

# Bible

# BAPTISM



**The Forum Terrace Church of Christ**

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# "One Baptism"

*"...there is one baptism" (Ephesians 4:5)*

Baptism is an important topic in the New Testament. In the King James Version the noun "baptism" is found 22 times, the verbs "baptized" is found 61 times, "baptize" is found nine times, and "baptizing" four times. The term "baptist" used to describe John actually means one who immerses or baptizes. It is found fourteen times in the New Testament. Every time the word "baptism" occurs in the New Testament, it does not necessarily refer to the same baptism, since there are several mentioned. There are several baptisms mentioned in the New Testament, such as, the Baptism of Noah, the baptism of Moses, the baptism of John, the baptism of suffering, the baptism of the Holy Spirit, the baptism of the great commission, and the baptism of fire. In his book, *A Contemporary Study of the Holy Spirit*, Bennie S. Triplett wrote "there are three basic baptisms for believers". Yet in 61 A.D. Paul told the church at Ephesus that there is "one baptism" (Eph. 4:5). Perhaps one primary cause for confusion over baptism is a failure to understand the differences between these various baptisms mentioned in the Bible.

In what way is there one baptism? Just as there is one God, To deny "one" is to give room to polytheism. Just as there is one Lord, to deny "one" is to give room to another Master in religion and in our heart (Mt. 6:24). Which baptism is this "one baptism"?

## Baptisms of the Past

### ◆ Baptism of Noah

The apostles Peter demonstrates the importance of the one baptism today by comparing it to the baptism of Noah. Just as water was used to save Noah and his family on the ark so God uses water baptism to save the sinner from his sins. He wrote *"...who formerly were disobedient, when once the Divine longsuffering waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was being prepared, in which a few, that is, eight souls, were saved through water. There is also an antitype which now saves us—baptism (not the removal of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God), through the resurrection of Jesus Christ"* (1 Peter 3:20-21).

The text explains that our baptism is the antitype to Noah's salvation by water. The phrase "like figure" is from the Greek word *antitypon* meaning antitype. An "antitype" is "a thing resembling another, its counterpart; something in the Messianic times which answers to the type prefiguring it in the O.T. as baptism corresponds to the deluge: 1 Pet. 3:21" (Thayer 51). Noah's salvation was by water. Today salvation involves water. As water lifted the ark to safety, it destroyed or washed away the wicked world of sin. As we are buried with Christ in baptism, we are baptized into Christ (Rom. 6:3), and our sins are washed away (Acts 22:16).

Other similarities can be seen between the baptism of Noah and the water baptism that now saves us. God's plan of salvation for Noah also involved grace. *"But Noah found favor in the eyes of Jehovah"* (Gen. 6:8. Cf. Eph. 2:8). "Grace" means "favor, love, good will", and "mercy, that is unmerited". It involved faith. *"By faith Noah, being divinely warned of things not yet seen, moved with godly fear, prepared an ark for the saving of his household, by which he condemned the world and became heir of the righteousness which is according to faith"* (Heb. 11:7) Did Noah have a dead or working faith? He preached, collected gopher wood, animals and built the ark, etc. So Noah's baptism also involved obedience.

Even though the passage specifically claims that *"baptism now saves us"* there are many objections. For example some will argue: "The ark represents Christ, thus they were saved before water." However the Bible also says *"righteous man"* (2 Pet. 2:5), before he entered the ark. Are we righteous before we enter Christ? Noah was not saved from the wicked world until he entered the ark and the floor

washed away the wicked world. Besides, the baptism not Christ is the antitype. Paul tells us one is baptized into Christ (See Gal. 3:27). Though in the ark, he was not saved from the wicked world until the waters came and washed it away.

Another argument against baptism saving us is: "The word 'phupos' rendered 'filth' means sin, thus baptism is not the putting away of sin". The basic meaning of "filth" is "dirt, filth, dirtiness" according to Liddell and Scott. It literally refers to "dry dirt as on the body" (Vincent, Vol. 1, p. 658). Donnigan writes that the term could metaphorically refer to sordid avarice or sin. However, according to Dungan's rules of interpretation: "Rule 1: All words are to be understood in their literal sense, unless the evident meaning of the context forbids" (Dungan, Hermeneutics, p. 184). Thus, the literal meaning must be retained. Peter is saying that water baptism is for the remission of sins, not the purpose of bathing. If the expression under consideration means "not the filth of sin" rather than "of the flesh" then you contradict Acts 22:16 where baptism is when Christ washes away sin.

It has been argued that "baptism is only a figure of our outward sign of an inward grace." Kenneth Wuest wrote that baptism is "the witness of a good conscience toward God" (109). This passage is not saying that baptism is a demonstration of salvation attained by faith only. Greek word *eperotema*, means "appeal, inquiry, or earnestly seeking after." The word has legal connotations and was so used by the Greeks when making an appeal or demand (Vincent, Vol. 1, p. 658). A clear conscience is necessary to salvation. Baptism is necessary to a clear conscience. Therefore: baptism is necessary to salvation.

The counter claim is made that "baptism is only a figure, not salvation." Again Kenneth Wuest wrote, "but he [Peter] says that it saves them only as a counterpart. That is, water baptism is the counterpart of the reality, salvation. It can only save as a counterpart of the reality, salvation. It can only save as a counterpart, not actually...So water baptism only saves the believer in type" (108). Peter said that baptism is a figure of the waters of the flood. When God sent the flood upon the earth, its purpose was to destroy all evil men. The deluge fulfilled that and when the water subsided, Noah walked out of the ark and into a clean new world. In the same way, when one is baptized in water, he comes forth from baptism into a clean new life. Peter's point is that water carried eight souls from a world of corruption to a new world free of the moral corruption of the old.

Finally, it is argued, "You are making this passage teach water salvation". No one claims the power to save is in the water. The Blood of Christ is what washes away sins (Rev. 1:5). When is one saved? When one is baptized in water. When was Paul's sins washed away? When he was baptized (Acts 22:16).

#### ◆ **Baptism of Moses**

The apostle Paul also uses typology to compare the salvation of sinners today with that of Moses and the Israelites when they passed through the Red Sea. *"Moreover, brethren, I do not want you to be unaware that all our fathers were under the cloud, all passed through the sea, all were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea, all ate the same spiritual food, and all drank the same spiritual drink. For they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them, and that Rock was Christ. But with most of them God was not well pleased, for their bodies were scattered in the wilderness. Now these things became our examples, to the intent that we should not lust after evil things as they also lusted"* (1 Cor. 10:1-6). The Israelites had become slaves to the wicked Egyptians (Ex. 2:23-25). Christians were servants to sin (Rom. 6:17). God saw the Israelites condition and made a plan for their salvation (Ex. 2:23-25). God saw the sinners condition and provided a plan of salvation (Jn. 3:16; Rom. 5:8). Moses was their Savior (Deut. 18:15-18) and now Jesus is our Savior (Acts 4:12). The Israelites heard the plan through Moses and Aaron and thus believed (Ex. 7:1,2; Heb. 11:29). Christians hear the Gospel and believe (Rom. 1:16; 10:17; Mk. 16:15,16). The Israelites turned from following their old masters (Heb. 11:26-28). Sinners are to repent and turn from sin (Lk. 12:3; 2 Pet. 3:9). They were baptized unto Moses, sinners are baptized into Christ (Gal. 3:27). The Israelites old life left behind and masters were washed away (Ex. 14:9,10). The saved have a new life at the point of baptism (Rom. 6:5) and their sins are washed away (Ac. 22:16). Israelites rejoiced on the shore after their baptism, singing and praising God (Ex. 15:1-3). So did those on Pentecost (Ac. 2:41); the Eunuch (Acts 8:39); and the Philippian jailor and his household, (Acts 16:34) after their baptisms.

Just when were the Israelites saved? When they walked through the sea (Ex. 14:13). They were

not saved just when they believed (Heb. 11:29). Their salvation involved faith and obedience.

#### ◆ **John's Baptism**

John preached the baptism for repentance *"unto the remission of sins"* (Mk 1:4; Luke 3:3). Also called the *"baptism of repentance"* (Lk. 3:3). It was not a sprinkling of water upon the subject. John baptized in the Jordan river and other places where there was *"much water"* (Jn. 3:23). The subjects of John's baptism were to *"believe on him who should come after him"* (Ac. 19:4). The purpose of John's mission was to prepare the people of the coming of the Messiah (Lk. 1:17). John's message and his baptism were preparatory. John's baptism was not repeated, it was one time only.

The baptism of John is not the one baptism of the New Testament today (Eph. 4:4-6). John's baptism was a belief that Jesus was to come in the future. Jesus has already come, died, resurrection, and ascended into heaven. John's baptism was with the preaching that the kingdom was near, but the Great Commission Baptism was to allow one into the kingdom (Jn. 3:5; Ac. 8:12). Those who had been baptized with John's baptism at Ephesus had to be baptized with Christ's baptism. Paul said, *"John indeed baptized with a baptism of repentance, saying to the people that they should believe on Him who would come after him, that is, on Christ Jesus"* (Acts 19:4). Therefore the baptized disciples of John were rebaptized in Acts 19:1-7. Christ's baptism requires as a prerequisite a confession of one's belief in Him. John's baptism was preceded by a confession of sins (Matt. 3:6). John's baptism was not in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit like Christ's baptism (Matt. 28:19). Unlike Christ's, John's baptism was not in the likeness of Christ's death, burial and resurrection (Rom. 6:3,4). Christ's baptism puts one into the church and into Him (Gal. 3:27; 1 Cor. 12:13; Acts 2:47). John's did not. Neither did John baptize anyone into the Baptist church, because it did not exist until 1606 AD. John's baptism was temporary, but Christian baptism is to continue unto the end of the world (Matt. 28:18-20). Thus, John's baptism could not be the one baptism.

#### ◆ **Baptism of Jesus by John**

John also baptized Jesus but not for remission of sins for Christ was perfect, but to fulfill all righteousness. *"But Jesus answered and said to him, 'Permit it to be so now, for thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness.' Then he allowed Him"* (Mt. 3:15). No one can be baptized like Jesus was. When John's ministry lessened Christ and his disciples continued to baptize the unto remission of sins (Jn. 4:1,2).

#### ◆ **Holy Spirit Baptism**

John the Baptist promised his disciples, *"I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance, but He who is coming after me is mightier than I, whose sandals I am not worthy to carry. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire"* (Mt. 3:11). This promise was again repeated by Jesus just before His ascension into Heaven. *"And being assembled together with them, He commanded them not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for the Promise of the Father, 'which,' He said, 'you have heard from Me; for John truly baptized with water, but you shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now'"* (Acts 1:4-5). Ten days later as the apostles waited in Jerusalem they received the baptism of the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:1-4). The only other case of Holy Spirit Baptism was Cornelius and his household (Acts 10). A fuller discussion of the Baptism of the Holy Spirit will be given in Lesson 10.

#### ◆ **Baptism of Suffering**

A metaphorical use of the term "baptism" is found in Jesus talking to James and John about the baptism of suffering. *"Then the mother of Zebedee's sons came to Him with her sons, kneeling down and asking something from Him. And He said to her, 'What do you wish?' She said to Him, 'Grant that these two sons of mine may sit, one on Your right hand and the other on the left, in Your kingdom.'" But Jesus answered and said, "You do not know what you ask. Are you able to drink the cup that I am about to drink, and be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with?" They said to Him, "We are able." So He said to them, "You will indeed drink My cup, and be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with; but to sit on My right hand and on My left is not Mine to give, but it is for those for whom it is prepared by My Father"* (Mt. 20:20-23).

In a figure of speech Jesus was to be baptized with or in suffering. To be immersed in suffering is to be overwhelmed with suffering or persecution. In the context, Jesus is foretelling of His passion. His apostles would also be plunged or immersed in suffering. In fact, James would be the first apostolic martyr (Ac. 12:2). This, of course, was not a literal baptism, but a metaphorical use of the word "baptize". This

is not the one baptism, because it deals with a prophecy to be fulfilled, and not a command to be obeyed, and is only baptism in a figure of speech.

### **Future Baptism: The Baptism of Fire**

John the Baptist also warned of the coming baptism of fire at the same time he made the promise of Christ baptizing some of his disciples with the Holy Spirit. *"I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance, but He who is coming after me is mightier than I, whose sandals I am not worthy to carry. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire. His winnowing fan is in His hand, and He will thoroughly clean out His threshing floor, and gather His wheat into the barn; but He will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire"*(Mt. 3:11-12). This baptism is yet in the future. It will be discussed at length in Lesson 12.

### **Present Baptism: Baptism in the Name of Christ**

Before Jesus ascended into Heaven to sit at the right hand of God He gave the disciples what is called the Great Commission. *"And He said to them, 'Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned'"* (Mark 16:16). This baptism came on the day of Pentecost when three thousand were baptized and added to the church (Acts 2:38,41,47). It is a command not a promise or future warning (Acts 10:48). The element is water and the action involves full immersion (Acts 8:35f). The authority is by the Godhead (Matt. 28:19-20). Those who administer this baptism do so by the authority of Christ. The subjects of this baptism involves only 1) those who hear the gospel (Rom. 10:17); 2) those who believe (Mk. 16:16); 3) those who repent (Ac. 2:38) and 4) those who confess (Rom. 10:9,10; Ac. 8:37,38). The purpose of this baptism is "for remission of sins (Ac. 2:38); to put one into Christ (Gal. 3:27); to wash away sins (Ac. 22:16); to put one into the church (1 Cor. 12:13); and to save us now (1 Pet. 3:21). This baptism is to endure or last just as long as there are sinners needing to be saved. This is the one baptism of today.

### **Summary**

Do not seek the baptisms of the past for they cannot save you. The baptisms of Noah, and Moses are types of salvation by water, we re to obey the antitype which is the one baptism that now saves us (1 Pet. 3:21). John's baptism is no more effective today for us that it was for the twelve at Ephesus (Acts 19:1-8). Holy Spirit Baptism is not promised to us and its purpose has been fulfilled. We will all suffer (2 Tim. 3:12), but few will be overwhelmed as the Lord and his apostles.

Furthermore, do not reject the one baptism of the great commission. Obey now the command of God to be baptized for the forgiveness of sins today, because salvation is for today (2 Cor. 6:2). Be forewarned, there is a baptism which may await the unfaithful Christian in the future, it is the baptism of Fire or Hell. We all need to act now so that we will not be subjects of the future baptism in the lake of fire. You can refuse temporal baptism in water in this life, but in the next you will not escape the eternal baptism in the lake of fire.

### **Questions:**

1. How many different baptism are there mentioned in the New testament? How many are active or applicable today?
2. What is an "antitype"?
3. Describe how Noah was "baptized".



4. How is the one baptism of today like that of Noah's baptism?
5. Could Noah and his family have been saved before flood came? Explain.
6. True False The phrase "filth of the flesh" means sinfulness.
7. List the ways in which the one baptism is comparable to the salvation of the Israelites under the leadership of Moses.
8. What was the purpose of John's baptism? What were the prerequisites to being baptized with John's baptism?
9. Why did the twelve men at Ephesus have to be rebaptized in Acts 19:1-9?
10. Why was Jesus baptized by John? Can any one today be baptized like Jesus was? Explain.
11. Who received the baptism of the Holy Spirit in the New Testament?
12. What is the baptism of suffering?
13. Which baptism is yet in the future?
14. Who were the ones who were first to be baptized to the Great Commission baptism? When?

15. Who are the proper subjects of the Great Commission baptism?

16. Why be baptized?

17. What is the danger of rejecting baptism?

**Application & Discussion:**

1. Explain how you would deal with the argument: "You people believe in water salvation, because you teach baptism is necessary to save one from their sins."

2. When is it appropriate/necessary for someone to be rebaptized?

**Homework:** In a discussion share with someone the many baptisms of the Bible and explain there is only one baptism today.

## The Action of Baptism

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For many centuries there has been a great deal of debate over whether baptism requires one to be immersed in water or whether one could be baptized by having water sprinkled or poured over him. Many denominations have accepted sprinkling or pouring as an acceptable mode of baptism. The Catholic Catechism by Peter Cardinal Gasparri says: "To secure the validity of the Baptism the washing should be done, either by immersion in the water or by pouring the water, or again by sprinkling it,..." (p. 158). The Methodists teach "Let every adult person and the parents of every child to be baptized have the choice of sprinkling, pouring, or immersion" (The Doctrines and Discipline of the Methodist Church, 1948, p. 470). Others proclaim "Baptism may be administered by sprinkling, pouring, or immersion, according to the choice of the applicant" (Manual of the Church of the Nazarene, 1952, p. 31). The Presbyterians teach "Baptism is rightly administered by pouring or sprinkling water upon the person..." (Confession of Faith, 1883, p. 59).

Since baptism is clearly commanded throughout the New Testament all those who wish to be obedient to God and Christ should give this issue careful consideration.

### The Meaning of "Baptism"

The New Testament was written in Koine Greek. In order for us to understand the New Testament it was needful for the words to be translated from the Greek to their English counterparts. At the time of the King James translation (1611) the common practice was to substitute sprinkling and pouring for immersion. To translate it "sprinkling" or "pouring" would rule out immersion which was known to be the true Greek meaning. Thus, to avoid these difficulties, they anglicized the Greek word *baptidzo*. That is, they put the Greek word into English spelling by dropping the "d" and substituting the "o" with an "e" thus creating a new word: "baptize". By doing this, they effectively avoided translating the Greek word by only transliterating it into English.

It is true that Webster's Encyclopedic Unabridged Dictionary of the English Language defines "baptize" as "to immerse in water, sprinkle or pour water on" (p. 118). However, dictionaries define a word according to its modern usage. It is a proper modern definition because of the doctrines of sprinkling and pouring in the religious world, today. Words change in meaning (cf. "gay") thus up-to-date dictionaries must give current meanings. Yet it should be noted that Webster does give the origin of baptism from the Greek word *baptidzein* meaning "to immerse".

The only proper and exact place to look up the meaning of the New Testament word is in a Greek-English lexicon. Stoubdrza, a native Greek wrote, "The verb baptizo has only one acceptation. It literally and perpetually signifies to plunge. Baptism and immersion, therefore, are identical; and to say baptism by aspersion [a sprinkling, DRV] is as if one should say immersion by aspersion, or utter any other contradiction of the same nature." The New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology, says, "Dip, immerse, submerge, baptize" (Vol. 1, p. 144). Arndt and Gingrich define it as "dip, immerse". In the massive Theological Dictionary of the New Testament it says "to immerse" (Vol. 1, pp. 529-545). We could site over a hundred lexicons which would say that *baptidzein* means "to dip, dip under, plunge, immerse, etc." As a matter of fact, there isn't one lexicon of any reputation which translates it as "sprinkling" or "pouring". The Greek word for "sprinkle" would be *rhantizo* meaning "to scatter in drops" or *proschusis* neither of which is ever translated "baptize". Many elements are said to be sprinkled, such as, ashes, blood, oil, scarlet wool, hyssop, ashes of the red heifer, ashes of cedar wood, dust and clear water. However, nowhere in the Bible is water alone (nothing but water) ever said to be sprinkled upon anyone or anything. *Cheo* is the Greek word for "pouring". It means "to turn out in a stream". There are four other words for "pouring", but none of them mean "baptize". No reference on sprinkling or pouring

even insinuates baptism. If the Holy Spirit desired to have water sprinkled or poured on us it would have selected the proper word to express that meaning. Yet, He chose a word which means "to immerse" to the exclusion of "to sprinkle" or "to pour".

