

Text: Various

Title: What is Baptism in/by the blood of Christ?

Truth: Doctrine that associates Christian baptism with the blood of Christ

Date/Location: Wednesday April 12, 2023 at FBC

Introduction

The purpose of these notes is to answer a question. Another pastor asked this: have you heard of baptism in or by the blood? Is it OK to include that phraseology in our baptism formula? Someone had indicated to my pastor friend that they would like to be baptized that way.

As I discussed the matter with the one who asked me the question (not the original people), I expressed initial skepticism because I have not heard of this before. Then as I unfolded the doctrine more, serious problems became evident. Let me take you along on that thought journey as we try to discern good and evil (Hebrews 5:14).

The first thing we should do is to ask the persons who believe this way about baptism what they understand it to mean.

I. First Cut: Search Scripture Quickly

A. I did not think there were any Scriptures that spoke of this idea. I used my software search capability to find any verses that spoke of baptism and blood but did not find any.

1. bapti* spirit => 12 verses in NKJV
2. bapti* water => 13 verses
3. bapti* lord => 10 verses
4. bapti* Jesus = > 17 verses, of which only 4 refer to the baptism of another person in the name of Jesus. The rest are about Jesus being baptized, or a verse about baptism that mentions Jesus later in the verse.
5. bapti* blood => 0 verses

- B. Caution: just because we do not find a verse does not mean that the doctrine is not present in Scripture. For example, searching for Trin* or Triun* does not return any verses!
- C. However, not finding anything in Scripture about this does increase my skepticism at least one notch.

II. The Scriptural Baptismal Formula

- A. We use the Scriptural wording in our baptism services, like this:
“Based on your profession of faith, I hereby baptize you in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.” Baptism is “in the name of” the Triune God, not “in the blood of Christ” or “by the blood of Christ.”
- B. The traditional formula that we have used in Baptist and Bible churches comes directly from Scripture. In other words, there is a good reason for the tradition! It is derived directly from Matthew 28:19.
- C. The “based on your profession” clause is clearly *not* from the Bible, but it is our way of saying that the profession is “on” you. Although we have done due diligence to make sure your profession is real, we acknowledge that it might not be real since we do not know your heart. In such a case, the baptism would not be valid. If someone in that case manifests a departure from the faith (or not) and then later comes back with repentance and explains why they were not legitimate before, they would be a candidate for their first “real” baptism.

III. A False Doctrine with This Title

This baptism of blood refers to the **blood of the martyr**, the person who dies under persecution.

- A. From https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Baptism_of_blood “In Christian theology, baptism of blood (Latin: *baptismus sanguinis*) or baptism by blood, also called martyred baptism, is a doctrine which holds that a Christian is able to attain through martyrdom the grace of justification normally attained through baptism by water, without needing to receive baptism by water.”

B. This is not precisely the same as saying that martyrdom is a kind of baptism. Rather, it teaches that if one dies for the faith before baptism, that martyrdom effectively automatically grants the status of “baptized” upon that individual. Here are some more quotes relative to the issue from the same article:

“Those who die as Christian martyrs in a persecution of Christians are judged by Anabaptists and Lutherans as having acquired the benefits of baptism without actually undergoing the ritual.[12]

“The Augsburg Confession of Lutheranism affirms that "Baptism is normally necessary for salvation". Citing the teaching of the early Church Fathers, Lutherans acknowledge a baptism of blood in "the circumstances of persecution".

C. But this is an error. **First**, being martyred is not the same, nor has the same significance, as water baptism. Nowhere in Scripture is this idea taught. It is a doctrine of men. **Second**, the entire notion is connected to Catholic sacramentalism. When it says “the grace of justification normally attained through baptism by water” it is saying that when a person is baptized, they believe that God grants a justifying grace to the person. But justifying grace is given to every saved person from the moment of their repentant faith, *whether or not* they were ever water-baptized. Water baptism is not a conveyance of sacramental grace, but rather it is a symbol of a previous spiritual reality that has happened in the life of the person. In other words, they see baptism effectively as a work that is required to attain justification.

IV. Applying Systematic Theology to this Doctrine

Obviously, a person being baptized in the church, in water, is not referring to the baptism of the martyr’s blood because they are not dying for their faith! Perhaps therefore “blood” of this baptism refers to the **blood of Jesus Christ** instead of to the blood of the martyr?

A. In the Bible and Christian theology, the blood of Christ refers to the entire cross-work of Jesus. We have shown before in detail that the phrase is not to be construed to refer only to the literal red liquid in Jesus’s body. Yes, blood and water came out, and He bled on the

cross, and He sweat great drops of blood. But those things, in and of themselves, did not pay for your sins. It is the “life in the blood” principle from Leviticus 17:11. Jesus had to *die* to take the capital punishment due for your sin. *That* is what “the blood of Christ” refers to.

- B. Because of that, we can connect to the next “dot” theologically and realize that blood has to do with remission of sin (Hebrews 9:22). It is the price of Jesus’s life that gives you freedom from sin, acquittal from guilt, remission (= removal) of guilt, and forgiveness from God. So, if the baptism is associated with Christ’s blood, it would appear the person is connecting that baptism with remission of sins.
- C. Therefore, baptism in/by blood seems to refer to a kind of sacramental understanding whereby baptism is related to the remission of sins. Catholics and Campbellites have a view like this—baptismal regeneration and baptismal remission of sin. Both amount to the same thing: they believe that God requires baptism in most cases for a person to be saved. I conclude this is a works-based theology.

To be clear, we believe baptism is required *because* one is saved, not to *become* saved.

Conclusion

- In baptism, we have a picture that we have died with Jesus, have been buried with Him, and rise again with Him. Its significance is a memorial, a symbol, and a prophecy of a saving truth of the gospel.
- I would not change the baptismal formula. We baptized in the name of the Triune God. Nor would I add blood baptism into the service to satisfy someone’s desire to have those words said, because there is no mystical power in those words. And those words likely indicate a bad sort of theology that we cannot endorse or co-sign.

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