view of baptism (like G. R. Beasley-Murray) but you reject pedobaptism, while that might be mistaken, nevertheless it wouldn't be injurious to the church because once people exercised faith in Christ and submitted themselves as candidates for believer's baptism they can be baptised and they might believe that at the moment of their water baptism they were also baptised in 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-sacramentalist view of baptism and you view baptism as a sort of sign or external seal of the covenant, then even if you were baptizing infants you would not be regarding their baptism as the moment at which they received justifying grace and were saved. So they would still need, 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-sacramentalist view it wouldn't be a terrible injury to the church.

But it seems 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 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 has been 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 they 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.

Next time we'll turn from a discussion of baptism to a discussion of that second sacramental ordinance, the Lord's Supper.¹⁰

¹⁰Total Running Time: 16:49 (Copyright © 2021 William Lane Craig)

Lecture 8: The Lord's Supper

We've been discussing the doctrine of the church. Today we turn our attention from the subject of baptism to that other major sacrament or ordinance of the church, namely, the Lord's Supper.

As we do so, a major difference between baptism and the Lord's Supper becomes immediately apparent; namely, baptism is a unique act never to be repeated, whereas the Lord's Supper is something that is to be regularly commemorated and repeated. Baptism, you will remember, is the climax of one's conversion-initiation of becoming a Christian. 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 an act which is never to be repeated.

I think that it is very important that we remember the significance of that act. A few years ago when Reasonable Faith first sponsored a trip to Israel, my Baptist pastor 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 to 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 one's baptism is in effect to invalidate the earlier baptism that you underwent. It is to say, *"That wasn't really my initiation into the body of Christ – this act is."* Therefore, you are invalidating the baptism you underwent before. My pastor 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, it just became all the more clear to me that such an action would be completely inappropriate. 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 in effect to invalidate that earlier act of initiation that you underwent. So I said, *"John, what we will do is offer baptism to anyone who hasn't undergone believer's baptism already. Someone who has never been baptized or perhaps was baptized as an infant without their consent and who now wants to undergo believer's baptism as this act of initiation can be baptized."* And it turned out that there were some on the trip who fit that description. There was one Catholic family from Australia in particular who had young sons of about eight years of age who wanted to be baptized. So they were baptized by John in the Jordan River. They absolutely loved this because they could now go back and tell all of their Catholic friends that they had been baptized by "John the Baptist" in the Jordan River!

Today we want to look at the Lord's Supper. Let's look first at the biblical data concerning the Lord's Supper.

The Lord's Supper was first initiated by Jesus himself. 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 says is represented by the cup of wine which they drink. This phrase recalls Exodus 24:8. Here Moses is explaining how the old covenant – that is, 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 the same phrase "the blood of the covenant" which expressed the sanctifying blood in the Old Testament. And now Jesus takes this cup while celebrating the Passover and says, "This is *my* blood of the covenant which is poured out for many." He thereby imbues his impending death with sanctifying significance.

Second, 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 also 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, I want to note that this is very interesting phraseology. This is the same phraseology that Paul uses in chapter 15 when he says, "For what I received, I also delivered to you" and then quotes an 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 is that Paul is here in 1 Corinthians 11 handing on historical tradition about Jesus that he had received concerning his Last Supper. Paul says,

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."

Here is a little aside on this passage that is interesting. Notice the 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 talking here merely 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 for Paul. Paul knew the historical context of the traditions that he handed on to his churches. That is seen here in his knowledge of Jesus’ betrayal in the context of delivering these traditions about the Lord’s Supper.

So what Paul says expressly in his epistles is just the tip of an iceberg. We see Paul’s knowledge of the historical Jesus only insofar as he is called upon to draw upon that knowledge in dealing with situations 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 would not have any reference in the Pauline epistles to the Lord’s Supper. Doubtless some scholar would surely say that in that case the Pauline churches did not celebrate the Lord’s Supper, and that the Lord’s Supper was a later tradition that eventually 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. So what we get in the Pauline epistles is just, as I say, the tip of an iceberg. What Paul knows about the historical Jesus is much, much vaster than what actually appears in these epistles, where it is just a matter of historical accident that this knowledge of Paul is disclosed. So that is just a brief aside about the credibility of what Paul has to say about the historical Jesus.

The important point for now 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 it as “the new covenant in my blood.”