### **Denominational Scholars on the Meaning of "Baptism"**

Many denominational scholars proclaim that baptism is immersion and not sprinkling or pouring. This is astonishing when one considers the fact that all the men quoted below were either founders or members of denominations which practiced "sprinkling" or "pouring" instead of "immersion". Martin Luther, the founder of the Lutheran Church wrote, "Baptism is a Greek word, and may be translated 'immerse'. I would have those who are to be baptized to be altogether dipped". The founder of Presbyterianism, John Calvin said, "The very word 'baptize', however, signifies immerse, and it is certain that immersion was the practice of the ancient church" (Calvin's Institutes, Vol. 3, p. 343). The Methodist church was founded by John Wesley who wrote, "We are buried with Him. Alluding to the ancient manner of baptizing by immersion" (Wesley's Notes). Sprinkling and pouring is practiced by the Episcopalians, yet two of their most renown scholars said, "This passage (Rom. 6:4) cannot be understood unless it be borne in mind that the primitive baptism was by immersion" (Conybeare and Howson, Life and Epistles of St. Paul, vol. 2, p. 169). These honest men paid greater attention to the truth in their studies of the Scriptures than they did the practices of their own denominations.

### **History of Sprinkling and Pouring**

If lexiconographers, scholars and church historians proclaim that baptism means immersion then where did sprinkling and pouring come from? In a word, they originated out of tradition. In 251 A.D. a man by the name of Novation lay sick in bed unable to get up for immersion, and was thus sprinkled with water, but only upon the promise that if he were to recover he would be immersed. Later, having fully recovered, Novation refused to be immersed in water. When he was seeking the office of bishop many were against his ordination because he had been "Merely sprinkled and had not been wholly immersed in water, in the ancient method" (Historical Commentary, Mosheim, vol. I, p. 62). Thus came sprinkling as Novation's innovation of baptism.

Historically, it took many years for sprinkling and pouring to gain wide acceptance. According to Brenner, the Catholic scholar, "For thirteen hundred years was baptism an immersion of the person under water". Official recognition wasn't given to sprinkling until 1311 A.D. at the Council of Ravenna, "Baptism is to be administered by trine immersion or aspersion [sprinkling, DRV]". Scandal helped widen the rift between the Roman and Eastern Catholic church. The Eastern Church would not accept the Western practice of sprinkling or pouring instead of immersion. Thus, they tended to reject all those not truly baptized. Deylingius says, "The Greeks retain the rite of immersion to this day, as Jeremiah, the patriarch of Constantinople, declares" (Booth on Baptism, p. 93). Evidently the Greek Orthodox Church had a better understanding of their native tongue. If Greeks don't know the meaning of the Greek word *baptidzo* then who does?

During the Reformation period the Protestants began to accept sprinkling and pouring along with immersion.

### **Bible Examples of Baptism**

All the examples of baptism in the New Testament clearly demonstrate immersion in water, never the sprinkling or pouring of water upon the candidate for baptism.

- **The Baptism of Christ**

Jesus came to be baptized by John the Baptist. John had been sent to baptize with (eis, into) water (Mark 1:8). He was baptizing people in the Jordan (v. 5). His baptism required "*much water*" the water having been baptized (Mark 1:10). Thus, John's baptism clearly required that Jesus be immersed. According to *The Emphasized New Testament: A New Translation* by J. B. Rotherham "John the Immerser" baptized Jesus.

- **The Baptism of the Eunuch (Acts 8:36-39)**

Again, immersion is implied as the action of baptism. First, *"they came unto a certain water"* (36). Next, they *"went down both into the water"* (38). Third, Philip *"baptized him"* (38). Finally, they *"came up out of"* the water (39). It is argued that they traveled in an area called *"desert"* according to verse 26. Thus, Philip must have sprinkled water upon the Eunuch for there is not enough water for immersion in a desert. Yet, *"desert"* does not necessarily refer to barren waste. Jesus stopped at a *"desert place"* to feed the 5,000. They sat down in *"much grass."* This place was not barren, but an unpopulated area describing the road between Jerusalem and Gaza. W. E. Vine defines *"desert"* as *"an uninhabited place, in contrast to a town or village...It does not always denote a barren region, void of vegetation; it is often used of a place uncultivated, but fit for pasturage"* (p. 289). It is also, argued that immersion cannot be demanded in baptism because there is a lack of water in the desert and in the frozen far north for immersion. Yet, how many people live in a desert or far north? What do they drink? What do polar bears, seals, etc. swim in? Ice can be broken and has been for others to be immersed. A better question is: where are you right now? Are you in a desert or the far north or south pole? If not, than these hypothetical arguments would not keep you from being immersed.

- **The Baptism of Saul of Tarsus (Acts 9, 22)**

When the Lord appeared to him, Saul asked what he must do. The Lord sent him to Damascus to wait there for further instructions. Saul stayed on a street called Straight in the house of Judas, fasting and praying in blindness for three days. The Lord sent Ananias who came and said *"Arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord"* (22:16). Why did he have to arise? Sprinkling and pouring takes place in a kneeling position. Saul arose to go be immersed.

- **The Baptism of the Philippian Jailor (Acts 16:23-34)**

First, Paul and Silas spoke to *"all that were in his house"* (32). Next, *"he took them the same hour of the night, washed their stripes; and was baptized, he and all his, straightway"* (33). Finally, *"when he had brought them into his house, he set meat before them"* (34). Sprinkling or pouring would not require leaving and returning to the house, yet immersion would.

- **Baptism is a Birth of Water (John 3:1-5)**

Nicodemus came to Jesus by night to question who He was. Jesus said, *"most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God."* Nicodemus said to Him, *"How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter a second time into his mother's womb and be born?"* Jesus answered, *"Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God."* (3-5). *"Born"* is to be understood figuratively. In order for one to be born out or delivered from water he must first be in water. Thus, to be *"born of water"* requires immersion.

- **Baptism is a Burial (Romans 6:2-5; Colossians 2:12)**

Paul in explaining the purpose of baptism in relation to Jesus Christ, wrote, *"or do you not know that as many of us as were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death? Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life"* (Rom. 6:3,4). The word *"burial"* is from the Greek word *thapto* which is used in direct reference to the burial of Christ in 1 Corinthians 15:4. Christ was buried in a stone hewed sepulcher with a rock rolled to seal the entrance. Christ was covered to the extent that Jonah was enclosed in the sea creature (Matthew 12:41). Immersion is a likeness of the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ. Christ's body was not sprinkled with dirt nor was dirt poured upon it. His body was completely covered or surrounded in the grave in which it was laid. Thus, a complete covering or surrounding or placing in is required for burial. Since baptism is a burial in water, immersion is commanded.

Once there was a little boy who went to church with his mother. The preacher read from the Bible that baptism is a burial. Later in the service he baptized a man by sprinkling water upon his head. A couple of weeks later the boy's little dog died. His mother told him to go out in the back yard and bury his dog. As she watch from the kitchen window, she observed him pick up a hand full of dirt and sprinkled it upon the dead dog. When he return to the house she rebuked him saying, *"Did you bury the dog as I had asked you?"* *"Yes, mother"* he replied. *"No you didn't. Now go out there in bury the dog"* she commanded. Once more she watched as he did the same thing. When he return, his mother scolded him saying, *"Now you didn't bury the dog. I watched you. All you did was sprinkle a little dirt on him."* Her son explained,

"but, Mama. Baptism is a burial and at church the preacher only sprinkled water on the man."

Paul told the saints at Colossae that they were "*buried with Him in baptism, in which you also were raised with Him through faith in the working of God, who raised Him from the dead*" ( Col. 2:12).

### Summary

Does sprinkling, pouring or immersion meet the Bible requirement for baptism? Bible baptism requires: water (Ac. 10:47); much water (John 3:23); going down into the water (Acts 8:38); coming up out of the water (Mark 1:10; Acts 8:39); a burial (Romans 6:3,4); a resurrection (Romans 6:5; Colossians 2:12); a washing of the body with water (Hebrews 10:22) and a birth of water (John 3:5). Only immersion meets all the requirements. Sprinkling and pouring are inadequate substitutes for immersion, and even worse, they are additions to the Word of God (Rev. 22:18,19).

If you have not been immersed in water you have not been baptized. If you have not been baptized you have not been saved. Jesus Christ said, "*he that believes and is baptism will be saved, he that does not believe shall be condemned*" (Mark 16:16). If you had water sprinkled or poured upon you instead of being immersed in water, will you not contact us today so we may assist you in being scripturally baptized in water?

### Questions:

1. Which denominations will accept pouring, sprinkling or immersion as a form of baptism?
2. The word "baptize" is translated from the Greek word *baptidzo*.
3. How and why did the word "baptize" originate in the English?
4. How does Webster define "baptize"? Why?
5. What is a Greek-English lexicon?
6. Most Greek scholars define *baptidzein* to mean?
7. List the denominational leaders or founders who correctly translated *baptidzein* to mean immersion instead of sprinkling or pouring which was practiced by their denominations.

8. The first known case of sprinkling instead of immersion was in 251 AD. Who did it involve and why?
9. What is significant about the Council of Revenna in 1311 AD?
10. Why did John baptize in the Jordan river? What does this imply?
11. What evidence is there which points to the Ethiopian being immersed in water by Philip?
12. Was Saul of Tarsus immersed or did he have water sprinkled upon him by Ananias? Explain.
13. Why does being "*born of water*" require immersion?
14. Why does a burial with Christ in baptism require immersion?

**Application & Discussion:**

1. Why do you think the Greek Orthodox Church has always practiced immersion instead of sprinkling or pouring?
2. How would you deal with the argument that the Ethiopian could not have been immersed in water by Philip because the place was called "*desert*"?
3. What would you advise someone to do who was not immersed in water but had water poured or sprinkled upon them when they were "baptized"?

**Homework:** Find someone who has been baptized by way of sprinkling and share with them the true meaning of baptism.

## The Subjects of Baptism

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When it came to baptism I was no rookie. On one occasion I baptized a man least at twice my size in a ten foot by four foot deep outdoor pool. When I climbed in there was only one inch to spare before the water level exceeded the top of my rubber waders. After the large baptizee entered the pool the water raised to one inch above the top of the waders. Suddenly, I felt water pouring down my torso and beginning to drown my feet. After the baptism, it was all I could do to climb the ladder out of the pool because so much water had filled my chest high waders. On another occasion a older one-legged man had to be baptized. Thinking ahead I had another young man assist me. The only problem that came up was whether we should go ahead and baptize his prosthetic leg as well as the rest of the man. However, the most difficult baptism to date was the time it took three attempt to completely submerge one terrified woman.

Maria was in her early forties when she was taught the Gospel plan of salvation. Many folks may have assumed that she was a bit slow. You see, Maria, was very hard of hearing and spoke much loader than normal. However, hearing the Word she believed and after making her confession of Christ publically we entered the water of the baptistry. She seemed just fine up to the point I began to lower her backward down into the water. Her right hand suddenly shot out like a rocket and grabbed firmly onto the frame surrounding the baptistry. When she was pulled back up on her feet, she explained, "When I was a little girl I almost drowned. Ever since the day I have been terrified of putting my head under the water." I told her that is was necessary for immersion and that if she relaxed, she would be in and out of the water before she needed to take another breath. After a minute or two she was ready to try again. Just as before, her hand shot out and grabbed the edge so that her head could not be immersed. What was I going to do? The thought crossed my mind that could just write this one off by sprinkling a little water on her head and sending her down the street to join the Methodists. But I came to myself and decided to go with plan B. When she went down into the water the third time her hand grabbed the edge like the two previous attempts. However, I reached over with my left hand and peeled her fingers back and released her vice like grip. After which I used her stiffened hand to help force her under the water and then just as quickly pull her back up out of the water. I apologized for it immediately, but she just thanked and told me that was only way she would have been baptized.

Now most baptisms take place without a hitch or a hand grabbing the edge. The third time was a success, but I hope I never had to force another baptism. I am sure there have been stranger baptisms. Like the preacher who thought you really did have to dunk the sinner in the water three times; once each for the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Once I heard about a novice immerser who could not remember what to say when he plunged the lost soul under the water. He just dunked him and said, "Do you believe...[dunk] do you believe...[dunk] do you believe?" When the man finally fought himself free from the preacher, he answer, "Yes I believe. I believe you are trying to drown me!"

Yet none of these above troubles with baptism compare with the myriads of denominational preachers and priests who force unwilling souls to be "baptized." Many denominations force children to be baptized without their consent. Such is a meaningless and unscriptural tradition of men for several reasons.

Since baptism is mentioned 123 times in the New Testament, it is important for all those desiring to be pleasing to God to know whether they have been properly baptized. Several denominations including the Catholic, Lutheran, Episcopal, Presbyterian, Methodist, etc. practice infant baptism. Many people have been baptized as infants or young children. This lesson is designed to investigate whether or not these individuals were baptized too soon and whether their baptism is acceptable to God (Hebrews 11:6).



## History of Infant Baptism

First, investigating the origin of infant baptism from church historians is in order. *"Baptism was administered at first only to adults, as men were accustomed to conceive baptism and faith as strictly connected. We have all reason for not deriving infant baptism from apostolic institution, and the recognition of it which followed somewhat later, as an apostolic tradition, serves to confirm this hypothesis. Irenaeus is the first church teacher in whom we find any allusion to infant baptism"* (Neander's History of the Christian Religion and Church, Vol. I, p. 311). *"But immediately after Irenaeus, in the last years of the second century, Tertullian appears as a zealous opponent of infant baptism; a proof that the practice had not as yet come to be regarded as an apostolic institution; for otherwise, he would hardly have ventured to express himself so strongly against it. ...'Let them come, while they are growing up; let them come while they are learning, while they are being taught to what it is they are coming; let them become Christians, when they are susceptible of the knowledge of Christ. What haste, to procure the forgiveness of sins for the age of innocence?"* (ibid. p. 312). *"In the Apostolic age, and in the three centuries which followed, it is evident that, as a general rule, those who came to baptism came in full age, of their own deliberate choice. We find a few cases of the baptism of children; in the third century we find one case of the baptism of infants. Even amongst Christian households the instances of Chrysostom, Gregory Nazianzen, Basil, Ephrem of Edessa, Augustine, Ambrose, are decisive proofs that it was not only not obligatory, but not usual. All these distinguished personages had Christian parents, and yet were not baptized till they reached maturity. The old liturgical service of Baptism was framed for full-grown converts, and is only by considerable adaptation applied to the case of infants. Gradually the practice of baptizing infants spread, and after the fifth century the whole Christian world,... Whereas, in the early ages, Adult Baptism was the rule, and Infant Baptism an exception, in later times Infant Baptism is the rule, and Adult Baptism the exception"* (Christian Institutions, Arthur P. Stanley, D.D., Dean of Westminster, p.19,20).

## Infants Have No Sin

If baptism is for the purpose of washing away sin then why are infants, who have committed no sin, baptized? Catholicism teaches the purpose of infant baptism is to remove original sin. *"Babies have to be baptized because they have original sin on their souls"* (THE CATHOLIC CATECHISM, p. 56). *"Baptism is a sacrament which cleanses us from original sin"* (Sullivan, Visible Church, p. 39).

The founder of the Methodist Church, John Wesley, explains the purpose behind infant baptism in greater detail. *"As to the ground of it: If infants are guilty of original sin, then they are proper subjects of baptism, seeing, in the ordinary way, they cannot be saved, unless this is washed away by baptism. It has been already proved, that this original stain cleaves to every child of man; and that thereby they are children of wrath, and liable to eternal damnation. It is true, the Second Adam found a remedy for the disease which came upon all by the offence of the first. But the benefits of this is to be received through the means which he hath appointed; through baptism in particular, which is the ordinary means he hath appointed for that purpose; and to which he hath tied us, though he may not have tied himself. Indeed, where it cannot be had, the case is different; but extraordinary cases do not void the standing rule. This therefore is our first ground. Infants need to be washed from original sin; therefore they are proper subjects of baptism"* (Wesley's Works Miscellaneous, Vol. 2, p. 16). Again he wrote, *"It is certain our church supposes that all who are baptized in their infancy are at the same time born again; and it is allowed that the whole office of the baptism of infants proceeds upon this supposition"* (Wesley's Sermons, Vol. 1, p. 405). The whole purpose of infant baptism is based upon the assumption that babies have sin and must have a spiritual new birth.

Protestant churches like the Methodist have based their teachings upon John Calvin's doctrine of "total hereditary depravity" by which is meant the infant inherits a corrupt nature from Adam. Many passages are used as proof texts for original sin and total hereditary depravity. *"The Lord looks down from heaven upon the children of men, To see if there are any who understand, who seek God. They have all turned aside, They have together become corrupt; There is none who does good, No, not one"* (Psalm 14:2,3). They became corrupt, all of them, when they turned aside. Some appeal to Psalm 51:5, which says, *"Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity, And in sin my mother conceived me."* Obviously, the text tells us the sin existed before David was born or before he was conceived. David did not even exist at the time

of the sin in the text. Another proof text is: *"The wicked are estranged from the womb; They go astray as soon as they are born, speaking lies"* (Psalm 58:3). Note, it was after they were born these babes went astray. Their sin consisted of speaking lies. Have you heard infants speaking lies? None of these passages teach the doctrine of original sin.

However, there are many scriptures which teach against infant baptism. What did Christ say about the condition of little children? *"Assuredly, I say to you, unless you are converted and become as little children, you will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven. Therefore whoever humbles himself as this little child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven"* (Matthew 18:3,4). Again He said, *"Let the little children come to Me, and do not forbid them; for of such is the kingdom of heaven"* (Matthew 19:14). Christ did not require that the children be baptized. If children have sin, then are we to become sinners in order to enter the kingdom? If they are depraved totally, then are we to become totally depraved? Is the kingdom of heaven to be made up of sinners, totally depraved? Surely, this is not what Christ is advocating. Christ was teaching the purity of the little children. They are neither saved or lost, but they are safe.

According to Paul's sermon on Mars' Hill we are all God's offspring (Acts 17:28). God is the *"Father of spirits"* (Hebrews 12:9). God has no offspring who are totally depraved. The only way His children could inherit total depravity is if the Father of their spirits were totally depraved. God is not depraved He is Holy.

A person has to commit sin in order to be a sinner. Sin is the transgression of the law - it is lawlessness (1 John 3:4). Infants are not accountable to the Law. How can they transgress the Law?

Children do not bear the sin of their parents, *"The soul that sins shall die. The Son shall not bear the guilt of the father, nor the father bear the guilt of the son. The righteousness of the righteous shall be upon himself, and the wickedness of the wicked shall be upon himself"* (Ezekiel 18:20). Only when a child grows older and makes a choice to do evil, knowing the difference between good and evil, does he sin.

