

Item #43 (The Christian *Tôdâ* and Justification)

This was Entry #53 on my previous website.

Christian justification is a classic Christian conundrum. What exactly does it mean? On a superficial level it means being in the correct relation with God. But what this means in specific terms in a Christian context has historically—and often tragically—been a source of endless controversy. The present note is not intended to settle the controversy, but to indicate a possible new approach in the light of the Christian *tôdâ*.

The Christian *tôdâ* has been amply introduced on this website (cf. my book *Hebrews—An Interpretation* (Subsidia Biblica 47; Rome: Gregorian & Biblical Press, 2016). The Christian *tôdâ*, i.e., the Eucharist, is based on the Jewish *tôdâ*. The latter had three major physical components: 1) a bloody holocaust on the Temple altar; 2) a ritual consumption of bread; 3) hymns and prayers. The accompanying psychological component was praise/thanksgiving to almighty God in a public setting for a signal act of benevolence as regards the Israeli male who arranged for the ceremony. Such signal acts could be either past or future, and could consist of such things as salvation from death in war or in famine. Obviously a strong faith-trust in God and His Providence for the one offering was the basis for such a psychological component.

As fulfilled by Christ in the Christian *tôdâ* the three physical components are: 1) Jesus' bloody death on the cross; 2) a ritual consumption of bread; 3) hymns and prayers. The accompanying psychological component at the institution of the Christian *tôdâ* was the faith-trust that Jesus had in God's ability to save Him from death even after His foreseen death on the cross, together with His faith-trust as a child of Abraham in God's ability to save from death as He had saved Isaac from death, i.e., God's ability to save a life other than Jesus' own. Thus the Christian *tôdâ*, i.e., the Eucharist, is in continuity with the Jewish *tôdâ*, but in discontinuity with it as well in the sense that the Eucharist is the definitive fulfillment of the Jewish *tôdâ*. In terms of the psychological component, the Christian Eucharist is the definitive fulfillment of Abraham's faith-trust in the face of his son Isaac's divinely commanded death plus Jesus' definitive fulfillment of the foreshadowing of Abraham's faith-trust in His own faith-trust in the face of his own commanded death.¹ This, then, is the background

¹ For the interpretation of the present writer as to the way the author of Hebrews presents the foreshadowing of Jesus' sacrifice by Abraham's see *Hebrews—An Interpretation* on Hebrews 11. In view of Christ's possession

for a suggested interpretation of justification in a Christian sense.

The suggested interpretation of justification in a Christian sense as understood in the New Testament would assume what has been given above as regards the Eucharist as the Christian *tôdâ*, and then build on it referring to the resurrection of Jesus in Matthew and Luke as being the “sign” given by God of His approval of all that Jesus did and said in His earthly life. In Matthew and Luke the resurrection is to be taken primarily in a legal sense of external vindication of all that Jesus did and said, both for Jesus’ followers and for Jesus’ enemies. Carried over to the Christian *tôdâ* the resurrection would be understood as a vindication of Jesus’ faith-trust as regards the entirety of Jesus’ death in the context of its Eucharistic relevance, including His faith-trust (as man, obviously) in God’s ability to save Him from death.. The resurrection thus is seen not only as the vindication of what Jesus did and said but a vindication or justification also of His psychological faith-trust in the face of His own death. Thus, in raising Jesus from the dead, God vindicated/justified Jesus’ faith-trust and, at the same time, vindicated/justified the faith in Jesus of all those who believe in the resurrection as Jesus did in the context of the Eucharist. Thus, when a person is given the faith to believe in Jesus and His resurrection from the dead, not only his faith *in* Jesus is involved but also the faith *of* Jesus. In vindicating/justifying the faith-trust of Jesus, in other words, God vindicates/justifies the faith-trust of all who believe in Jesus. And this is why they are justified in God’s sight. They are justified by the faith of Jesus.²

What is being proposed here obviously has possible relevance for the debate about the meaning of the genitive of the words “Jesus Christ” as regards the word “faith” in such texts as Galatians 3,22. The fact that the discovery of the *tôdâ* and its possible relevance for New Testament studies is of rather recent relevance would seem to make possible a whole new frame of reference for the meaning of “faith” as regards Jesus Christ. **(7 March 2013; modified 23 December 2019)**

of the Beatific Vision as man perhaps “fidelity” to the unfulfilled example of Isaac’s example should be used instead of “faith-trust” for πίστις.

² This justification includes the forgiveness of sins of all sinners, because that is why Jesus died. It has no reference to any sins of Jesus, not only because Jesus had no sins (cf. Hebrews 7,26) but also because He died for the sins of others (cf. Hebrews 2,17).