Actually, the Pauline tradition of the Last Supper is even closer to Luke’s version of the Last Supper than it is to Mark’s. Turn over to Luke 22:19-20. Luke writes,

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.”

[Notice here you have the command to celebrate this memorial supper, an element which isn't in Mark; but it is in Luke and in Paul.]

And likewise the cup after supper,

[This 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 similar traditions of the Last Supper that they hand on about how Jesus said that these elements are his body and blood and that we are to celebrate this Supper in remembrance of him.

In addition to the historical tradition that we find in Paul as well as 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 is from 1 Corinthians 11:17-34. Here Paul is obviously very upset with what is going on in Corinth. He writes,

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 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.

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 completes our survey of the biblical data concerning the practice of the Lord's Supper. Next time we'll talk about the real presence of the body and blood of Christ in the Lord's Supper.¹¹

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Lecture 9: Transubstantiation

We've been talking about the Lord's Supper. Last time we surveyed the biblical data concerning the Lord's Supper. Obviously, there are different interpretations of these passages on the part of different confessions within Christendom. Some understand the Lord's Supper in a sacramental sense. They hold that these passages indicate that the Lord's Supper is in some sense a special means of God's grace. Others, however, think of the Lord's Supper merely as a sort of memorial meal that is done in remembrance of Christ and his death. So let's look today at some of the various theological interpretations of the practice of the Lord's Supper.

First, the strongest, and I think we can say the most radical, interpretation of the Lord's Supper is the doctrine of *transubstantiation*. This doctrine is taught in the Roman Catholic Church. According to the doctrine of transubstantiation, the wine and the bread consecrated by the priest are actually turned into the body and blood of Christ. Now, you might say, "It certainly doesn't look that way!" If you were to analyze these elements chemically, it is just bread and 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 a substance and its accidents, or contingent properties. The substance of a thing is the thing itself. For example, 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. They are not essential to me. In transubstantiation the claim is that what happens is that the substance of the bread and the wine actually become 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 to all appearances like bread and wine because the color, the taste, the consistency, the porousness, the liquidity, and 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 the very radical view that the elements of the Eucharist (i.e. the Lord's Supper) are actually transformed into the body and blood of Christ even though they retain the accidental properties of bread and wine.

So transubstantiation is the most radical view of the Lord's Supper. The elements of the bread and the wine are turned into the flesh and the blood of Christ and then taken by the communicant. As such, this is a means of grace. 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."¹² That is a very strong

¹² 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 February 21, 2021).

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.

Now this occasions a question: when the communicant takes the blood and the body of Christ and eats them and digests them then why isn't the body and blood of Christ so to speak "used up" after a while? Is there a sort of infinite body and blood to be consumed? Remember we're 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 or blood. So we are talking about the human nature of Christ. So as the communicant eats the body of Jesus and drinks his blood, we might wonder, "Why isn't it all consumed by now? Why isn't he eaten up?" I asked this question once of a Fordham University philosopher who is a priest, and he said, "Oh, you don't consume the *substance* in the Lord's Supper. You only consume the *accidents*." It was as if a 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 they're not used up.

Now that puts a rather different perspective on transubstantiation! I remember talking to a young Catholic woman once who said to me that she liked the doctrine of transubstantiation because it made her feel so close to Christ, because she was actually eating his flesh and drinking his blood. It was such an intimate union with Christ. 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.

Let me say a word now about the history of the doctrine of transubstantiation. Early church fathers such as Justin Martyr, Irenaeus, and Tertullian used language of the real presence of Christ in the Eucharist. That isn't necessarily to say that they believed in transubstantiation or Christ's physical, bodily presence in terms of the body and blood of Christ. 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 merely 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 Christ.

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 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 of bread and

wine on the one hand along with the body and blood on the other. Rather, the elements are actually changed into and become the body and blood of Christ.

By contrast, in the West, Augustine and most of the Western theologians tended to be symbolists – there isn't an actual transubstantiation taking place, but these elements represent 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 Roman 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 considerable theological dispute. In the 9th century, Radbertus and Ratramnus disputed the nature of the elements. That was around the year 860. Radbertus was a realist and held that the elements really were the body and blood of the Lord. By contrast, Ratramnus said that these were merely symbols of the body and blood of the Lord. This controversy broke out again in the 11th century, this time between Lanfranc (ca. 1089) and Berengarius (ca. 1088). Lanfranc was a realist who believed in the transformation of the elements into the body and blood of Christ, while Berengarius was the symbolist in this dispute. 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. The Council declared that the substance of the bread and the wine literally become the flesh and the blood of Christ. So that became official Roman Catholic doctrine.