Are infants guilty of a sin they did not commit? If infants are guilty of sin, they cannot be cleansed till they repent (Acts 2:38). If infants are born guilty of "original sin" they will remain so till they repent. If they don't repent they will die in their sins (Luke 13:3). This is the inevitable conclusion. The Catholic church *"has always taught that unbaptized children are excluded from Heaven but has defined nothing as to their positive fate"* (Neander's History of the Christian Religion and Church, vol. I, p. 255). However, some Catholics teach people to believe in Limbo a region bordering on Hell that is for unbaptized infants and children. Still others believe they will be damned to Hell. *"...infants dying unbaptized in the name of the trinity, were inevitably punished with the torments of everlasting fire"* (Robinson's History of Baptism, pp. 306,307). Who can believe that God would eternally punish infants for sins which they did not commit?

### **Infants Are Not Members of the Church**

Many denominations which practice infant baptism teach its necessity based on the idea that babes need to be a part of the church.

Man has sinned. Christ's blood was shed for man's sins (Romans 5:8). Christ purchased the church with His blood (Acts 20:28). Infants have no sin, they have no need of the blood of Christ and thus are not members of the church.

Infants are not part of the church, thus not subject to the commands given to the church. Many commandments are given to those who are members of the church, such as, singing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs teaching and admonishing one another (Ephesians 5:19); partaking of the Lord's Supper as a memorial of Christ's death, recognizing that the bread represents His body broken for us and the grape juice represents His blood shed for our sins (1 Corinthians 11:23f); and studying to show themselves approved of God (2 Timothy 2:15). Infants cannot fulfill any of these duties. Thus, infants cannot be a part of the church nor were they ever intended to be.

The word "church" is from the Greek word *ekklesia* meaning "the called out". It is calling them out of the world of darkness and sin into the kingdom of light (Colossians 1:13,14). Infants are not in the kingdom of darkness or world of sin, thus cannot be called out of it. The church is made up of the saved (Acts 2:47). Infants are sinless and therefore safe.

### **Infants Were Never Baptized in New Testament Times**

Bible scholars inform us that there is no evidence that the church of the first century ever practiced

infant baptism. *"Among the persons that are recorded as baptized by the apostles, there is no express mention of an infant"* (Wall's History of Baptism, Preface, p. 29). *"There is no trace of infant baptism in the New Testament"* (Schaff-Herzog Ency., Art., Baptism, p. 200). *"There is no proof or hint in the New Testament that the Apostles baptized infants or ordered them to be baptized"* (The First Age of Christianity and the Church, J.J.I. Dolinger, p. 325). George P. Fisher wrote, *"Whether infants were baptized in the Apostolic age, or exactly when the custom arose of administering this rite to them, is a controverted question on which the new Testament writings furnish no direct information"* (The Beginnings of Christianity, p. 565). Even the founders of the Presbyterian and Lutheran churches admit that infant baptism cannot be found in the New Testament. This they proclaim even though both denominations practice infant baptism. Infant baptism *"is nowhere expressly mentioned by the evangelists, that any one child was by the apostles baptized."* (John Calvin, Institutes, Bk. 4, chp 14). Martin Luther wrote, *"It cannot be proved by the sacred scripture that infant baptism was instituted by Christ, or began by the first Christians after the Apostles"* (Vanity of Infant Baptism, part II, p. 8).

In the Great Commission, Christ commanded His apostles to baptize disciples (Matthew 28:19,20). A disciple is one who is instructed and taught. Can infants be disciples? If not, they are not to be baptized.

On the day of Pentecost none of the 3,000 baptized could have been infants. Peter accused those present of sin (Acts 2:36). Having heard this they were *"pricked in their hearts"* showing the sermon touched their consciences (37). They requested a solution to their sin from the apostles. Peter replied, *"Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit"* (38). He went on to exhort them to save themselves (40). Many gladly received his words and were baptized (41). Those who were baptized *"continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread and prayers...sold their possessions...continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house and house..."* (42,44,46,47). Can infants be accused of crucifying someone, repent, be exhorted, receive the words of Peter, continue steadfastly in doctrine, fellowship, Lord's Supper, prayers, and can they sell possessions? Clearly, infants were not baptized on the day of Pentecost.

One of the deacons of the Jerusalem church, Philip, went to Samaria preaching Christ. Those who heard his preaching were baptized *"both men and women"* (Acts 8:12). These same men and women heard and saw the miracles of Philip, they were able to believe his preaching, and they were the same ones who had seen and been astonished at the fakery of Simon the Sorcerer for some time. Simon also was baptized. Surely, no infants were baptized among the Samaritans.

Later, the Holy Spirit sent Philip to meet the Ethiopian Eunuch on the road from Jerusalem to Gaza. The Eunuch was reading the word of God from Isaiah (Acts 8:30). Philip began from that passage to preach Jesus (35). When they came to some water the Eunuch asked Philip, *"See, here is water. What hinders me from being baptized?"* Then Philip said, *"if you believe with all your heart, you may."* And he answered and said, *"I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God."* (37,38). Philip would not baptize him until he heard the Eunuch confess his belief. Verbal confession of one's belief in Christ as the Son of God is a prerequisite for baptism (Romans 10:9,10). No infant is able to make such a confession and is therefore not a subject for Bible baptism.

An angel appeared to Cornelius and told him to send for Peter who *"will tell you what you must do"* (Acts 10:6). Cornelius was a man who feared God with all of his house (2). While he *"heard the word"* (44) which Peter was preaching Cornelius and his household began to *"speak with tongues and magnify God."* (46). At this point Peter commanded them to be baptized (48). Can infants obey such verbal commandments? Can they fear God? Can they speak and magnify God?

The next two instances of Bible baptism perhaps represent the best hope advocates of infant baptism have for Biblical proof. When Paul and Silas went to Philippi they came across Lydia. Upon the preaching the gospel she and her household were baptized. To prove she had infants one would have to assume: she was married, she had children, some of them were infants, these infants were with her at the time although she was from Thyratira some 300 miles away.

Later, after the Philippians had thrown both Paul and Silas into prison there was an earthquake. The jailor fearing all the prisoners had escaped intended to take his life. Paul stopped him with the assurance that all were still there. The jailor requested information about salvation. They said, *"Believe"*

*on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved, you and your household" (Acts 16:31). The Word of God was preached to his household. Next, all were baptized and "rejoiced, having believed in God with all his household" (34). Were infants a part of the Philippian Jailor's household that were baptized by Paul? Those baptized, had to be old enough to hear the word of God and believe it. Babies cannot understand preaching, believe, etc.*

At Corinth they heard and believed the preaching of Paul and were baptized including Crispus and his household (Acts 18:8). Again, those of his household had to be old enough to hear and believe what they heard. Infants were incapable of this, therefore, they were not part of those who were baptized. Furthermore, the Corinthians who obeyed the gospel were those who had been fornicators, idolaters, adulterers, homosexuals, sodomites, thieves, covetous, drunkards, revilers, and extortioners (I Corinthians 6:9f). Can infants get involved in this kind of sin? Only teenagers and adults could have composed this group which were baptized at Corinth.

At Ephesus, Paul found twelve men who had been baptized with the baptism of John. After they heard the preaching of the resurrected Christ they were baptized (Acts 19:5). Can infants discern between the baptism of John and that of Christ? Furthermore, these men were disciples. As already shown, infants cannot be disciples.

### **Summary**

Baptizing infants is contrary to the teaching of Christ and his apostles for several reasons. 1) It is based on the traditions of men. Infant baptism originated 100 years too late for it to have the approval of the New Testament. Christ said that religion based on man's religion is vain (Matthew 15:7-9). 2) Infant baptism is without authority from God. In the New Testament only adults had baptism administered to them. Infant baptism was neither taught nor exemplified in the New Testament. If God intended for infants to be baptized he would have mentioned it somewhere in the New Testament. Whenever children are relevant to the subject the Bible mentions them, as in the feeding of the 5,000 (Matthew 14:21), the feeding of the 4,000 (Matthew 15:38), the children brought to Jesus (Matthew 19:14) and Paul's farewell to the disciples in Tyre (Acts 21:5). If infants are to be baptized then why does not the Bible mention it in one single place in the New Testament? The only way to find authority for infant baptism is to go beyond the pages of the New Testament. To do so is to go beyond what is written and displease God (I Corinthians 4:6; Revelation 22:18,19). 3) Baptizing infants causes many young adults and teenagers to never obey true Bible baptism. They will argue: "My parents had me baptized when I was a baby, so I don't need to be baptized again." The Bible warns about sinning against a child (Genesis 42:22). 4) With rare exception those who are baptized as infants are not immersed in water, but have water sprinkled upon them. The original Greek word for "baptize" is universally defined by Greek lexicons as "to dip, plunge, or immerse." Never does it mean sprinkle or pour. 5) Another reason that infant baptism is unscriptural, is the fact that infants have no sins to be remitted or washed away and that is the very purpose of baptism. Baptism now saves us (I Peter 3:21). Infants do not need to be saved. They are safe. 6) Finally, infants cannot possibly meet all the prerequisites for baptism: recognize sin (Romans 3:23), hear the Word of God to the extent they can comprehend the preaching (Romans 10:17), believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God (Hebrews 11:6; Mark 16:16), give a verbal confession of that belief (Romans 10:9,10), and repent of sins (Acts 2:38). Were you baptized as an infant? If so, you were baptized before you were guilty of sin, heard the preaching of the gospel, believed that Christ was the Son of God, confessed that belief verbally, repented of our sin, and therefore, baptized too soon. Thus, you have not been baptized. Additionally, you are still in your sins, they have not been washed away.

If you have not been baptized, yet you have heard the gospel, believed that Jesus is the Son of God, are willing to verbally confess the belief, and have repented of a life of sin, you should be baptized. If we can assist you in obeying the command of baptism please contact us immediately.

### **Questions:**

1. List the denomination which practice infant baptism.

2. Who are the first opponent of infant baptism among the early Christians? Why?
3. True False As a rule infant baptism if rarely practiced among the early Christians.
4. What is "original sin"?
5. What are the proof-text of original sin? How would answer these?
6. Did Jesus believe that little children were sinners? Explain.
7. According to 1 John 3:4 how or when is sin committed?
8. Does the son bear the guilt of sin from his father? Explain.
9. According to some denominations what is to become of infants who are not baptized to wash away original sin?
10. Can infants be members of the church? Explain.
11. True False There is no example of a small child or infant being baptized in the New Testament.
12. Who did Philip baptize at Samaria?

13. Were any infants or small children baptized from the household of Cornelius? Explain.
  
14. Were any infants or small children baptized from among the household of the Philippian Jailer? Explain.

**Application & Discussion:**

1. What things must an infant or small child do in order to be baptized with the Bible Baptism?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
2. What would instruct someone to do if you discovered they have only been baptized as an infant?

**Homework:** Find someone who was only baptized when an infant or small child and encourage them to be baptized with Bible Baptism.

# The Purpose of Baptism

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Police were called to investigate a break-in at a local Church of Christ. When they arrived they notice the building had been left unlocked. In the baptistry was a homeless man taking a much need bath. On another occasion a fire inspector lost his foot trying to walk around a church baptistry and fell in by accident. Baptism is not for the removal of the dirt from the body. It's purpose is spiritual and far more important (1 Peter 3:21). Just what is the purpose of Bible baptism?

## Baptism Brings Salvation

Just before His ascension into Heaven Jesus command His disciples, *"go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned"* (Mark 16:15-16). Salvation is a result of these two conditions: believe and be baptized. Just as 4 is the result of 2 + 2, so believing and being baptized equals salvation for the obedient. The conditions of damnation are equally plain: if you don't believe you will not be baptized, thus you will not be saved. Just as 2 + 0 can never equal 4, neither can belief without baptism result in salvation.

Jesus' command is so simple, it is hard to understand how so many cannot seem in comprehend what He is demanding. The truth is, many reject the plain command of Jesus because their minds are clouded by their prejudices against the truth. If one is an atheist, he will not believe in God, heaven or hell, or salvation of any kind. According to their view one can believe and be baptized but will not be saved, because there is no one to save him. However, those who do not believe will be condemned.

Others hold to the belief that God is so loving that He will never condemn anyone. Therefore regardless of whether one believes and is baptized, he will be saved. This is the doctrine of universalism. However, Jesus said, *"Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven. Many will say to Me in that day, 'Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name?' And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!'"* (Matthew 7:21-23).

Denominations such as the Catholic Church, the Methodists, Lutherans, Presbyterians, etc. who practice infant baptism reject the clear meaning of Jesus' command. They believe that every baby born has its soul tainted with original sin, that is, they inherit the guilt of Adam's sin he committed back in the garden. Calvinists refer to this as "total hereditary depravity." The doctrine would have Jesus say, "He who does not believe, and is baptized will be saved." Yet, belief comes by hearing and understanding God's Word. Infants cannot read and comprehend, therefore cannot believe (Rom. 10:17). Furthermore, God has said, *"the soul who sins shall die. The son shall not bear the guilt of the father, nor the father bear the guilt of the son. The righteousness of the righteous shall be upon himself, and the wickedness of the wicked shall be upon himself"* (Ezek. 20:18).

Many of the same denominations mentioned above substitute sprinkling or pouring for immersion (which is the true meaning or action of baptism). Notice Jesus did not say, "he who believes and has water sprinkled or poured upon him will be saved."

Almost all denominations reject that idea that baptism saves the sinner from the sins he has himself committed. They argue that salvation is by "faith only" or by "grace only." They would have Mark 16:16 read, "He who believes is saved and later can be baptized." This has the sinner saved BEFORE baptism. Thus, baptism is not essential to salvation. In fact, there is only one occurrence of the phrase "faith only" in the Bible: *"You see then that a man is justified by works, and not by faith only"* (James 2:24). Faith without baptism does not justify or save.

The purpose of baptism in the passage has been rejected by some because the last part of this

verse leaves out baptism. Thus they interpret the verse to mean: "he does not believe will be condemned, but he who is not baptized will not be condemned." However in the second part of verse sixteen Jesus is not giving the conditions for salvation but for condemnation. For example, it is impossible to digest food if it has not been eaten. Therefore, he so does not eat will starve. As it is impossible to be baptize into the name of Christ if one does not believe in Christ. Unbelief is the only thing necessary to be condemned. However, both belief and baptism are necessary to be saved.

Another attack against this text involves textual criticism. A couple of the oldest manuscripts are missing Mark 16:9-20. Therefore, some claim that this passages does not even belong in the New Testament. Yet, the loss of a leaf from the manuscripts could easily account for this. Older and more reliable versions of the Mark in Syrian, Egyptian, Ethiopian, etc. do contain this section of scripture. Most Latin manuscripts and even the Gothic version contains these scriptures. Many of the early Christian writers from the first to the fifth centuries quote from Mark 16:9-20. Over five hundred Greek manuscripts contain the entire sixteenth chapter of Mark.

Peter claimed that baptism and the Ark of Noah are related to each other in regard to salvation. *"there is also an antitype which now saves us-- baptism (not the removal of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God), through the resurrection of Jesus Christ"* (1 Peter 3:21). The ark is the type and baptism the antitype. Type can refer to a seal that would leave an impression in the hot wax. The impression it leaves would be the antitype. The type comes first but the antitype is what is important. It is the real reason for the type. Just as an old typewriter had keys which moved the type to strike the ribbon which then left an impression on the paper. The impression left on the paper is the antitype.

The comparison between the type (the ark) and antitype (baptism) are both involved souls being saved through water. The water did not save Noah and his family. But through the water they found salvation. The ark protected them from the flood waters which washed away the wicked world and at the same time lifted the ark above the death and destruction of the wicked world. The comparison between the two is not meant to be seen at every point. For example, the ark was not immersed in water, yet baptism means immersion. The wicked sinful world of Noah's day was immersed and washed away.

The flood can be seen as part of the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus Christ. The waters buried the earth in judgment, but they also lifted Noah and his family up to safety. They came out of the ark to rebuild a new world. Baptism is also in the likeness of Christ's death, burial, and resurrection (Rom. 6:3-5; Col. 2:12). As the waters of Noah's day separated him from the wicked world by destroyed them and saving him, so water baptism destroys our old life of sin and resurrects to a new life in Christ.

As water saved Noah and his family back then, so baptism is now saving you. Salvation means "to save out of danger, rescue" (Thayer 142). It is the idea of escaping danger or being delivered from it.

Baptism is not just a reference to a past event nor is it in reference to a future event. Baptism is what is saving people now through water just as Noah was saved through water.

### **Baptism Is an Answer of a Good Conscience**

Again Peter states, *"there is also an antitype which now saves us-- baptism (not the removal of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God), through the resurrection of Jesus Christ"* (1 Peter 3:21). The term "answer" means "a pledge, a demand." The term "was used by the Greeks in a legal sense, as a demand or appeal" (Vine, p. 53). When a person was signing a contract, he would be asked, "do you pledge to obey and fulfill the terms of this contract." The good conscience is sought through baptism, that is, when baptism washes away guilt one is left with a clear or good conscience. Or because one has a good conscience they are baptized. It is possible to have a good conscience before baptism. Saul of Tarsus Possessed a good conscience while in unbelief and a persecutor of the church (Ac. 23:1). When Paul was baptized it washed away his previous sins (Acts 22:16) resulting the him have a good or clear conscience. However, it is more logical with Peter line of reasoning and the rest of the Bible teaching about water baptism that a good conscience is a result of having been saved at the point of baptism. The blood of Christ and water baptism in His name work together in tandem to produce a cleansed conscience/salvation (Heb. 9:11-14). The blood of Christ purifies the conscience from dead works (Heb. 9:14). This is why those who believed in the book of Acts are baptized immediately (Acts 8:35:38).



The stories of conversion in Acts are examples of those with a cleared conscience. The Pentecostians who had killed the very Son of God (Acts 2:36). Saul of Tarsus who killed Christians (Acts 22:16). The Philippian Jailor who had imprisoned Paul and Silas (Acts 16:34).

### **Baptism is for the Remission of Sins**

On the first Pentecost after the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus Peter stood up with the other apostles and preached the first Gospel sermon (Acts 2:4, 14-36). A good, effective sermon must call men to repentance by convincing them of their soul's deep need. Peter's sermon was effective. *"Now when they heard this, they were cut to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, 'Men and brethren, what shall we do?'"* (2:37). "Cut" is also translated "pricked" meaning "to pain the mind sharply, agitate it vehemently" (Thayer 334). Their conscience felt the burning pain of guilt. Peter's indictment stabbed them in their hearts. This reaction shows that they did indeed yet to believe that Jesus was Lord, and Christ and they had sinned greatly against their God who had sent Him. They could not undo what they have done and pleaded for mercy to be shown. How can they be free from the godly sorrow that weighed so heavily upon their minds?

Peter gives a clear and concise answer to their question on what they must do. Notice he does not say, "You obviously already believe, so you have been saved from this horrible sin by your faith alone" or "Christ has done all that needs to be done, there is nothing you can do." Instead, Peter demanded of them, *"Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins"* (2:38a). "Remission" simply means "forgiveness." Two things were essential for them to do, before they could have forgiveness of their sins. First, they must repent. To repent of sin is not merely to feel sorrow (2 Cor. 7:10). It means "a change of mind that leads to a change of life". Second, they must be baptized. Jesus had promised before His ascension: *"He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned"* (Mark 16:16). "The idea of an unbaptized Christian is simply not entertained in the NT" (F.F Bruce, 77).

Peter continued preach and 3000 received the Word that day and saved themselves from that *"perverse generation"* (2:40,41). Conversion of the Pentecostians involved hearing, believing, repenting and being baptized.

### **Baptism Washes Away Sins**

After the stoning of Stephen, Paul began persecuting Christians. On a trip to Damascus to arrest Christians, Saul saw the Lord. He was told to go to Damascus and wait there to be told what he must do. Ananias was sent to tell him what to do (9:5; 22:14). It is implied that he obeyed since he called Jesus Lord and followed his instructions. His penitent attitude is seen in his fasting and praying for three days. Ananias commanded *"and now why are you waiting? Arise and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on the name of the Lord"* (22:16). Saul's conversion involved hearing, believing, repenting, and being baptized.

Although Saul of Tarsus believed the Lord on the road to Damascus, he was not saved at that point. He was not saved then for he did not know it nor did the Lord for Jesus sent Saul to Damascus to be told what he must do. Observe, Paul did not receive salvation by praying for three days, but only when his sins were washed away in baptism.

### **Baptism Needed for the Resurrection of the Sinner into a New Life**

In two different epistles Paul compares baptism to the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus. *"Or do you not know that as many of us as were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death? Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. For if we have been united together in the likeness of His death, certainly we also shall be in the likeness of His resurrection"* (Romans 6:3-5). To the saints at Colossae Paul explained that they had been *"buried with Him in baptism, in which you also were raised with Him through faith in the working of God, who raised Him from the dead. And you, being dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He has made alive together"*

*with Him, having forgiven you all trespasses” (Col. 2:12,13).*

Before Baptism they were dead in sin, in the bondage of sin (6; Col. 2:13); servants of sin (17); and due the wages of sin which is death (23). After baptism they were dead to sin (2,11); raised to walk in new life (4); old man crucified; the body of sin done away (6); alive unto God in Christ (11); made free from sin (17); servants of righteousness (18); and have promise of eternal life (22,23). During baptism they are buried with Christ (Col. 2:12).

Baptism is the form of doctrine they obeyed in order to have their sins washed away, coming in contact with the death and blood of Christ. Makes the power of His blood effective. Without the shedding of His blood, there is no remission of sins (Mt. 26:28). Without His death no blood could have been shed. Without His resurrection the shedding of His blood, His burial, and man's baptism would be vain.

### **Baptism Puts One into Christ**

Paul wrote, *“for as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ” (Gal. 3:27).* Before one is baptized they cannot be "in Christ". What is "in Christ" that motivates us to be baptized?

*“If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature” (2 Cor. 5:7).*

*“In whom we have redemption” (Col. 1:14; Gal. 1:7).*

*“complete in him” (Col. 2:10).*

*“all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ” (Eph. 1:3).*

*“hope in Christ” (1 Cor. 15:19).*

*“made alive from the dead in Christ” (1 Cor. 15:22).*

Truly, unless one is in Christ he is lost.

### **Baptism Puts One into the Body of Christ**

In Acts chapter two those who were baptized (Acts 2:38,41), where the ones being saved and added to the church. What does baptism have to do with being added to the church. *“For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body-- whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free-- and have all been made to drink into one Spirit” (1 Cor. 12:13).* What is the body? *“The church which is His body” (Eph. 1:22,23).* Christ *“is the head of the body, the church” (Col. 1:18).* *“There is...one body...one baptism” (Eph. 4:4,5).* Therefore, the one baptism put one into the one church. If not, Christ is not your head (Eph. 1:22,23). If not, then one is not reconciled to God (Eph. 2:16). If not, then one is not a fellow-partaker of the promises in Christ Jesus (3:6). If not, then one cannot glorify God by his life (3:21). If not, then one will not be delivered up to God in the end (1 Cor. 15:26).

### **Baptism Allows One to be Born Again into the Kingdom of God**

A Pharisee came to Jesus by night seeking questions about entering the Kingdom. *“Jesus answered and said to him, ‘Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.’ Nicodemus said to Him, ‘How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter a second time into his mother's womb and be born?’ Jesus answered, ‘Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God’” (John 3:3-5).* Being born of water is baptism. To fail to be baptized in the right way for the right reason at the right time is to fail to enter the Kingdom of God.

### **Baptism Results in Much Rejoicing**

Philip, the evangelist, was led by directions from an angel and the Holy Spirit to go preach to the Ethiopian Treasurer. He began preaching from the very passage in Isaiah from which the Ethiopian was reading (32-35). The Ethiopian confessed his belief to Philip and the chariot was stopped, so Philip could baptize him in the water. Both Philip and the eunuch went down into the water, and he baptized him. Now when they came up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord caught Philip away, so that the eunuch saw him

no more; and he went on his way rejoicing (Acts 8:38,39). The Ethiopian went on His way rejoicing because he was saved.

When Paul and Silas were preaching in Philippi, they freed a young, slave girl from a demon. This enraged her owners who were using her to make a profit. The two preachers were cast into the inner prison. At midnight there was an earthquake. The prisoners were freed of their chains and the door to the jail was shaken open. The jailor came in and thought they had all escaped and was about to kill himself when Paul stopped him. He asked Paul and Silas what he needed to do. *“So they said, ‘Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved, you and your household.’ Then they spoke the word of the Lord to him and to all who were in his house”* (Acts 16:31-32). Paul’s instructions must have included the need for baptism. *“And he took them the same hour of the night and washed their stripes. And immediately he and all his family were baptized. Now when he had brought them into his house, he set food before them; and he rejoiced, having believed in God with all his household”* (Acts 16:33,34). Why is baptism done so soon after the subjects learned what they must do? Life is short. It is like a vapor that soon dissipates (James 4:14). The day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night - suddenly and unexpectedly (2 Pet. 3:10). The longer we wait, the chances are greater that our hearts could become hardened in sin (Heb. 3:7).

Why did the jailer and his family rejoice having been baptized? Because they knew they were saved. Joy is not an emotional proof of salvation from sin, but it is the result of having faith that God has forgiven us of our sins. Undoubtedly, Heaven rejoiced as well (Luke 15:7). This joy is not to be a temporary experience. It should be a continuous part of the believers day to day life. *“Rejoice in the Lord always. Again I will say, rejoice!”* (Phil. 4:4). Like the children’s song: "I've got the joy, joy, joy, joy, down in my heart".

## Summary

If you have been baptized in a denomination and have not correctly been baptized according to the Bible, then will you not examine your baptism in light of the Scriptures and make it right today? Remember, you can't be taught wrong about baptism and then baptized right and you can't be baptized in the wrong way, at the wrong time, and for the wrong reason and be right with the Lord.

### Questions:

1. Jesus said, *"He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned"* (Mark 16:16). How do the following groups reinterpret this passage?
  - a) Atheists:
  - b) Universalists:
  - c) Those who practice infant baptism:
  - d) Those who argue for salvation by "faith only":
2. Why is baptism left out of the second clause in Mark 16:16?
3. Based on what you know so far should Mark 16:9-20 be included or excluded from the New Testament? Explain.

4. How does baptism save like water saved Noah?
5. How does baptism result in a good conscience?
6. What two things did Peter require of the sinners who killed the Son of God to do for remission of sins?
7. What did Ananias tell Saul of Tarsus he must do and why?
8. How is baptism like the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus?
9. How does one get "into Christ"?
10. Can one be a member of the Lord's church without ever being baptized?
11. How is baptism described in John 3:3-5?
12. Why did those who were baptized rejoice?

**Application & Discussion:**

1. What role does being a member of the church play in salvation (1 Cor. 12:13; Acts 2; Eph. 5:23)?

**Homework:** Take time every day this coming week to meditate on the joy you had upon being baptized.

## Denominational Baptism

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All denominations except the Christian Scientists and the Quakers practice some rite they call baptism. Commands and examples of baptism are resplendent throughout the New Testament. However, the mode, subject, and purpose of Bible Baptism is often different from that of modern denominational baptism. Although Baptism is mentioned many times in the New Testament and many more times in the writings of the early Christians writers, it remains one of the most controversial topics between New Testament Christians and denominations.

### Why Denominational Baptism Is Not Bible Baptism

#### **X Denominational Baptism is Not By the Authority of Christ**

Bible baptism is performed by the authority of Christ and in the name {authority} of the Godhead *“And Jesus came and spoke to them, saying, ‘All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.’ Amen”* (Mt. 28:18-20). Bible baptism is commanded by God. After Cornelius and his household received the baptism of the Holy Spirit, *“Peter answered, ‘Can anyone forbid water, that these should not be baptized who have received the Holy Spirit just as we have?’ And he commanded them to be baptized in the name of the Lord”* (Acts 10:46b-48a).

Denominational baptism is by their creed and traditions. The same warning Jesus gave the Pharisees goes to these denominations. *“Hypocrites! Well did Isaiah prophesy about you, saying: ‘These people draw near to Me with their mouth, and honor Me with their lips, but their heart is far from Me. And in vain they worship Me, teaching as doctrines the commandments of men.’”* (Matt. 15:7-9).

#### **X Denominational Baptism Has the Wrong Action**

The Greek term for baptize, as seen in a previous lesson, means to immerse or to submerge. It requires “much water” and “going down into” and coming up out of the water. It is a burial in water. The action of Bible Baptism can only be immersion in water.

Denominational baptism gives one a choice between having water sprinkled or poured upon them as well as being immersed. Most denominations permit this choices today. The Church of the Nazarene states: “The Bible never defines how much water was applied or how. Therefore, the Church of the Nazarene considers immersion, sprinkling, and pouring all to be acceptable methods of baptism.” (Answers to Frequently Asked Questions <http://www.nazarene.org>). In The Manual for the Church of the Nazarene they believe: “Baptism may be administered by sprinkling, pouring, or immersion, according to the choice of the applicant.” Clearly denominational baptism is not Bible Baptism.

#### **X Denominational Baptism Has the Wrong Subject**

The only ones who were fit subjects for baptism in the New Testament were those who had sinned themselves, heard the Word of God, believed it’s evidence that Jesus was the Son of God, repented of their sins, confessed with their mouths publicly their faith in Christ (Ac. 2:38; 8:37; Rom. 10:9,10;17).

Many denominations practice infant baptism. “Nazarenes also understand baptism to be a symbol of the new relationship God establishes with His people. Because of this, some Nazarenes choose to have their young children baptized as a symbol of their intention to raise their children in God’s Church and their hope to see that their children choose God’s ways when they are older.” (Answers to Frequently Asked <http://www.nazarene.org>).

First of all infants do not have sin to wash away (Ezek. 18:20). They also cannot hear, believe, confess and repent. According to the Catholic Dictionary, “It is difficult to give strict proof from the scriptures in favor of it.” (Catholic Dictionary, 61). They go on to admit: “There is no express mention of

the baptism of infants in the New Testament” (Question Box, page 23).

**X Denominational Baptism Does Not Put One into the New Testament Church**

Bible Baptism puts one into the one body (1 Cor. 12:13). Those who were baptized in the Day of Pentecost were saved (Acts 2:38-41). *“And the Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved”* (Acts 2:47).

Denominational Baptism puts one into a denomination, not into the New Testament church which is the one body of Christ. The Baptist claim, “Baptism is not essential to salvation, for our churches utterly repudiate the dogma of ‘baptismal regeneration’” but it is essential to obedience, since Christ has commanded it. It is also essential to a public confession of Christ before the world, and to membership in the church which is his body. And no true lover of his Lord will refuse these acts of obedience and tokens of affection.” (The Standard Manual for Baptism Churches, E.T. Hiscox, 20,21). Although they believe baptism is essential or necessary to church membership it is not to the “one body” which is the church of the New Testament. They view it as a part of admission into their denomination.

“It is most likely that in the apostolic age when there was but ‘one Lord, one faith, and one baptism,’ and no differing denominations existed, the baptism of a convert by that very act constituted him a member of the church and at once endowed him with all the privileges of full membership. In that sense, ‘baptism was the door into the church.’ Now it is different and while the churches are desirous of receiving members, they are wary and cautious that they do not receive unworthy persons. The churches therefore have had candidates come before them, make their statement, give their ‘experience’ and then their reception is decided by a vote of the members.” (The Standard Manual for Baptism Churches, p. 22).

Although many denominations and inter-denominations are accepting the baptism of other religious groups and not requiring new members to be re-baptized. These individuals still have not been baptized with Bible baptism into the Lord’s church.

**X Denominational Baptism is Not in the Likeness of Christ Death, Burial and Resurrection**

Bible baptism is in the likeness of Christ’s death, burial, and resurrection (Rom. 6:3-5). The sinner dies to sin in repentance just as Christ died on the cross for all sins. Next, one is buried with Christ in the watery grave of baptism. Finally, he arises to walk in newness of life just as Christ resurrected back to life from the grave.

Some denominations claim that baptism is only a outward symbol. The Jehovah’s Witnesses teach:

“Why did Jesus require that his disciples be baptized? Well, it was a fitting symbol of their whole hearted dedication to God...Are you one who has been associated with the Jehovah’s Witnesses for some time? Perhaps you have already made the necessary changes in your life in accordance with Bible principles but have not taken the steps of dedication and baptism...There are many people who have taken in an accurate knowledge of the Bible but have not yet fully availed themselves of God’s provision for salvation by being baptized...A person who truly has such love and wants a special relationship with Jehovah God would not hold back from freely dedicating his life to him. Baptism is but an outward symbol of the dedication” (The Watchtower, “Baptized!”, pp. 5-7).

Others claim this baptism is a demonstration of one’s faith. “By its observation faith is shown in the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ. (Rom. 6:1-6; Acts 16:31-33)” (Seventh-day Adventist Church Manual, issued by the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, 1971). Faith in Christ has to come before baptism and salvation according to Jesus (Mark 16:16).

**X Denominational Baptism is Not for the Remission of Sins**

Bible baptism is for the remission of sins. *“Then Peter said to them, ‘Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit’”* (Acts 2:38).

Denominations claim the baptism is not for the remission or forgiveness of sins. Again, Jehovah’s Witness believe, “The views of the ‘Disciples,’ otherwise ‘calling themselves’ ‘Christians’ ...is that baptism (immersion water) is for the remission of sins. We cannot accept this to be a correct view of baptism; --to

us it is neither scriptural nor reasonable. We cannot believe that the word has made the eternal welfare of our race dependent upon their knowledge of, and obedience to, an such institution" (The Truth that Leads to Everlasting Life, p. 428).

**X Denominational Baptism Does Not Wash Away Sins**

When Paul met the Lord on the road to Damascus and believed in Him. He asked Jesus what he needed to do. The Lord sent him to Damascus to a street called Straight and had him wait for a preacher for three days. When God's messenger came to Paul he commanded him, "*and now why are you waiting? Arise and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on the name of the Lord*" (Acts 22:16). Bible Baptism is to wash away sins.

Jehovah's Witnesses complete rejects Acts 22:16 stating that "Repentance must precede baptism, but sins are not washed away by baptism." (Make Sure of all Things, Article on Baptism, p. 30). They affirm this again, "What, then does Christian baptism signify? It is not a washing away of one's sins...(Eph. 1:7)" (The Truth that Leads to Everlasting Life, p. 183). And "...immersion does not cleanse the one being baptized from sin. That is not the purpose of baptism of Christians. The going under the water symbolizes that the one being baptized has become dead to the old course of life" (This Good News of the Kingdom, pp. 29-30). It is hard to believe anyone would teach that one can be clean before they are washed.

**X Denominational Baptism Comes After One is Saved**

Bible baptism must come before one is saved (Acts 2:38; 22:16; Pet. 3:21; Mk. 16:16).

Denominations teach that salvation comes before water baptism. The Adventists teach: "...baptism is an ordinance of the Christian church, and should follow repentance and forgiveness of sins." (Church Manual, Issued by the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, 1942, p. 193). They believe this because of their doctrine that one is saved at the point of belief. The "faith only" plan of salvation leaves no room for baptism. The Episcopal: church claims, "Wherefore that we are justified by faith only is a most wholesome doctrine and very full of comfort." (Article 2 of Episcopal Articles of Religion). Church of the Nazarene hold "that believers are to be sanctified wholly - through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ." (Manual, 1956, 36). The Baptists also teach: "All you have to do is believe and he will save you: also, 'Justification, the pardon of sin, and the promise of eternal life - are solely through faith.'" (Church Manual for Baptist Churches, J. M. Pendleton, p. 48). The late gospel preacher Robert Jackson explains in "Why I Left the Methodist Church": "I had always believed that one was saved by faith only. This is exactly what the Methodist church teaches about salvation. However, when I was told to read James 2:24, I was made to see in words that none could misunderstand that "faith only" was wrong. I began to read more and found out that Jesus required faith and baptism (Mk. 16:16)"

**X Denominational Baptism Has the Wrong Confession**

Before Bible Baptism one confesses faith before salvation. "*If you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. For with the heart one believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation*" (Rom. 10:9-10; also Ac. 8:37,38).

However, before denominational baptism one confesses: "God for Christ's sake has pardoned my sins." The Seventh-day Adventist postulate: "Before being baptized the candidate is to be asked, '...do you believe that God, for Christ's sake, has forgiven your sins, and given you a new heart.'" (Church Manual, Issued by the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, 1942, p. 86). Under the heading Baptism Vow and Baptism they teach: "In the presence of the church the following questions should be answered in the affirmative by candidates for baptism; renouncing the world and it's sinful ways, have you accepted Jesus Christ as your personal Savior, and do you believe that God, for Christ's sake, has forgiven your sins and given you a new heart?" (Seventh-Day Adventist Church Manual, p. 51).

**X Denominational Baptism is Not Necessary for a New Birth**

Bible baptism is essential to the new birth into the Kingdom or church. Jesus answered Nicodemus, "*most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God*" (Jn. 3:5).

Denominational baptism claims new birth before baptized. "Baptism is not essential to salvation, for our churches utterly repudiate the dogma of 'baptismal regeneration" but it is essential to obedience, since Christ has commanded it"' (The Standard Manual for Baptism Churches, E.T. Hiscox, 20,21).

Furthermore the Methodist church doctrine states, "Baptism is not only a sign of profession, and mark of difference, whereby Christians are distinguished from others that are not baptized; but it is a sign of regeneration, or the new birth." (Article 17, Methodist Disciple, 1910, edition).

#### **X Some Denominations Believe in Many Baptisms**

Paul claimed "*there is...one baptism*" (Eph. 4:5; also 1 Cor. 12:13). Today, all denominations have a different baptism than that of the Bible. All these cannot be the "one baptism." Some man-made churches will claim in addition to the baptism of water that Christians must also experience the baptism of the Holy Spirit and the Baptism of fire.

### **Mormon Baptism Versus Bible Baptism**

At first glance Mormonism appears to teach the truth about baptism. Found online is the "Official Answer" to the question: "What does Mormonism teach regarding baptism?"

We believe that through the Atonement of Christ, all mankind may be saved, by obedience to the laws and ordinances of the Gospel" (Articles of Faith 1:3). Baptism in water is an ordinance essential to our salvation. By being baptized, we show God that we are willing to be obedient to His commandments. Jesus set the example for us by being baptized, even though He was without sin (see Mosiah 18:8-10). The Savior revealed the proper method of baptism to the Prophet Joseph Smith, making clear that the ordinance must be performed by one having priesthood authority and that it be done by immersion (see Doctrine and Covenants 20:72-74) ([www.mormon.org/faq/baptism-beliefs](http://www.mormon.org/faq/baptism-beliefs)).