There is one other aspect 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, there is again ambiguity on this question in Roman Catholic doctrine. Until then I wish you godspeed.¹³

¹³Total Running Time: 13:31 (Copyright © 2021 William Lane Craig)

Lecture 10: The Lord's Supper - Roman Catholic Interpretation cont'd

We've been talking about the doctrine of the sacraments, in particular the Lord's Supper. Last time we examined the Roman Catholic doctrine of transubstantiation, perhaps the most radical interpretation of the Lord's Supper. You will recall that we saw that Catholics believe that when the bread and the wine are consecrated by the priest they literally are transformed into the body and blood of Christ. Although they don't *appear* to us as flesh and blood, they really are in their substance. They merely have the accidental properties of bread and wine, but in fact they are the body and blood of Christ.

That however does not exhaust the importance of the Eucharist (or the Lord's Supper) for Roman Catholics because there is another very important facet of their doctrine that needs to be emphasized, and that is that the Eucharist (or the Mass) is a *sacrifice* which is offered to God. In early church history the church father Irenaeus (130-202), who was the Bishop of Lyons in France, 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 divine justice and allays the wrath of God. It is also expiatory in the sense that it cleanses us of our sin. In the Roman 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 sacrifice for our sins.

This doctrine became codified as official Roman Catholic doctrine at the Council of Trent during the Counter-Reformation in response to Protestant theologians. This Council met for a number of years between 1545 and 1563 and came to codify standard Roman Catholic doctrine over against Protestantism. At the Council of Trent, the church affirmed that the body and blood of Christ are indeed really present in the Eucharist. The bread and the wine are transformed into the body and blood of Christ. In addition, 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, rather you also partake of the body of Christ in drinking the wine. Similarly, if you eat the bread, you take in not only the body of Christ but the blood of Christ as well. With respect to each element there is a communion with *both* the body and the blood of Christ. Therefore the church declared that laymen should be permitted to take the bread only and not to drink the cup. The cup was reserved for the priests. Laypeople get to participate only in eating the

bread. But there is no blessing denied to them because in taking the bread, they get both the body and the blood of Christ.

In the 22nd session, chapter 2 of the Council of Trent¹⁴, the Council declared that “the 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 (or in the Mass). 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. Trent declared that the sacrifice of the Mass is propitiatory; that is to say, it satisfies the demands of God’s justice and allays his wrath. The only thing different between the sacrifice that is offered in the Mass and Jesus’ original sacrifice on the cross is just the manner of offering. It is a different manner of offering but the sacrifice is the same.¹⁵ Back then Christ offered himself to God but now he offers himself to God 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.¹⁶ 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 not only of the living but also on behalf of the sins of those in purgatory 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,” but 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 alone such as Irenaeus contemplated. Rather, the Mass is offered to God as a propitiation for sins and punishments.

¹⁴An 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> (accessed June 2, 2014).

¹⁵“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).

¹⁶“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.)

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 that the Eucharistic sacrifice is the "fount and apex of the whole Christian life."¹⁷ I pointed out before how that makes the Mass so important to Roman 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."¹⁸ So Christ is offered to God in the Mass, but now the Council 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, dedicating himself.

In section 28 of the document on The Church, Vatican II says that, "in the Eucharist the priest re-presents" [notice it does not say "represents"; it says "re-presents," that is, the priest 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."¹⁹ 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.

In the declaration on Liturgy of the Second Vatican Council, the Council declares that Christ offers himself through the priest.²⁰ 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."²¹

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

¹⁷cf. "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 February 28, 2021).

¹⁸Ibid.

¹⁹Ibid., 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).

²⁰cf. "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 February 28, 2021).

²¹cf. "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 February 28, 2021).