Not only do Mormons use the correct mode of baptism: immersion in water, but they correctly identify the Biblical purpose behind baptism: salvation from past sins. They quotes such passages as Acts 2:38; Mark 16:16; and John 3:3-5 to support this truth.

However, in other places by other church authorities, Mormons appear to equivocate on the exact role baptism plays in salivation. "All who humble themselves before God, and desire to be baptized...and truly manifest by their works that they have received of the spirit of Christ unto the remission of their sins - shall be received by baptism into the church" (Roberts, B.H., History of the church, Sec. 7, p189-191). Regardless of the confusion about the purpose of baptism Mormon baptism is still far removed from what is found in the Bible concerning baptism.

First, they teach that Joseph Smith received his authority not from Jesus Christ through the apostles doctrine but by John the Baptist. "Since Joseph Smith was given the authority to baptize by John the Baptist, the same who baptized Jesus Christ, will you follow in the footsteps of the Savior in being baptized by that same authority" (A Uniform System of Teaching Investigator, 68). It was Jesus who gave the Great Commission to the apostles commanding them to baptize in His name (Mark 16:15f; Matt. 28:18-20). He told them that repentance and remission of sins should be preached beginning in Jerusalem (Luke 24: ). Peter preached this in Jerusalem on the Day of Pentecost just ten days after being authorized to do so by Jesus Christ (Acts 2:38). Those preachers, such as Apollos, who preached the baptism of John were corrected (Acts 18:24-26). Those who were baptized with John's baptism after the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ were baptized by Paul with the baptism command by Christ (Acts 19:1-7).

Second, the Mormons believe baptism can only be administered by priesthood members. "The Savior revealed the proper method of baptism to the Prophet Joseph Smith, making clear that the ordinance must be performed by one having priesthood authority and that it be done by immersion (see Doctrine and Covenants 20:72-74)" ([www.mormon.org/faq/baptism-beliefs](http://www.mormon.org/faq/baptism-beliefs)). Orson Pratt of the original quorum of the twelve Mormon apostles claimed:

"But who in this generation have authority to baptize? None but those who have received authority in the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints: All other churches are entirely destitute of all authority from God; and any person who receives baptism or the Lord's Supper from their hands will highly offend God; for He looks upon them as the most corrupt of all people. Both Catholics and Protestants are nothing less than the 'whore of Babylon' whom the Lord denounces by the mouth of John the Revelator as having corrupted all the earth by their fornications and wickedness (The Seer, p. 255).

The Bible makes no requirements for the one performing the baptism. All members of the New Testament



church were part of the royal priesthood under Jesus Christ the High Priest (1 Peter 2:5,9; Rev. 1:5,6).

Another distinction between Mormon baptism and Bible baptism is an official set age for one to be baptized. "Little children are redeemed through the mercy of Jesus Christ. They are "alive in Christ" and cannot sin. They do not need baptism until they understand the difference between right and wrong. The Lord has revealed that children should be baptized at eight years of age. (See Book of Mormon, Moroni 8:8-24; Doctrine and Covenants 29:46-47, 68:2 7)" ([www.mormon.org/faq/baptism-beliefs](http://www.mormon.org/faq/baptism-beliefs)). Although the Bible demands that those who are proper subjects for baptism must be old enough to sin, hear with an understanding of the evidence, believe Jesus Christ is the Son of God, repent of sin, and confess with their mouth, it does not set a specific age. Many eight year olds have not yet reached the age of accountability.

The Articles of Faith of the Latter-Day Saints claim: "We believe that the first principles and ordinances of the Gospel are: first, Faith in the Lord Jesus Christ; second, Repentance; third, Baptism by immersion for the remission of sins; fourth, Laying on of hands for the gift of the Holy Ghost" (Scott, Latayne C., *The Mormon Mirage* 198). According the Acts 8:12-19 and 19:6 the gifts of the Holy Spirit are conveyed only by means of laying on of the Apostles hands. The Mormon church does have its apostles, however the laying on of hands cannot be performed by the apostles of Jesus Christ because they are all dead. Furthermore, the gifts of the Holy Spirit have ceased (1 Cor. 13:8-10).

The fifth difference with regard to the Latter-Day saints' teachings on baptism and what the Bible teaches is the number of baptisms required in salvation. The Encyclopedia of Mormonism's article on Baptism reads:

Latter-day Saints believe, as do many Christians, that baptism is an essential initiatory ordinance for all persons who are joining the Church, as it admits them to Christ's church on earth (John 3:3-5; D&C 20:37, 68-74). It is a primary step in the process, which includes faith, repentance, baptism of fire and of the Holy Ghost, and enduring to the end, whereby members may receive remission of their sins and gain access to the Celestial Kingdom and eternal life (e.g., Mark 16:15-16; 2 Ne. 31:13-21; D&C 22:1-4;84:64, 74; MD, pp. 69-72) (Hawkins, Carl S. *Encyclopedia of Mormonism* p 92 1992).

Paul made it very clear in Ephesians 4:4-6 that there is just one baptism by 62 AD. Holy Spirit baptism was a promise that was fulfilled on the Day of Pentecost in Acts 2 when the Apostles began to speak in tongues and again when Cornelius and his household became to speak in tongues. After which, Peter commanded these penitent, believing Gentiles to be baptized with water (Acts 10). Where as, Holy Spirit baptism was a promise by Christ which has been fulfilled in the past, baptism by fire is a warning to the disobedience and is coming in the future (2 Thess. 1:7-10). Today, there is only one baptism by which men can be saved.

According to the New Testament baptism is the point at which baptized men and women are saved and added by God to the church (Acts 2:38;41,47). It is only by the one baptism any one can be part of the one body which is the church (1 Cor. 12:13,14). Mormonism claims, "Faith and repentance, baptism and bestowal of the Holy Ghost constitute the heart of the gospel of Jesus Christ, being the essential requirements for entry into the celestial kingdom" (Elder Bruce D. Porter Of the Seventy, *The First Principles and Ordinances of the Gospel*).

Finally, Mormons believe only their baptism can save men and women today. "There is no salvation outside the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints" (McConkie, *Mormon Doctrine*, 670). However, only the baptism taught in the pages of the New Testament is the "one baptism" which can wash away sins (Acts 22:16).

These seven differences between Mormon baptism and Bible baptism make a difference in regard to whether one has obeyed God's command to be baptized or whether he has merely followed a man-made ordinance. Those who have been baptized with Mormon baptism are not saved and still in their sins. Only by obedience to the teachings of the Bible regarding the "one baptism" can they have remission of sins.

## **Summary**

All baptisms are not equal. Just because you were dunked under the water by some preacher does

not mean you were baptized with Bible baptism. Many denominations offer baptism, but some sprinkle water on you instead of having you submerged into the water. Others apply baptism to those who are very young and cannot understand, repent or confess. The purpose for various denominational baptisms are almost always at variance with the Bible. Consider the differences between what you were taught and how, when, and why you were baptized with what the Bible teaches.

The good news is that some scholars among the denominations are going back and studying Bible baptism and starting to refute or correct what their denominations are teaching. For example, John R. Tyler in His Book "Baptism: We've Got it Right...and Wrong - What Baptists Must Keep, What We must Change, and Why, wrote: "Baptism is mandatory in the sense that to be a believer and not be baptized is simply not contemplated in the New Testament any more than the idea that one can be a believer without being a member of a local church. The New Testament church would have considered the term non-baptized believer to be an oxymoron and the term baptized believer to be redundant" (Tyler 50).

### Questions:

1. List a passage in the right column which refutes the Seventh-day Adventist's false teaching about baptism and salvation in the left column

Seventh-day Adventist teach:

The Bible teaches:

"...baptism is an ordinance of the Christian church, and should follow repentance and forgiveness of sins." (CHURCH MANUAL, Issued by the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, 1942, p. 193).

"Before being baptized the candidate is to be asked, '...do you believe that God, for Christ's sake, has forgiven your sins, and given you a new heart.'" (Ibid, p. 86).

Under the heading Baptism Vow and Baptism: "In the presence of the church the following questions should be answered in the affirmative by candidates for baptism; renouncing the world and its sinful ways, have you accepted Jesus Christ as your personal Savior, and do you believe that God, for Christ's sake, has forgiven your sins and given you a new heart?" (Seventh-Day Adventist Church Manual, p. 51).

"That baptism is an ordinance of the Christian church, the proper form being by immersion, and should follow repentance and forgiveness of sins. By its observation faith is shown in the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ. (Rom. 6:1-6; Acts 16:31-33)" (Seventh-day Adventist Church Manual, issued by the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, 1971).

“When the sinner believes that Christ is his personal Savior, then, according to His unfailing promises, God pardons his sin, and justifies him freely.” (H.M.S. Richards, *Why I Am a Seventh-day Adventist* [Review and Herald Pub. Assoc., Washington, D.C., 1956] p. 57).

H.M.S. Richards lists five of Ellen G. White’s books and remarks, “Every single one of these books teaches the glorious and wonderful doctrine that our salvation depends upon the atoning work of the Lord Jesus Christ, that righteousness and justification are by faith alone” (ibid., p. 55).

2. List a passage in the right column which refutes the Church of the Nazarene’s false teaching about baptism and salvation in the left column

Church of the Nazarene teaches:

The Bible teaches:

“The Bible never defines how much water was applied or how. Therefore, the Church of the Nazarene considers immersion, sprinkling, and pouring all to be acceptable methods of baptism.” (Answers to Frequently Asked Questions <http://www.nazarene.org>)

“Baptism may be administered by sprinkling, pouring, or immersion, according to the choice of the applicant.” (Church of the Nazarene, *The Manual*)

“Nazarenes also understand baptism to be a symbol of the new relationship God establishes with His people. Because of this, some Nazarenes choose to have their young children baptized as a symbol of their intention to raise their children in God’s Church and their hope to see that their children choose God’s ways when they are older.” (Answers to Frequently Asked Questions <http://www.nazarene.org>)

“That the atonement through Jesus Christ is for the whole human race; and that whosoever repents and believes on the Lord Jesus Christ is justified and regenerated and saved from the dominion of sin.” ([http://www.nazarene.org/gensec/we\\_believe.html](http://www.nazarene.org/gensec/we_believe.html)).

"That believers are to be sanctified wholly - through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ." (Manual, 1956, 36).

“The Bible never defines how much water was applied or how. Therefore, the Church of the Nazarene considers immersion, sprinkling, and pouring all to be acceptable methods of baptism.” (Answers to Frequently Asked Questions <http://www.nazarene.org>)

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3. List some reasons why Mormon baptism is not Bible baptism.

**Application & Discussion:**

1. What factors need to be considered in one examining their baptism with what is taught in the Bible?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
2. What are the possibilities the someone could taught wrong about Bible baptism and end up being baptized with Bible baptism? Explain.

**Homework:** Find a friend and examine together their baptism in contrast with Bible Baptism.

# Arguments Against Bible Baptism

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## “The Thief on the Cross Was Not Baptized”

A preacher of a generation ago began a sermon entitled "The Most Popular Thief in this City". When trying to teach people that baptism is necessary for salvation they argue "What about the thief on the cross? He was not baptized; yet the Lord saved him. Since this is true, people today can be saved without being baptized?" Was the thief on the cross saved? Assuredly, yes! The question is not, "Was the thief on the cross saved" but, "Is the thief a New Testament example of gospel conversion?"

### The Thief May Have Been Baptized

John the Baptist could have baptized him (Mt. 3:5,6; Mk. 1:4,5). Jesus or rather His disciples could have baptized him (Jn. 4:1,2). If one is going to use the thief as his authority to prove that one can be saved without baptism, he must be able to prove that the thief at least had never been baptized. Since this cannot be proven, they can only assume such. Thus, their assumption is based upon assumption. Surely, one cannot assume his way into heaven.

### Christ Had Authority While on Earth to Forgive Sins

Several other examples exist where Christ forgave the sins of men and women prior to His death upon the cross. Based upon the faith of four friends of the palsied man, Jesus said, "*Son, your sins are forgiven you*" (Mark 2:5). He was not told to be baptized neither was he told to believe on Christ or to repent to be forgiven. The Pharisees accused Him of blasphemy (2: 9). Jesus then healed the man thus affirming that He had authority on earth to forgive sins (2:10). Next, a woman who was a notorious sinner came to Christ, and He also said to her "*Your sins are forgiven*" (Lk. 7:48-50). After Zaccheus, a publican, promised to return all that he had wrongfully extracted from taxpayers, Jesus remarked, "*Today salvation has come to this house...*" (Lk. 19:9). The rich young ruler came to Jesus inquiring how he could inherit eternal life. Jesus reminded him of the Ten Commandments. Informing Christ he had kept these from his youth, he wanted to know what else he lacked. Jesus replied, "*Sell all that you have and distribute to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow Me*" (Lk. 18:22). Now, why not tell everyone to sell all his goods and give to the poor in order to receive eternal life? Why not use the Rich Young Ruler instead of the Thief on the Cross as a proof text on being saved today? While being crucified by the Romans for the unbelieving mob of Jews, Christ cried, "*Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they do*" (Lk. 23:34).

While on earth Jesus could dispense salvation or goodness on anyone He chose upon any condition. The who and why were at His discretion. Note, among the various examples above there are various conditions and some were blessed unconditionally.

Consider the following illustration: Prior to a man's death, he may do with his property as he chooses, but after death, his goods are bestowed according to the terms of his will. The thief lived before the Will of Christ was probated. Thus, these events during His ministry on earth are not cases of Gospel conversions.

### One Truth Doesn't Nullify Another

Their effort to be saved like the thief in effect attempts to nullify all the other passages which clearly command baptism as essential to one's salvation. Does the Word of God contradict itself? If so, then that would make God a liar. Yet, God is not a liar though many men have and are promoting falsehoods (Rom. 3:4). The fact is, Jesus said "*He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved*" (Mk. 16:16).

## **He Was Not Required to Believe in the Resurrected Savior**

An essential aspect of the Gospel of Christ is the doctrine of the resurrection. Without it our faith would be in vain. No true Christian can be faithful to his Lord and not believe in His resurrection (1 Cor. 15:1-4). Those who believe they can be saved like the thief need to consider the three fundamental facts of the Gospel: 1) Christ died for our sins; 2) He was buried and 3) He rose again the third day. The thief had not heard any of the gospel because none of this had taken place yet.

Furthermore, how can anyone to really think they have the same faith the thief had? "He believed on the Lord at the time when even His staunchest disciples had forsaken Him and fled. He believed on Him and confessed Him as "Lord" while others were reviling Him. He believed while suffering torment, humiliation, and inevitable death. He confessed before Christ bitterest foes. He confessed Christ in the moment of Christ's deepest humiliation. Where in the history of the world was there ever a more daring exhibition of faith, or nobler confession made under more difficult circumstances than was his?" (J.B. Coffman, Commentary on Matthew). However, He could not of made the confession unto salvation for this had not been command of men at this time (Romans 10:9-10). His belief could not have been in the resurrected Christ since Christ had not even died (see Acts 19:1-9).

## **The Thief Wasn't Required to Be Baptized into Christ's Death Because Christ Had Not Died**

Although he could not have obeyed Christ's commandment to be baptized, you and I live on this side of the cross, thus Romans 6:3-6 is a commandment which we must obey: *"Or do you not know that as many of us as were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death? Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. For if we have been united together in the likeness of His death, certainly we also shall be in the likeness of His resurrection, knowing this, that our old man was crucified with Him, that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves of sin."*

So get your eyes off the thief and look upon the Man in the middle. Only He can save you.

## **The Thief Lived Under the Old Law Not Under the New**

The New Testament or Gospel is compared to a will in Hebrews 9:15-17. The requirements of an effective will are: 1) A Testator who must be of age and in right mind. Christ is that testator (Lk. 3:23). 2) A legacy, that is, something to bequeath. Christ has given us salvation (Jn. 10:10; 2 Cor. 8:9). 3) Heirs are the individuals who receive certain benefits of the estate. Christ wants the whole world to be the beneficiaries (Mt. 11:28; Tit. 2:11; Rev. 22:17). 4) Conditions are also important, however, a will may or may not be conditional. Recipients of salvation must be obedience to the gospel. 5) Witnesses are necessary. The Apostles of Christ serve this capacity (Lk. 24:33; Ac. 1:3,8,21, 22; 2:32; 26:16-18). 6) The death of the testator is a logical essential to the probation of a will (Jn. 19:30,33,34). 7) Executors, who at the death of he testator must administer the estate according to the terms of the will. This the Holy Spirit did through the apostles (Jn. 14:26; 16:13; Lk. 24:49). Forty days after his resurrection and just prior to his ascension (Ac. 1:3), Christ told His apostles what the conditions of pardon were in His Will (Mt. 28:18,19; Mk. 16:15,16; Lk. 24:46,47).

Prior to the death of Christ the Old Testament was in force. The one who made the testament was yet alive and was not yet bound by the terms of the testament. After He died, the testament was in effect. The Old Covenant was done away with at the cross (Heb. 7:12; Col. 2:14). Furthermore, once a covenant has been confirmed *"... no one annuls or adds to it"* (Gal. 3:15).

The Will of Christ is seen executed in the examples of conversion found in the book of Acts: Pentecostians (Ac. 2:36-39); Samaritans (Ac. 8:12,13); the Eunuch (Ac. 8:35-39); Saul of Tarsus (Ac. 9:6; 22:16); Cornelius (Ac. 10:47,48); Lydia (Ac. 16:11-15). Jailor (Ac. 16:31-34); and the conversion of the Corinthians (Ac. 18:8). The books of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John were written to produce faith in Christ. The book of Acts was written to answer the question, "What must I do to be saved?" Go then to the book of Acts, not the thief on the cross, for gospel examples of conversion. When you study these scriptures

notice the uniformity of requirements existed in the cases of conversions in the book of Acts, that is, in all cases baptism was essential to their salvation.

A Will or law cannot be retroactive. A court cannot condemn a person for not obeying a certain law before it came into existence. The American Constitution says, "*No...ex post facto law shall be passed*" (Art. I, Sec. 9). No "Ex Post Facto" law exists in Christ's Will.

In the secular field there are many laws applicable to us today that were not applicable to our ancestors. For example, there is Income Tax. It was legalized with the passing of the 16th Amendment to the Constitution in 1913. Today, you can't argue: "since my great-grandfather paid no income tax, I therefore do not have to pay any?" Or "George Washington and Abraham Lincoln did not pay this tax." Many of our ancestors didn't have to carry any driver's license or social security numbers. We cannot say we don't have to be baptized because the Law was changed.

Suppose that a man who has made his will meets a person who asks for one of his cars. Out of the kindness of his heart, he gives this person a car; for while he is yet living he can give whatever he wishes to whomsoever he wills. Later the man dies. The individual who received personal assistance from the man cannot now receive anything from the man's estate, unless he fulfills the conditions set forth in the will. Suppose he should go to the executor and say, "I demand something from the man's estate." "But," the executor would reply, "you do not meet the conditions for receiving anything from the estate." "He gave me something while he was living," argues the man. "Perhaps he did," answers the executor, "but we have his will now, and it is in effect."

In the *Ensign Fair* R. L. Kilpatrick used the counter argument which follows: "*First, to say that the thief did not live under N.T. law implies that salvation is by 'law,' which is not the case ...Secondly, it reverses the roles we normally assign to 'old law' and 'new law'; that is, we assign justice to the law of Moses and mercy to the law of Christ, which is correct (Jn. 1:17), but here it is reversed...*" (July, 1979). The New Law is referred to as "*the perfect law of liberty*" (Js. 1:25) "*which is able to save your souls*" (v. 21). Furthermore, God used the law "of Moses" as a "schoolmaster" to bring us unto Christ. But now that the faith (the law of Christ) is come, there is no longer a need for the "schoolmaster" (Law of Moses) (Gen. 3:23-27).

In no way can men be saved like the thief today. We are living on this side of the cross of Christ, and the thief lived on the other side of it.

Today, all men live under the gospel; he under the law. All sinners live under the great commission. The thief was dead and buried nearly two months before the Great Commission was given. We have commandments he never had, namely, to be baptized in the likeness of Christ's death, burial, and resurrection (Rom. 6:2-6). His salvation does not provide a pattern of salvation for us today, any more than it did for those under the Law of Moses. It was an exception to the rule, and not the rule itself. One might as well argue that Abraham, Moses, Joshua, David, etc. were not required to be baptized. Only if Christ or His Gospel pointed to these as examples for us to emulate would they have any bearing upon what we must do to be saved. The Gospel did point to Noah's salvation by water. Baptism is the antitype to his salvation. Water baptism is said to "*now save us*" (I Pet. 3:20,21). What those who appeal to the thief on the cross need to find is where anyone after the death of Christ was given salvation without baptism.

What if a man died and left a will that said, "He that believes in me, and is immersed in water, shall receive from my estate \$100,000". Would you comprehend what conditions you needed to fulfill to inherit the money. No one can receive that kind of money by merely immersing himself in water. Only by the good grace the testator will such a person receive the inheritance. Likewise, Christ has promised: "*He that believes and his baptized will be saved*" (Mark 16:16). Won't you avail yourself of the grace of God and meet the conditions of salvation today?

### Questions:

1. What is the basic argument baptism using the thief on the cross?

2. What evidence is there that the thief may have been baptized? Can anyone prove that he was not baptized prior to his death?
  
3. List several examples exist where Christ forgave the sins of men and women prior to His death upon the cross.
  
4. True False The Word of God never contradicts itself.
5. Could the thief have made the good confession unto salvation? Explain.
  
6. Could the thief have the same belief in Christ we are to have today? Explain.
  
7. Could the thief have been baptized according to Romans 6:3-5? Explain.
  
8. List the seven requirements of an effective will.
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
9. When did the Old Law go out of effect?
  
10. What had to happen before the New Testament could come in effect?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
11. What Bible examples should someone look to for how one needs to be saved today?



12. What is "ex post facto" law? How does it apply to this argument against baptism?

**Application & Discussion:**

1. List some Old Testament comparisons to salvation by way of baptism or immersion in water. Should these not carry more weight than the thief on the cross? Explain.

**Homework:** Meditate on how fortunate you are this week to live on this side of the cross and receive salvation by means of obedience to the Gospel.

## Arguments Against Bible Baptism

### “*Eis* Meanings Baptism is Because One Has Been Saved”

Jesse L. Sewell was born in 1818 and became a Baptist preacher. He started preaching the truth about Acts 2:38. He was convicted of heresy and was to be excluded from the Baptist Church. The moderator told him to write, “For teaching heresy.” Sewell would not, but he did write that he was being thrown out of the Baptist denomination for preaching “baptism for the remission of sins” according to Acts 2:38.

Just what is so threatening about Acts 2:38? It is only one verse out of many which record the first Gospel sermon. Peter shows that God approved of Jesus and His teachings by the many miracles Christ wrought. Yet, the Jews killed Him. God raised Him up from the dead and exalted Him to the right hand of His Throne. After Peter accused his audience of killing God’s Son, Jesus Christ, *“they were pricked in their hearts”* (Acts 2:37). These murderers wanted to know what they needed to do about their heinous guilt before God. *“Then Peter said to them, ‘Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit’”* (Acts 2:38, NKJV).

The conflict over this verse has to do with whether it really teaches baptism for the remission of sins or not. Many denominations teach that one is saved at the point of faith. The sinner is saved by faith only and then they are baptized “for (*eis*, Greek) the remission of sins.” *Eis* is pronounced “ace” or “ice.” According to some denominational preachers, Acts 2:38 could mean one is baptized for the purpose of salvation or “because your sins have been remitted.” For example, a man goes to prison “for” murder. What does “for” mean? Did he go to prison in order to commit murder or because he had already committed murder?

The New Testament was originally written in Koine or common Greek. The Greek words translated “for” are *eri*, *dia*, *gar* and *eis*. *Eis* is found 1600 times in the New Testament. The word *dia* means “because of” or “on account of”, but the word *eis* never means “because of.”

The only way most Bible students are going to be able to discern the meaning of *eis* is by use of Greek lexicons. A lexicon is a dictionary of ancient languages, such as, Koine Greek. How do lexiconographers define the word *eis*?

- “eis, a prep. Governing the accusative, and denoting entrance into, or direction, and limit: into, to, towards, for, among,...eis aphen hamartion, to obtain the forgiveness of sins, Ac. 2:38...” (Thayer, 183).
- “For forgiveness of sins, so that sins might be forgiven” (Arndt and Gingrich, 228).
- “Direction toward, motion to, on, or into” (Liddell and Scott).
- *Eis* - “stressing result rather than purpose, this word has the sense of ‘with a view to’ or ‘resulting in.’” (C.F.D. Moule, *An Idiom-Book of New Testament Greek*, 2d ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1960), p. 70)
- “...it implies motion into or towards” (Berry’s Lexicon, 31)
- Paul Southern: “The word expresses entrance, direction, limit. It means into, unto, to, upon, towards, for. In other words, it looks toward purpose, end, goal.”
- Edward Robinson: “Of an intent, purpose, aim, end...In the sense of unto, in order, to or for...eis aphen hamartion.”
- John Parkhurst: “eis - the final cause or purpose of anything...and is translated for...”
- “with a view to” (Young’s Analytical Concordance to the Bible, 362)
- “The purpose and end in view ...Acts 2:38...” (Winer’s N.T. Grammar, p. 398)

According to these lexiconographers, *eis* points forward not backward. Baptism is *eis* (for) the remission of sins. Salvation is after baptism, not before baptism. Many scholars of the Greek New Testament concur with this definition of the word *eis*.

- H.B. Hacket, D.D., Commentary on the Acts of the Apostles: “unto the remission of your sins.”
- Southern Baptist Theological Seminary defined *eis* in a letter: “unto remission of your sins.”
- University of Chicago Divinity School, Allen Wikgren: “for (lit. “to”) the forgiveness (or “remission”) of your sins.”
- D.A. Penick, Prof. of Classical Language, Univ. of Texas: “Normally ‘eis’ looks forward and I know of no case in the New Testament where it looks back.”
- Johann F. Lange, German Lutheran, “...the former (aphesin) namely, is indicated by the word *eis* (for the remission, etc.) As the immediate purpose of baptism, and as the promise unseparably connected with it...” (Comm. On Act, 53).
- “Its original meaning (basic meaning) is ‘motion into’; its derived meaning (in quite general use in all Greek from Homer and N.T.) is ‘for purpose of.’ Hence *Eis* apheresin in Acts 2:38; means for (the purpose of) remission (forgiveness)” (George J. Bryan, College of William and Mary).
- “...because *eis* denotes purpose and not cause...in Greek you would use the preposition *dia*” (Henry V. Shelly, Univ. of Washington and Lee).
- “...*eis* expresses either the purpose or the result...Therefore the noun after *eis* expresses a state or an act that cannot be earlier than the time of the verb’s action and usually is future to it” (Kendrick Grobel, Prof. of Biblical Theology, Vanderbilt Univ.).
- “The truth will never suffer by giving the ‘eis’ its true significance. When the Campbellites translate ‘in order to’ in Acts 2:38, they translate correctly. We conclude without hesitation in accordance with such authorities as Hackett, Winer, Meyer that the proper rendering of ‘eis’ for the remission of sins in Acts 2:38 as in Matthew 26:28 is ‘unto,’ ‘for,’ that is ‘in order to.’ If it ever means ‘with reference to’ in a sense of a retrospective and commemorative reference to a past event, we have failed to find an example” (J.W. Wilmarth, Baptist Quarterly, July 1887).

Not a single one of these scholars, even among the Baptists, are willing to define the Greek word *eis* to mean “because of.”

The good news is that you do not need to know Greek or have access to all of these scholars or lexicons to know how *eis* is used in the New Testament. If we look at how *eis* is used in other passages, we gain a clear understanding that it looked forward and involves purpose. For example, Matthew 26:28 reads, *“For this is My blood of the new covenant, which is shed for many for (eis) the remission of sins.”* Without the shedding of blood, there can be no remission (Heb. 9:22). Christ did not shed His blood because the remission of sins had already been provided, but so that after His Death sins could be remitted. In like manner, Acts 2:38 teaches that without repentance and baptism there is no remission of sins, because they are for the remission of sins. Look at these other passages to see if it would make sense to substitute “because of” or “in order that” in the place of *eis*. In the following passages, does *eis* point to the future or to the past?

- Acts 3:19 - *“Repent therefore and be converted, that (eis) your sins may be blotted out,”*
- Rom. 10:9,10 - *“For with the heart one believes to (eis) righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made to (eis) salvation.”*
- Heb. 10:39 - *“Faith unto (eis) the saving of the soul”*
- Acts 10:43 - *“whoever believes in (eis) Him will receive remission of sins.”*
- Acts 2:22 - *“Jesus. A man approved among (eis) you...”*

What about the many English translations? Did any of the translators believe that the Greek word *eis* translated “for” should be rendered “because of”? You should take a look for yourself.

- ▶ Today’s English: “so that your sins will be forgiven”

- ▶ Simple English: “so that your sins may be forgiven”
- ▶ King James: “for the remission of sins”
- ▶ Goodspeed: “in order to have your sins forgiven”
- ▶ Young’s: “to remission of sins”
- ▶ New King James: “for the remission of sins”
- ▶ International Standard: “for the forgiveness of your sins”
- ▶ New International Standard: “for the forgiveness of your sins”
- ▶ Tyndale (1534): “for the remission of synnes”
- ▶ Bishops’ Bible (1568,1602): “for the remission of sinnes”
- ▶ Rheims (1582): “for remission of your sinnes”
- ▶ Douay (Catholic): “for the remission of your sins”
- ▶ English Revised (1881): “unto the remission of your sins”
- ▶ American Standard (1901): “unto the remission of your sins”.
- ▶ New American Standard: “for the forgiveness of sins”
- ▶ Phillips: “so that you may have your sins forgiven”
- ▶ New English Bible: “for the forgiveness of your sins”
- ▶ Challoner Rheims (Catholic): “for the forgiveness of your sins.”
- ▶ Knox (Catholic, 1945): “to have your sins forgiven”
- ▶ American Bible Union Version (Baptist): “unto the remission of your sins”
- ▶ Centenary Translation (Baptist): “for the remission of sins”
- ▶ Modern Speech: “with a view to the remission of your sins”
- ▶ Geneva Bible (1557): “for the remission of synnes”
- ▶ Braid Sctos: “for the pittenawa 0’ yere sins.”
- ▶ C. B. Williams: “that your sins may be forgiven”
- ▶ Authentic (Schonfield): “for the forgiveness of your sins”
- ▶ Contemporary English (1995): “so that your sins will be forgiven”
- ▶ Amplified New Testament: “for the forgiveness of and release from your sins”
- ▶ New World Translation (JW): “for forgiveness of your sins”
- ▶ Haweis (1795): “for the remiffion of fins”
- ▶ Ferrar Fenton: “for a release from your sins”
- ▶ New English (1961): “for the forgiveness of your sins”
- ▶ Basic English: “for the forgiveness of your sins”
- ▶ Revised Standard (1946-1951): “for the remission of your sins”
- ▶ Emphasized: “into the remission of your sins”
- ▶ Modern English: “for a release of your sins”
- ▶ H. B. Montgomery (1924): “for the remission of your sins”
- ▶ Wesley’s Translation: “for the remission of sins”
- ▶ Moffatt: “for the remission of sins”
- ▶ 20th Century: “for the forgiveness of your sins”
- ▶ Living Oracles: “in order to the remission of sins”
- ▶ Syriac Version: “for the remission of sins”
- ▶ Moulton: “unto the remission of your sins”
- ▶ McKnight: “in order to the remission of sins”
- ▶ Weymouth: “for remission of sins”
- ▶ Rotherham: “unto the remission of sins”
- ▶ Darby’s: “for remission of sins”
- ▶ Webster: “for the remission of sins”
- ▶ Anderson: “in order to the remission of your sins”
- ▶ International English: “so that your sins may be forgiven”
- ▶ Today’s English: “so that your sins will be forgiven”
- ▶ German Translation: “(for, unto) order to the forgiveness of sins”
- ▶ Italian Translation: “into the remission of sins”

- ▶ Spanish Translation: “for the purpose of the remission of your sins”
- ▶ French Translation: “in order to obtain the remission of your sins”
- ▶ Indian Translation: “in order to the forgiveness of sins”
- ▶ First German Bible: “for (in order to, unto) the forgiveness of sins”
- ▶ Emphatic Diaglotte: “for the forgiveness of sins”
- ▶ Wycliffe (1308): “in to the remission of youre synnes”
- ▶ Berry Interlinear: “for remission of sins”

These sixty translations bear overwhelming witness from translators that baptism of penitent believers is to be for the purpose of remission of their sins. One must repent and be baptized in order to have remission of sins or salvation.

Long before there ever was even a need for any of these English translations, early Christians read Acts 2:38 from the Koine Greek. How did they view baptism? Did they teach that a sinner was baptized in order to have salvation or did a saved man get baptized because he was already saved. Read what they wrote about it centuries ago.

- ▶ JUSTIN MARTYR wrote about ninety years after Matthew wrote his gospel: "this food we call eucharist, of which none are allowed to be partakers but such only as are true believers, and have been baptized in the laver of regeneration for the remission of sins" (Orchard's History, Vol. I, p. 241).
- ▶ THEOPHILUS: “The things proceeding from the waters were blessed by God, that this also could be a sign of men being destined to receive repentance and remission of sins, through the water and bath of regeneration-as many as come to the truth and are born again” (c. 180); (Ante-Nicene Fathers, 2.101).
- ▶ IRENAEUS (C. 180): “When we come to refute them [the Gnostics], we will show in its proper place that this class of men have been instigated by Satan to a denial of baptism which is regeneration to God. Thus, they have renounced the whole faith...For the baptism instituted by the visible Jesus was for the remission of sins” (1.346).
- ▶ MARTYR (110-165 AD): "there is no other way [to obtain God's promises] than this to become acquainted with Christ, to be washed in the fountain spoken of by Isaiah for the remission of sins, and for the remainder, to live sinless lives." (Justin Martyr, Trypho chap. 44)
- ▶ CYRIL (345 AD): "'Repent,' saith he, 'and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.' O unspeakable loving-kindness of God! They have no hope of being saved, and yet they are thought worthy of the Holy Ghost. Thou seest the power of Baptism!" [Acts 2:38] (Cyril of Jerusalem, 348AD, "On Baptism," Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, vol. 7, pg. 16).
- ▶ CLEMENT (150-200 AD): "... lest haply they might suppose that on the cessation of sacrifice there was no remission of sins for them He instituted baptism by water amongst them, in which they might be absolved from all their sins on the invocation of His name" (Clement, "Recognitions of Clement," Ante-Nicene Fathers, vol. 8, pg. 88).
- ▶ HERMAS (200 AD): "And I said, 'I heard, sir, some teachers maintain that there is no other repentance than that which takes place, when we descended into the water and received remission of our former sin.' He said to me, 'That was sound doctrine which you heard; for that is really the case'" (Hermas, "The Shepherd," Ante-Nicene Fathers, vol. 2, pg. 22).
- ▶ CYPRIAN (C. 250): “In the baptism of water, there is received the remission of sins” (5.497).
- ▶ “If he was not baptized, neither are any of us baptized. Yet, if there is no baptism, neither will there be any remission of sins. Father every man will die in his own sins.” (Disputation of Archelaus and Manes (c. 320); (6.228).
- ▶ FIRMIAN: "But indeed you are worse than all heretics..... although they confess that they are in sins, and have no grace, and therefore come to the Church, you take away from them remission of sins, which is given in baptism, by saying that they are already baptized and have obtained the grace of the Church outside the Church, and you do not perceive that their souls will be required at your hands when the day of judgment shall come" (Firmilian, "The Epistles of Cyprian," Ante-Nicene Fathers, vol. 5, pg. 396).

On the day of Pentecost, the Jews were commanded by Peter to “*repent and be baptized for the*

*remission of sins.*” Some argue that they were to be baptized, because they were already saved. So far, we have seen evidence from lexiconographers, scholars of the Greek New Testament, sixty different translations, and the writings of the early Christians that baptism was in order to procure remission of sins.

Those who propose that *eis* meant “because of” recognize a problem with applying it to the word “repent.” They hold that one must repent and believe in order to obtain remission of sins and then be baptized because they have been saved. So they point out that Acts 2:38 agrees with their teaching because of the difference in number and person in reference to the verbs: repent and be baptized. The text literally says they were to repent (you all) and be baptized (each one). Since the words “repent” and “be baptized” are different in both person and number in the original text, it is contended that the phrase “for the remission of sins” cannot refer to both of these verbs. Further, it is believed that since “remission of sins” is plural than it must only agree with “repent” (you all) and not with “be baptized.” Therefore, they would prefer to translate Acts 2:38 as follows: “Repent ye unto the remission of your sins and let each one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ.”

Again, we must ask if translators agree with this? We can find no such translation of Acts 2:38. Well then, what do the scholars of New Testament Greek think of this rendering of Acts 2:38?

- Thayer (192): points out that it is common for “hekastos” to be used with plurals of all types (Acts 2:8; 3:26; Rev. 2:38; 20:13).
- Bruce M. Metzger was the editor of the Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament. He wrote, “In reply to your recent inquiry may I say that, in my view, the phrase ‘eis aphasin hamartion’ in Acts 2:38 applies in sense to both of the preceding verbs.”
- F.W. Gingrich, professor of New Testament Greek at Albright College, wrote, “The difference in person and number of ‘repent’ and ‘be baptized’ is caused by the fact that ‘repent’ is a direct address in the second person plural, while ‘be baptized’ is governed by the subject ‘every one of you,’ and so in third person singular. ‘Every one of you’ is, of course, a collective noun.”
- Arthur L. Farstad, chairman of the New King James Executive Review Committee and general editor of the NKJV New Testament, has stated, “Since the expression ‘eis aphasin hamartion’ is a prepositional phrase with no verbal endings or singular or plural endings I certainly agree that grammatically it can go with both repentance and baptism. In fact, I would think that it does go with both of them.”
- John R. Werner is the International Consultant in Translation to the Wycliffe Bible Translators. He wrote, “Whenever two verbs are connected by ‘kai’ ‘and’ and then followed by a modifier (such as a prepositional phrase, as in Acts 2:38), it is grammatically possible that modifier modifies either both the verbs, or only the latter one. This is because there is no punctuation in the manuscripts, so we don’t know whether the author intended to pause between the first verb and the ‘and’. “It does not matter that, here in Acts 2:38, one of the verbs is second-person plural (“y’all”) and the other is third person singular (“is to”). They are both imperative, and the fact that they are joined by ‘kai’ ‘and’ is sufficient evidence that the author may have regarded them as a single unit to which his modifier applied”.
- Translator’s Handbook on the Acts of the Apostles: “So that your sins will be forgiven (literally ‘into a forgiveness of your sins’) in the Greek may express either purpose or result; but the large majority of translators understand it as indicating purpose. The phrase modifies both main verbs: turn away from your sins and be baptized.”
- “IN ORDER TO THE FORGIVENESS OF SINS (Matt. 26:28; Luke 3:3) we connect naturally with both the preceding verbs. This clause states the motive or object which should induce them to repent and be baptized. It forces the entire exhortation, not one part of it to the exclusion of the other.” (H.B. Hackett, D.D., Commentary on the Acts of the Apostles, p. 53).
- Simon J. Kistemaker: “In Greek, the imperative verb repent is in the plural; Peter addresses all the people whose consciences drive them to repentance. But the very be baptized is in the singular to stress the individual nature of baptism.” (105).
- Robert Halley: “The signification of ‘eis’ must correspond in its relation to both words, ‘repent’ and ‘be baptized.’...If it be, ‘repent for the remission of sins,’ it must also be, ‘be baptized for the

remission of sins.”