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

Next time we'll look at the Lutheran view of the Lord's Supper. Until then, may God bless you.²²

²²Total Running Time: 13:38 (Copyright © 2021 William Lane Craig)

Lecture 11: Consubstantiation and Other Views

The last two weeks that we've met we talked about the most radical interpretation of the Lord's Supper, namely the Roman Catholic view of transubstantiation. Today we want to move on from the Catholic doctrine of transubstantiation to the Lutheran doctrine which is called *consubstantiation*. How is that different from transubstantiation? In the Formula of Concord (1577), which is the standard Lutheran statement of doctrine, the Formula rejects the view of transubstantiation. It says that the bread and the wine are not transformed into the body and blood 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 for Lutheran theologians of the Lord's Supper. They maintained that there has to be more than just 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 something in between. It is consubstantiation. What this view holds is that the body and blood 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 flesh of Christ at the same time. They are both 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 really there along with the bread and the wine? This question recurs to a view of Martin Luther's that we talked about when we looked at the doctrine of the two natures of Christ. You may remember that Luther held this peculiar doctrine called the *communicatio idiomatum*, that is to say 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 the favorite illustrations of Lutheran theologians was that of a red hot poker that has been lying in the fire. The poker is normally 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 properly belonging to the fire. Similarly, the human nature of Christ in his exalted state takes on some of the properties of the divine nature like ubiquity (that is to say, omnipresence). (By the way, that is a great word to add to your vocabulary if you don't yet know it! Ubiquitous – it means everywhere. So, for example, you could say at the time of this recording that COVID-19 is ubiquitous.) So the human nature of Christ becomes ubiquitous; it is everywhere. It also takes on the property of invisibility, which is a proper property of the divine nature. So when the communicant eats the bread and drinks the wine, Luther emphasizes that he is chewing the body of Christ. He is actually eating it and drinking Christ's blood because the human nature, having taken on the attributes of the divine nature, is now there. It is really present. It is ubiquitous even though it is invisible and you don't sense it.

So on the Lutheran view, I think you can see there is a kind of middle way between transubstantiation and a mere spiritual presence of Christ in the Lord's Supper. On Lutheran doctrine, the body and blood of Christ are really there along with the bread and the wine. The body and blood 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.

We now come to a third view which is yet weaker in its understanding of Christ's presence in the Lord's Supper, and that is the Reformed view. There are actually a number of different Reformed perspectives on the Lord's Supper. Calvin's own view was that in the Lord's Supper there is a spiritual presence of Christ to the believer. It is not a transformation of the elements. It is not even a consubstantiation. Rather, in the Lord's Supper the sacrament confirms spiritually what has already happened physically at the cross. There is a kind of spiritual communion that takes place at the Lord's Supper that is experienced by the communicant. So the Lord's Supper is still a means of grace, but it is not a physical reception of the body and the blood of the Lord; rather it is a sort of spiritual communion with him.

We finally come to the fourth view which is that the Lord's Supper is an ordinance. A weaker version of the Reformed view is that in the Lord's Supper we simply have an ordinance. It is not a sacrament. It is not a special means of grace. This was 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 is the view that also typically characterizes Baptist churches. The Lord's Supper is not a means of grace, nor does the communicant partake of the body and blood of Christ. 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 reflect on what he has done on our behalf.

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

That is a good breaking point in our lesson. So we will finish early today, and next time when we resume we will look at an assessment of these four competing views.²³

²³Total Running Time: 9:29 (Copyright © 2021 William Lane Craig)

Lecture 12: Assessment of Competing Views on the Lord's Supper

We've been discussing over the last several weeks different views of the Lord's Supper. Today we want to come to some assessment of the competing alternatives.

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

Indeed, Jesus' words are really a rather typical Semitic use of imagery. Let's look at a couple other examples. 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. Paul 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 the identification of Christ with the rock from which the water flowed. It obviously doesn't mean that Christ is literally a rock or that the rock is literally Christ. Paul is using imagery.

Similarly, look over at Galatians 4 for another use of this sort 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. She is an image of the old covenant. Sarah represents the new covenant, the New Jerusalem. Again, obviously, it would be inept to take Paul's words in a 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 hands them the bread, or, “This is the cup of the new covenant in my blood,” and he hands them the wine, he is engaging in a symbolic presentation of a prophetic action. Very often in the Old Testament, the prophets would be asked by God to do some 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. Jesus understood his death in terms of the suffering Servant of the Lord in Isaiah 53. 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 an explanation of the righteous Servant’s death. The Servant of the Lord would give his life to atone for sin. I think this is what Jesus is representing in presenting the symbols of the bread and the wine.

Our 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.*” This is Jesus’ discourse on the bread of life. He tells people that he is the bread of life and that one must therefore eat of this bread and drink his blood in order to experience eternal life. Let’s turn to John 6, beginning in verse 35 and then skipping to 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.”

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.

I doubt that this passage has anything to do with the celebration of the Eucharist. Notice that the context here is not the Last Supper. This is a discourse that Jesus gives during the time of his ministry. Jesus isn't talking about the Eucharist.

But suppose someone says this passage represents later Johannine theology, that this passage represents the early church's theology in John's community. They are looking back on Jesus' life and describing the Eucharist as they practiced it.

Now, I think the difficulty in interpreting this passage as a later retrojection of Eucharistic theology is the question, "Why isn't the passage inserted into the historical context of Jesus' final meal with the disciples?" 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! But that is not true. One of the odd 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, blessing the cup – but it is not in the Gospel of John. This passage could have been easily inserted where the other Gospels narrate the Lord's Supper as a perfect expression of the Eucharist; but it is not done so. That suggests that this isn't to be interpreted in those Eucharistic terms.

In fact, Jesus' use of the title "the Son of Man" in this passage suggests that this is not later Johannine theology. "The Son of Man" was Jesus' favorite self-designation. Some eighty times in the Gospels Jesus 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.²⁴ This was not a title that was used in the early church or 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 rather as a metaphor of feasting spiritually upon Christ and imbibing the life that he gives.

Moreover, even if the passage were about the Eucharist, the question would remain whether it should be understood metaphorically or literally. We have many other examples in John where Jesus uses symbols like the bread of life; symbols which his hearers misunderstood by taking them literalistically. So, for example, look at John 3:3-4, Jesus' discourse on the new birth. Speaking to Nicodemus,

Jesus answered him, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born anew, he

²⁴cf. Acts 7:55-56

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 really talking about – spiritual rebirth. Nicodemus mistakenly thought that Jesus was speaking literally.

Or, turn over to John 4:10-12. This is the story of Jesus’ meeting the Samaritan woman at the 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 literalistically what Jesus is saying – “*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?”

They thought Jesus was speaking literally. They wondered, “*Who brought him something to eat? We’re not aware that anybody has given him anything to eat.*” But Jesus was talking about a different kind of food – a spiritual sustenance.

One more example. John 11:11-12. This is prior to Jesus’ departure 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.”

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

So I think you can see that John frequently uses symbols to express deeper spiritual truths. The 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. There we read, “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.

In fact, to return to John 6, when you go down to verse 60, we read,

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.

Jesus’ own comments seem to suggest that he was not speaking literally. 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 press an objection to this point of view. And that is that the doctrine of Christ’s real presence in the Lord’s Supper seems confused with respect to Christ’s resurrection body. Christ’s resurrection body is a physical, humanoid organism that the disciples could see and touch and that has now departed from our spacetime universe but someday 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 once you 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. For one thing, it wouldn’t be large enough to feed all the persons who are taking the Lord’s Supper at any one time in the world. The resurrection body of Christ is a finite, physical, humanoid body, and to spiritualize it is to fail to do justice to the doctrine of the resurrection.

So I have difficulty with the doctrine of transubstantiation, not only because of its lack of biblical support, but because I think it is fundamentally confused with regard to a proper understanding of Christ’s resurrection body which has left this universe but will someday return again. So I am not persuaded that transubstantiation is the 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, 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 neither divide the person nor confuse the natures. There is one person Christ in two distinct natures. You must not divide the person and you must not confuse the natures together. But 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 from the divine nature of Christ to his human nature. This confounds the two natures and so is not acceptable 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 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 physically or carnally, 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 physical. It is a physical body that Christ rose from the dead with. That body, if it is present non-physically and non-bodily, just is not a body. That is a contradiction in terms. But 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, as you sing hymns or 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 this view of the Lord's Supper as an ordinance wouldn't deny the spiritual presence of Christ as we take the Lord's Supper. Of course they would say that he is present. But they 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 risen and ascended and will not return until the Second Coming. That forms a nice segue to the final locus that we will talk about in our survey of Christian doctrine – the doctrine of the last things.

So in my thinking, I go with the ordinance view, not only of baptism but also of 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.

There are other topics to be discussed under the doctrine of the church, such as church government and church offices, but as I shared earlier these are topics on which I have not worked. So I'll not make any further remarks on this head.

That brings our study of the doctrine of the church to a close. Next time we'll begin our final locus in our Defenders survey of Christian doctrine: the doctrine of the last things. I

am looking forward to discussing it with you.²⁵

²⁵Total Running Time: 25:54 (Copyright © 2021 William Lane Craig)