- D.A. Penick: “Metanoesate - repent ye. The writer then wishes to be more emphatic, so he says ‘hekastos baptistheto’ - let each one of you be baptized. This distribution of the plural subject and predicate by the use of ‘hekastos’ an a third person singular is quite common in all Greek and is frequently used in the New Testament.”
- McGarvey: “Repent ye, (collectively) and be baptized (individually) every one of you” makes it the more forceful...A contractor hires carpenters to build a house and says: ‘All of you come, and let each of you bring his tools.’ ‘All’ in the sentence is the same as ‘EACH OF YOU’, yet ‘ALL’ is plural and ‘each one’ is singular, but despite the number, refers to the same” (Comm. On Acts).

After weighing the evidence, how could one continue to doubt that baptism is necessary to put one into salvation? Pendleton sums things up well when he wrote, “This little word EIS, is a strange word, indeed, if what they say of it is true. It will take a man INTO a country, INTO a city, INTO a ship, INTO heaven, INTO hell - INTO any place in the universe, except the water! Poor word! Afflicted, it seems, with hydrophobia” (3 Reasons, 121). So, according to Acts 2:38, the sinner must both repent and be baptized if his sins are going to be remitted or forgiven.

### Questions:

1. What is the context of Acts 2:38?
2. What do some denominations believe the Greek word *eis* in Acts 2:38 means?
3. What do most New Testament Christians believe *eis* means in Acts 2:38?
4. True False The word *dia* means “because of” or “on account of”, but the word *eis* never means “because of.”
5. What is a Greek lexicon?
6. True False Most lexiconographers believe *eis* means "because of"?
7. True False Many Bible scholars believe one is baptized in order to have salvation not because of already being saved.
8. Read Matthew 26:28: "*For this is My blood of the new covenant, which is shed for many for (eis) the remission of sins.*" What would be the consequences of translating *eis* "because of" in this passage?

9. Does Romans 10:9-10 teach that with one's heart he believes because of his righteousness and with one's mouth confession is made because of one's salvation? Explain.
10. Of the sixty translations listed give the number of those which translate *eis* in Acts 2:38: "because of".
11. Why would the writings of early Christians writers about Acts 2:38 be helpful in dealing with this argument over *eis* in Acts 2:38?
12. Can Acts 2:38 be translated: "Repent ye unto the remission of your sins and let each one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ"? Explain.

**Application & Discussion:**

1. Go online and find a translation of the Acts 2:38 which translates *eis* "because of". Share your findings with the class. Does this prove that *eis* can mean "because of" in Acts 2:38? Explain.
2. If one is baptized because they are saved in Acts 2:38 would that change the meaning Acts 22:16 and Mark 16:16 or 1 Peter 3:21? Explain.

**Homework:** Go online and check the Greek lexicons available for Bible Study.



## Arguments Against Bible Baptism

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### “Paul Was Not Sent to Baptize According to 1 Corinthians 1:17”

Paul’s comments to the Corinthians: *“For Christ did not send me to baptize, but to preach the gospel, not with wisdom of words, lest the cross of Christ should be made of no effect”* (1 Cor. 1:17).

Some have understood this passage to teach that Paul was not sent to baptize, thus baptism is not important to salvation. Others go so far as to use this verse to teach that baptism is not even part of preaching the Gospel. “Paul in fact drew a clear distinction between the preaching of the gospel and baptism when he said, ‘For Christ sent me not to baptize, but to preach the gospel...’ 1 Cor. 1:17” (Water Baptism and Salvation: A Response to the Teaching of the Church of Christ, Keith Johnson).

Before we investigate what Paul is trying to say in this passage, let us first observe what this verse of Scripture does not say. It does not say that Paul did not baptize. It does not say that Paul did not preach the essentiality of baptism to salvation. It does not say that Paul did not baptize lest some should think baptism was essential to salvation. It does not say the baptism is not part of the Gospel. It does not say that baptism is not essential to salvation.

Surely, Paul did baptize others. At Philippi, he baptized both the household of Lydia (Acts 16:14,15) and the household of the Jailer (30-34). He baptized about twelve men in Ephesus who only knew of the baptism of John (Acts 19:1f). In Acts 18:8, we find that some of the Corinthians were baptized (18:8). In fact, within the very context of the verse under investigation, Paul admits to having baptized Crispus, Gaius, and the household of Stephanas (1 Cor. 1:14,16). Concerning this passage Alford wrote: “It is evident that this is said in no derogation of baptism, for he did on occasion baptize...” (Greek Test., vol. 2, 478).

Furthermore, throughout his various epistles, Paul wrote about the importance of baptism in relation to salvation. Later, in his first letter to the Corinthians, he showed they were all baptized into one body (1 Cor. 12:13). In his letter to the Romans, baptism is shown to be necessary to be buried with Christ and to arise out of the water to walk in newness of life (Rom. 6:2-5; 17,18). He wrote to the Ephesians about the one baptism that could sanctify and cleanse with the washing of the water (Eph. 4:4-6; 5:26). To the churches of Galatia, Paul wrote, *“For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ”* (Gal. 3:27). He reminded the church at Colossae that they were *“buried with Him in baptism, in which you also were raised with Him through faith in the working of God, who raised Him from the dead”* (Col. 2:12). Without question, Paul believed that baptism was part of preaching the Gospel.

In fact, Paul himself was baptized so that his sins could be washed away (Acts 22:16; 9:12). This was done at the direction of Ananias who was sent to Paul by the Lord Himself to tell Paul what he must do.

The immediate context of 1 Corinthians chapter one and verse seventeen shows the importance of baptism. The church at Corinth had several problems. The one being dealt with by Paul in this section is divisiveness. The brethren were dividing up over the preacher who had baptized them (v. 12). For this cause he thanked God that few were baptized of him, and not that a few were baptized (v. 15). “Baptism was such an important thing in the view of the early Christians that Paul congratulated himself in having baptized so few at Corinth, lest some should say that he ‘baptized in his own name’ - lest the faith and reverence due to Christ might be ‘divided’ - and a part be transferred to the distinguished administrator. How could this have been, if baptism had been a mere symbol of no vital consequence?” (J. W. Wilmarth, “Baptism and Remission,” Baptist Quarterly, July, 1877, pp. 312,313).

Here we find the very roots of denominational thinking by early Christians. They were actually calling themselves disciples of those who had baptized them in water. Paul informs them of three prerequisites in order for one to call himself after another religiously (13). He asks three rhetorical

questions: Is Christ divided? Was Paul crucified for you? Were you baptized in the name of Paul? The answers to the questions are obviously “no,” “no,” and “no.” This proves they should only call themselves after Christ in whose name they were baptized. It also shows that baptism is just as necessary to the putting on the name of Christ as Christ’s crucifixion.

Part of the confusion over this verse comes from Paul’s use of an ellipsis. An ellipsis is a figure of speech where certain words which are not directly expressed are to be understood. Commonly an ellipsis comes as with a “not ...but” construction. “Christ sent me not to baptize (only), but (also) to preach the gospel.” Below are several examples of other ellipsis in the New Testament.

- John 6:27 - *“Do not (only) labor for the food which perishes, but (also) for the food which endures to everlasting life, which the Son of Man will give you, because God the Father has set His seal on Him.”*
- John 12:44 - *“He that believes on men, believes not on me (only), but (also) on him that sent me.”*
- 1 Tim. 5:23 - *“Drink no longer water, but use a little wine for thy stomach’s sake and thine often infirmities”* (KJV). Compare it to the New King James Version: *“No longer drink only water, but use a little wine for your stomach’s sake and your frequent infirmities.”*
- Matthew 10:34 - *“Do not think that I came to bring peace on earth (only). I did not come to bring peace but (also) a sword.”*
- 1 Peter 3:3, 4a - *“Do not let your beauty be that outward adorning of arranging the hair, of wearing gold, or of putting on fine apparel (only); but (also) let it be the hidden person of the heart,”*

In the last example, no one thinks that Peter is forbidding women from putting on apparel. Godly wives are not to go around naked. In each of these examples it is apparent that a complete rejection of the first component is not the point but rather its de-emphasis in comparison with the component introduced by the word “but.” The “hidden person of the heart” is emphasized as more important than “putting on fine apparel.” So, in our text Paul is saying the preaching is more important than baptism because anyone could baptize, but not everyone could preach the Word of God.

Is Paul really trying to teach that baptism is not part of the Gospel? Better yet, let us ask another question: Can one preach the Gospel without preaching baptism? Can one preach about salvation through Jesus and not preach baptism? Consider the conversion of the Ethiopian eunuch in Acts 8. He was reading from Isaiah 53. Not understanding of whom the prophet spoke, the Ethiopian invited Philip into his chariot to explain. Philip preached to him Jesus out of Isaiah 53. Down the road the Ethiopian wanted to be baptized. How did he know about baptism? Isaiah 53 does not mention baptism. Philip must have preached baptism when he preached about the Good News of Jesus. This is exactly what happened when Philip preached the name of Jesus Christ to the Samaritans. *“But when they believed Philip as he preached the things concerning the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, both men and women were baptized”* (Acts 8:12).

Could Jesus’ apostles preach the Gospel without preaching baptism? During the Great Commission, Christ commanded His apostles to, *“Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned”* (Mark 16:15,16).

In fact, part of believing the Gospel includes being baptized. *“Then Crispus, the ruler of the synagogue, believed on the Lord with all his household. And many of the Corinthians, hearing, believed and were baptized”* (Acts 18:8). Later, Paul would write: *“I thank God that I baptized none of you except Crispus and Gaius”* (1 Cor. 1:14).

So, why did Paul emphasize the preaching of the cross instead of baptizing people? The contrast Paul is making is between preaching and baptizing. Consider the following syllogism:

Incorrect syllogism:

Major premise: Christ sent me not to baptize.

Minor premise: Christ did send me to preach the Gospel.

Conclusion: Therefore, baptism is not a part of the Gospel.

Corrected syllogism:

Major premise - Christ sent me not to baptize.

Minor Premise - Christ did send me to preach the Gospel.

Conclusion - Therefore, to baptize is not part of being sent to preach the Gospel.

At first, one might argue that these two syllogisms are the same. However, the incorrect syllogism introduces the word "baptism" in the conclusion. This word does not appear in the major or minor premises. Paul is speaking of "baptizing," not "baptism." The word which should be used in the conclusion is baptize (verb) rather than baptism (noun). After all, the word for "preach" is the Greek verb *euanggleizo*. The contrast is not between baptism and the Gospel. The contrast is between the act of baptizing someone and the act of preaching the Gospel. Baptizing is not part of the act of preaching the Gospel. We all know this to be a fact. The Gospel can be preached week after week without anyone being baptized.

It is baptism that is essential to one's salvation, not baptizing. In other words, it is the reception, not the administration, of baptism that is essential to one's salvation. One must be baptized to be saved. One does not have to baptize another in order to be saved or to preach the Gospel. As an apostle, Paul's purpose was to go out and preach the Gospel. Whether Paul baptized or had Timothy do all the baptisms was of no consequences to his commission as an apostle. Who administers baptism is of no consequence to one's salvation just so long as they are baptized. Paul is defending his work as an apostle which is to preach the Gospel. He is not degrading the purpose of baptism. Christ made Paul an apostle to preach the Gospel. Christ did not have to make him an apostle, so he could administer baptism. The context addresses the purpose of Paul's apostleship; it says nothing as to the purpose of baptism.

Even the word "*sent*" demonstrates Paul's apostolic commission. "*Sent*" is from the Greek word *apesteilen*, a cognate of the Greek word for "apostle" (*apostolos*). It means an official is sent in an authoritative capacity. Conybeare and Howson interpret the verse to mean, "For Christ sent me forth as His apostle" (The Life and Epistles of St. Paul, 383). Paul was sent out as an apostle not so he could baptize, but so he could preach the Gospel (Ac. 9:15,16; 22:14,15; 26:16-20). Just as in Acts 6:1f, the apostles were not sent out to serve tables to widows but to pray and preach. This does not mean that widows in the church must be neglected, but that others can do that while apostles preach the Gospel. Likewise, it is not necessary to be an apostle to baptize.

Barnes wrote: "That is, 'not to baptize as my main business.' Baptism was not his principal employment, though he had a commission in common with others to administer the ordinance, and occasionally did it." In fact, Paul was commanded to baptize people as are all those who obey the great commission (Mt. 28:18,19). If Christ did not send Paul to baptize, Christ repudiated his great commission. If Christ did not send Paul to baptize, Paul disobeyed Christ, for he did baptize. If Christ did send Paul to baptize, Paul was unfaithful, if he did not. In 2 Timothy 4:7 Paul said that he "*kept the faith*." It was not necessary for Jesus to appear to Paul on the road to Damascus to make a baptizer of him. Anybody could administer baptism. Jesus appeared to him so he could be an apostle. At that time the Gospel could not be preached by just anyone, but just anybody could baptize. Jimmy Allen explained this well when he wrote: "I have preached in meetings with more than 200 baptisms without once getting into the water. The brethren called me to preach rather than to baptize. However, in every sermon, I urged the unsaved to be baptized" (Commentary on 1 Corinthians 31).

Yes, baptism is a part of the Gospel message. Paul was baptized when the Gospel was preached to him. He baptized others after they heard the Gospel message preached. He wrote about the importance of baptism in the Gospel message on many occasions. Nowhere did he teach that baptism was not part of preaching the Gospel. If you have not been baptized you have not obeyed the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Unlike Paul your sins have not been washed away.

### Questions:

1. How do some interpret the meaning of 1 Corinthians 1:17 in regard to the purpose or necessity of baptism for salvation?

2. List those whom the Bible teaches were baptized by Paul.
  
3. List the passage where Paul wrote about the importance of baptism?
  
4. Why was Paul baptized by Ananias in Acts 22:16?
  
5. Why did Paul point out that he baptized so few of them at Corinth?
  
6. Paul informs them of three prerequisites in order for one to call himself after another religiously. What are they?
  
7. Supply the ellipsis in 1 Cor. 1:17: *"Christ sent me not to baptize \_\_\_\_\_, but \_\_\_\_\_ to preach the gospel."*
  
8. Supply the ellipsis in John 6:27 - *"Do not \_\_\_\_\_ labor for the food which perishes, but \_\_\_\_\_ for the food which endures to everlasting life..."*
  
9. What would be the literal meaning of 1 Peter 3:3, 4a if an ellipsis is not applied?
  
10. True False In 1 Corinthians 1:17 Paul is saying that preaching is more important than baptism, because anyone could baptize, but not everyone could preach the Word of God.
  
11. Can one preach the Gospel plan of salvation without preaching baptism? Explain.
  
12. In Acts 8 how did the Samaritans and the Ethiopian know about the need to be baptized?

13. Could a preacher proclaim the Gospel without baptizing someone? Explain.

14. What is interesting about the word "*sent*" in our text?

15. Why was Paul sent forth as an apostle?

**Application & Discussion:**

1. Must one be baptized by a faithful preacher or Christian in order for their baptism to be valid? Explain.

2. How much Bible knowledge and preaching experience does someone have to have in order to perform a baptism?

**Homework:** Compare the number of people you have baptized with the number of people you have helped to teach the Gospel.

# Arguments Against Bible Baptism

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## “Baptism is a Work”

Humanists may argue that no god exists to save us, so man must save himself. Yet, there is a God and salvation from sin can only be achieved by one of three ways. First, live a sinless life, so there is never a need to be saved. In this sense salvation would not require Christ to be one's Savior or would it necessitate grace. However, *“all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God”* (Romans 3:23). All men sin. *“The wages of sin is death”* therefore man needs *“the gift of God”* which is *“eternal life”* (Romans 6:23). Second, the sinner can attempt to earn salvation. Islam teaches one can earn salvation from Allah by accumulating more good deeds in life to out-weigh the bad deeds one has committed. However, Paul told the Ephesian saints that it is by *“grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast”* (Eph. 2:8,9). The third manner is to be given salvation. This gift can come with or without conditions. Universalism teaches all men will be saved without any conditions. However, Jesus said, *“enter by the narrow gate; for wide is the gate and broad is the way that leads to destruction, and there are many who go in by it”* (Matthew 7:13,14). The Bible teaches there is a condition which involves man's faith in Jesus Christ as the Son of God. *“Jesus said, “therefore I said to you that you will die in your sins; for if you do not believe that I am He, you will die in your sins”* (John 8:24).

Many denominations teach that faith is the only condition for man to receive salvation. The doctrine of "justification by faith only" is the offspring of the famous German reformer, Martin Luther. Luther was so controlled by this idea that he took the liberty of adding the word *allein* (German for "alone") to the word "faith" in Romans 3:28: *“Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by(allein, alone) faith apart from the deeds of the law.”* No German translator would agree with Luther. Most Protestant denominations agree with his teachings on faith only. The Methodist Discipline states: "Wherefore, that we are justified by faith only is a most wholesome doctrine and very full of comfort" (Article IX, "Of the Justification of Man"). The Jehovah's Witnesses teach: "The only ground of salvation mentioned in the Scriptures is faith in Christ as our Redeemer and Lord. 'By grace are ye saved through faith.'" (Vol. 1, p. 100). In the Church of the Nazarene creed we read: "that believers are to be sanctified wholly - through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ" (Manual, 1956, 36). The Episcopal church believes: "Wherefore that we are justified by faith only is a most wholesome doctrine and very full of comfort" (Article 2 of Episcopal Articles of Religion). Finally, the Baptist denomination claims: "All you have to do is believe and he will save you: also, 'Justification, the pardon of sin, and the promise of eternal life - are solely through faith" (Church manual for Baptist Churches, J. M. Pendleton, p. 48).

However, these same denominations will also claim that one is saved by grace only. The Baptists: "We believe the Scriptures teach that salvation of sinners is wholly of grace" (The Standard Manual for Baptist Churches - Articles of Faith, item 4). The Presbyterians: "...their justification is only of free grace: that both the exact justice and rich grace of God might be glorified in the justification of sinners" (The Confession of Faith - Presbyterian Church - Chapter 13, Para. 3). Although the Lutheran church claims salvation by faith only, their "Lutheran theologians, on the other hand, insisted that salvation is wholly a free gift of God's grace" (What Lutherans Believe, Warburg Press, Chapter 9).

Much of the confusion over salvation has to do with an apparent contradiction. Passages like Ephesians 2:8-9, John 3:16, and 2 Timothy 1:6 appear to teach salvation by faith only. On the other hand James 2 states that we are saved by works and faith: *“by works a man is justified and not by faith only”* (James 2:24). Is this a real contradiction or is there some other solution to the problem?

The Bible does not contradict itself. Man just fails to make the distinction between the works of man and the works of God. James 2:24 shows three doctrines to be false: grace only, faith only, and works

only. There are many different types of works listed in the Bible. The Bible mentions the works of the Pharisees (Matt. 23:3); the works of Satan (Jn. 8:41,42); the works of darkness (Rom. 13:12); the works of the flesh, Gal. 5:19-21); the works of ungodliness (Jude 15); and the works of the Law of Moses also called "works of the law" (Rom. 3:28). Paul wrote, "*knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law but by faith in Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Christ Jesus, that we might be justified by faith in Christ and not by the works of the law; for by the works of the law no flesh shall be justified*" (Galatians 2:16). The Hebrew writer says, "*for it is not possible that the blood of bulls and goats could take away sins*" (Hebrews 10:4). The other works which cannot save are works of personal merit. "*Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us, through the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit*" (Titus 3:5). Works of righteousness "which we have done" cannot save. None of these types of works having anything to do with salvation from sin.

In contrast, there are works of God, works of righteousness, and "work of faith" (1 Thess. 1:3). When God sent Peter to preach salvation to Cornelius the apostle said, "*in truth I perceive that God shows no partiality. But in every nation whoever fears Him and works righteousness is accepted by Him*" (Acts 10:34,35). Who does God accept? The sinner who does two things: fears God and works righteousness. Obedience is important for salvation. "*For not the hearers of the law are just in the sight of God, but the doers of the law will be justified*" (Romans 2:13)

What about the apparent contradiction in Ephesians 2:8,9: "*For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast.*" What is the "gift of God"? It is not grace. The word "grace" means "unmerited favor," it is a free gift so Paul would be saying a "free gift is a gift of God." This gift of God is not faith. However commentator John MacArthur wrote,

Faith is presented as a gift from God in 2 Peter 1:1... When we accept the finished work of God on our behalf, we act by the faith supplied by God's grace. That is the supreme act of human faith, the acts which, though it is ours, is primarily God's-His gift to us out of His grace. When a person chokes or drowns and stops breathing, there is nothing he can do. If he ever breathes again it will be because someone else starts him breathing. A person who is spiritually dead cannot even make a decision of faith unless God first breathes into him the breath of spiritual life. Faith is simply breathing the breath that God's grace supplies. Yet, the paradox is that we must exercise it and bear the responsibility if we do not (cf. John 5:40). (Ephesians, 60-61).

Yet the Greek grammar will not support the idea that Paul is saying faith is the gift of God by grace. "Faith" is feminine, while "that" is neuter. Bible faith is the human response to divine testimony. "*So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God*" (Romans 10:17). "*It is the gift of God*" refers neither to "grace" or to "faith". It refers to the whole process of salvation by "grace...through faith". The gift of salvation cannot be bought – it is a free gift. However, it does have conditions: hearing to produce faith (Rom. 10:17), confession of faith before men (Rom. 10:9,10), repentance of sins (Acts 2:38) and baptism to wash away sins (Acts 22:16).

While the Church of Christ believes in the necessity of both faith and grace for salvation (Heb. 11:6; Acts 16:31; Romans 5:1), the New Testament church also holds that one must be baptized to be saved. Many denominations have falsely accused the church of believing in salvation by works. They claim "salvation by works rather than by the grace of God" ("The Truth About the Church of Christ, p. 17, Hugh F. Pyle). "If it is necessary for man to work in order to be saved, then salvation is not of grace."

The real contradiction is that so-many denominations are claiming that salvation is by faith only and also claim it is by grace only. The term "only" is from the Greek word *monos* and is defined as, "alone, solitary" (W.E. Vine). "Only" means solely or alone, that is, "exclusively." If one is saved by grace only, faith is excluded. If one is saved by faith only, grace is excluded. However, one is saved by both the grace of God, by faith, and by other works of God.

### **Consequences of Salvation by Faith Only**

Most denominations claim a sinner is saved by faith only. Yet James 2:17-26 claims that one is saved by works and not by faith alone. This appears to contradict Paul's teaching that salvation is not of

works. However, the works of God, faith or righteousness are conditions of salvation. As opposed to works of the Law or works of man. Martin Luther handled this apparent contradiction by simply disregarding the book of James by calling it, "a right strawy epistle."

If one strives to be saved by faith or grace only there are some inevitable consequences he will have to face.

### ***If Saved by Faith Only or Grace Only Then...***

#### ◆ **Saved With a Dead Faith**

If one is saved by "faith only," then one is saved with a dead faith. James said, "*faith apart from works is dead*" (2:17). Just as the human body may exist in either the living state or in the dead state, so faith may also be either alive or dead. Living faith, like the living body, is manifested by action. Dead faith is like a dead body, when it is inactivate. James thus stated that just as a dead body is useless without the spirit, so dead faith is useless without the works of obedience to Christ's divine law.

#### ◆ **Saved With an Imperfect Faith**

James went on to argue, "*do you see that faith was working together with his works, and by works faith was made perfect?*" (James 2:22). Faith alone is incomplete. One must not only claim to believe in Christ as the Son of God, he must respond to or act in accord with the belief. This requires obedience to God.

#### ◆ **Saved Without Being Justified**

The phrase "faith only" appears only once in the Bible. In this passage the Word of God claims one is not saved or justified by "faith only." "*You see then that a man is justified by works, and not by faith only*" (James 2:24). "Faith only" will not justify; faith plus works will justify. James used the same word "only" (monos) once more in his letter. "*But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves*" (James 1:22). It is not a question of whether faith justifies or is essential to salvation or not. The issue is whether faith alone will save. Not all works will justify or save the sinner. James does not affirm such. He does ask two rhetorical questions concerning to great examples of faith. First, he speaks of the faith of Abraham who offered up Isaac. "*Was not Abraham our father justified by works when he offered Isaac his son on the altar?*" (James 2:21). Second, James mentions the faith of Rahab. "*Likewise, was not Rahab the harlot also justified by works when she received the messengers and sent them out another way?*" (James 2:25).

#### ◆ **Saved Without a New Birth**

One night a Pharisee by the name of Nicodemus came to Jesus to ask the way into the kingdom. "*Jesus answered, 'Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God'*" (John 3:5). If one is saved by faith only, he must be saved without the new birth. This new birth involves being "*born of water*" which is baptism.

#### ◆ **Saved Without Baptism**

Denominationalists say, "If you say that one must be baptized in order to be saved, then you would have us saved by men's works." And, "obviously salvation cannot be by grace through faith and still by partly by baptism. Salvation cannot be both by grace and by works." Yet Jesus said, "*he who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned*" (Mark 16:16). Faith plus baptism equals salvation. Anything that is commanded of God, is not a work of man, but it is a work of God. "*There is also an antitype which now saves us—baptism (not the removal of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God), through the resurrection of Jesus Christ*" (1 Peter 3:21)

#### ◆ **Saved Without Obedience**

Although Jesus "*was a Son, yet He learned obedience by the things which He suffered. And having been perfected, He became the author of eternal salvation to all who obey Him*" (Hebrew 5:8,9). Are the actions of obedience considered works? The eleventh chapter of Hebrews tells of the active faith of men and women in the Bible. In every single case their faith was coupled with obedience. Abel who by faith offered a more excellent sacrifice (11:4). Noah who by faith built an ark as God directed (11:7). Noah did not earn salvation by building an ark. The Israelites did not earn the promised land. Every case of Bible conversion in the book of Acts shows that people were saved only when their faith was coupled with the works of obedience to God's law. Many think that John 3:16 teaches salvation at the point of



faith. But the word “believes” according to Thayer’s Lexicon means, “Faith conjoined with obedience.” Paul in writing the book of Romans began and ended the letter by mentioning “*obedience to the faith*” (Rom. 1:5), and “*the obedience of faith*” (Rom. 16:26). So Paul and James do not contradict each other, both teach that faith only will not save.

◆ **Saved Without Love**

Faith must exist before it can work and it must work through love before it can avail anything. “*For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision avails anything, but faith working through love*” (Galatians 5:6). True working or active faith must involve love. Salvation by faith only would omit the necessity of love.

◆ **Saved Without Repentance**

“Faith only” doctrine would leave out not only baptism but would exclude the necessity of repentance. When on the day of Pentecost Peter condemned the Jews for killing the Son of God, they ask them what could be done. “*Peter said to them, ‘Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins’*” (Acts 2:38). Jesus warned, “*I tell you, no; but unless you repent you will all likewise perish*” (Luke 13:3).

◆ **Saved Without Confession**

What good is belief in Christ without confessing with one’s mouth before others that He is the Son of God. “*Nevertheless even among the rulers many believed in Him, but because of the Pharisees they did not confess Him, lest they should be put out of the synagogue*” (John 12:42).

◆ **Saved Without Faith**

Believe it or not Jesus said that faith is a work. The multitude asked Jesus “*What shall we do, that we may work the works of God?*” Jesus answered and said to them, “*This is the work of God, that you believe in Him whom He sent*” (John 6:28,29). Faith is a work, a work of God. God has commanded us to believe; therefore, believing is a work of God. It is not a work God must do, or will do for us, it is a work we must accomplish.

◆ **Saved Without Good Works**

If salvation is by faith or grace only, then good works are completely excluded. Doing “good works” are required by the Lord. “*For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men, teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in the present age*” (Titus 2:11,12). The grace of God teaches us how “*we should live.*” We are created in Christ to produce good works. “*For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them*” (Eph. 2:10). “Good Works” are those things taught in the Word. “*All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work*” (2 Timothy 3:16,17).

A man asked a denominational preacher what needed to be done to be saved. He answered, “Nothing! Jesus did it all two thousand years ago.” When the Jailor asked the same question. Paul did not say “you are too late to do anything, Jesus did it all” (see Acts 16:31-34). When Paul asked the Lord what He was to do, Jesus sent him to Damascus and sent a preacher named Ananias. Paul was not told to do nothing because everything had already been done by Jesus two thousand years ago. Instead Paul was commanded to “*arise and be baptized, and wash away your sins*” (Acts 22:16).

Salvation is by the grace of God and by the works of God which include: hearing, believing, repenting, confessing, and being baptized. God has his part in salvation: loving grace and man has his part: obedient faith.

## **Water Baptism is a Work of God**

Still some will cling to the arguments that we are not saved by works (Eph. 3:8-9). Baptism is a work. Therefore baptism cannot save.

Baptism is a work. It is a work of God, just like faith is a work of God. It is a work or condition of obedience required by God (John 6:28-29). Likewise, repentance (Acts 2:38) and confession (Romans 10:9-10) are also works man has been required to do as a condition for the gift of salvation.

Another argument often used against baptism is: “your baptism is water salvation.” The inference

here is that water is the source or power of salvation. Of all those whom I have baptized or witnessed their baptism no once did they arise out of the water and turn around to praise the water for saving them. All praised and glorified God for His saving grace. When Noah and his family were saved by water lifting up the ark and washing away the wicked world, they did not offer up sacrifices of thanksgiving to the water. God is the one who saved them using water. They had to have faith and obey them by building and getting into the ark. Baptism now saves us in like manner (1 Peter 3:21). Israel was baptized unto Moses in the cloud and as they passed through the Red Sea. That water destroyed the Egyptian army. When Miriam led the women in song they did not praise the water but God. Yet the crossing of the Red Sea by faith was required of them (1 Cor. 10:1-2). Naaman's leprosy was washed away only after he obeyed in faith the command to immerse himself seven times in the river Jordan. He did not look at his efforts or the water in the river as he source of his salvation from certain death (2 Kings 5). When Jesus told the blind man to wash his eyes in the water who did he return to give praise? It was Jesus, not the water that saved him. However, had he not obeyed he would not have had saving faith and spent the rest of his days in darkness.

The power to save is not in the water. Thousands of people are immersed in water around the world every minute. The mere act does not save them. Only those who in obedient faith are baptized in the water are promised the gift of salvation.

The power to save is in the blood of the lamb, the Son of God. Christ died or shed His blood for us (Rom. 5:8). The blood was shed "*for the remission of sins*" (Matt. 26:28). Blood was shed in His death (John 19:14). We are baptized into His death. Thus, figuratively coming in contact with the saving blood of Christ (Rom. 6:3).

#### **Questions:**

1. Why can man not save himself by being sinless?
2. Why can no man earn his salvation?
3. What is universalism?
4. List the various denominations which claim that man is saved by "faith only".
5. List several denominations which claim that man is saved by "grace only."
6. Comparing the lists in question #4 with #5 what is the apparent problem?
7. List the only time the phrase "faith only" is found in the Bible? Does the passage claim one is saved by faith alone? Explain.

8. List the various types of works mentioned in the New Testament. Put an "x" in front of the works which are not acceptable and circle the works which are required by God.

9. What is the gift in Ephesians 2:8,9?

10. How does one have faith?

11. True False If one is saved by grace only, faith is excluded. If one is saved by faith only, grace is excluded.

Matching: Consequences of Salvation by Faith Only

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|-----|-----|-------------------------------|----|--|
| 12. | ___ | Saved Without Repentance      | a. | <i>"You see then that a man is justified by works, and not by faith only" (James 2:24).</i>  |
| 13. | ___ | Saved Without Being Justified | b. | <i>"And having been perfected, He became the author of eternal salvation to all who obey Him" (Hebrew 5:8,9).</i>  |
| 14. | ___ | Saved Without Baptism         | c. | <i>"Jesus answered, 'Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God'" (John 3:5).</i>  |
| 15. | ___ | Saved Without Obedience       | d. | The multitude asked Jesus <i>"What shall we do, that we may work the works of God?"</i> Jesus answered and said to them, <i>'This is the work of God, that you believe in Him whom He sent'" (John 6:28,29).</i> |
| 16. | ___ | Saved With a Dead Faith       | e. | <i>"faith apart from works is dead" (2:17).</i>  |
| 17. | ___ | Saved Without Faith           | f. | <i>"he who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned" (Mark 16:16).</i>  |
| 18. | ___ | Saved Without a New Birth     | g. | <i>"I tell you, no; but unless you repent you will all likewise perish" (Luke 13:3).</i>   |
| 19. | ___ | Saved With an Imperfect Faith | h. | <i>"do you see that faith was working together with his works, and by works faith was made perfect?" (James 2:22).</i>   |



# The Baptism of the Holy Spirit

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With the amount of emphasis place on the Holy Spirit and the multitude of passages of scripture on this third member of the Godhead, it is amazing the religious world is overwhelmed with confusion on this subject. Perhaps, not great attention is paid to the Holy Spirit than when discussing Holy Spirit Baptism. The denominational world is great divided on this subject. Just what is the Baptism of the Holy Spirit. When did it take place and where? Who was it for? Who could administer it? Why was it needed? Is this the “one baptism” for today (Eph. 4:5)?

## The Promise of Holy Spirit Baptism

While John the Baptizer was at the Jordan River multitudes came to be baptized by him. Many were sincere. The Pharisees and Sadducees came to be baptized, yet they did not bring forth fruits of repentance and were warned by John: *“I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance, but He who is coming after me is mightier than I, whose sandals I am not worthy to carry. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire”* (Matthew 3:11). Later Jesus promised the sending of a Helper or Comforter which would bless the apostles with guidance, truth and remembrance (John 14:26; 15:26; 16:13). Note these promises were only given to the apostles and not meant for Christians today. After Jesus’ resurrection and just ten days before His ascension into Heaven, Jesus *“commanded them not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for the Promise of the Father, “which,” He said, “you have heard from Me”* (Acts 1:4; also see Luke 24:49). He further explained this in verse eight: *“But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth”* (Acts 1:8). Ten days later in Jerusalem on the day of Pentecost Peter informed the audience concerning Jesus, *“therefore being exalted to the right hand of God, and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, He poured out this which you now see and hear”* (Acts 2:33). Thus the promise of Joel 2:28-32 was fulfilled on that day (cf. Acts 2:16-17).

Keep in mind that Holy Spirit baptism is a promise not a command. Promises are received, commands are obeyed. It is impossible to find one single individual who was ever commanded to be baptized of the Holy Spirit in all the New Testament.

## The Administrator of Holy Spirit Baptism

John the Baptist promised Jesus Christ would administer Holy Spirit Baptism (Matthew 3:11). He is the only one who could administer it. It was administered only by Christ to the Apostles and Cornelius’ household.

## The Element of Holy Spirit Baptism

The element in Holy Spirit Baptism is the Holy Spirit. It is being overwhelmed or immersed (figuratively) in the Holy Spirit.

## The Purpose of Holy Spirit Baptism

Jesus promised His disciples that they would be given the Helper or Comforter sent by God the Father. He mentioned the various reasons for sending Him. *“But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, 1) He will teach you all things, 2) and bring to your remembrance all things that I said to you”* (John 14:26). *“But when the Helper comes, whom I shall send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth who proceeds from the Father, 3) He will testify of Me”* (John 15:26). *“I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now. However, when He, the Spirit of*

truth, has come, **4) He will guide you into all truth; for He will not speak on His own authority, but whatever He hears He will speak; 5) and He will tell you things to come**" (John 16:12,13).

Holy Spirit baptism was given to Cornelius and his household as a sign to Peter and the other Jewish brethren that God had accepted the Gentiles (Acts 10:47; 11:17; 15:8). The sign was manifest by the household of Cornelius being able to speak in tongues or languages which they had never learned or spoken before.

The Apostles could also speak in tongues, perform miracles, and receive revelation from God (1 Cor. 2:9-13). The miracles confirmed their words were from God.

### **The Place of Holy Spirit Baptism**

The place the Apostles were to receive the promise of the Holy Spirit was in Jerusalem. Before Christ's ascension He commanded them, *"Behold, I send the Promise of My Father upon you; but tarry in the city of Jerusalem until you are endued with power from on high"* (Luke 24:49). The apostles were not to begin their preaching until they received power from on high and they were to receive the power *"after that the Holy Spirit is come upon you"* (Acts 1:8). Previously, during His earthly ministry Jesus told the Twelve, *"assuredly, I say to you that there are some standing here who will not taste death till they see the kingdom of God present with power"* (Mark 9:1). The time and place of this baptism was on the Day of Pentecost in Jerusalem when the Holy Spirit came with power (Luke 24:49; Mark 9:1; Acts 1:4; 2:1-4).

### **Signs of the Holy Spirit Baptized**

As a sign of Holy Spirit baptism both the Apostles on the Day of Pentecost and the household of Cornelius could speak in tongues. Peter and Paul demonstrated other signs, such as, raised the dead (Acts 9:36-42; 20:9-10); made a man blind (Acts 13:9-12); bitten by poisonous snakes and survived (Acts 28:5). Furthermore, the ability to lay hands on the saints to impart spiritual gifts. *"Now when the apostles who were at Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the word of God, they sent Peter and John to them, who, when they had come down, prayed for them that they might receive the Holy Spirit. For as yet He had fallen upon none of them. They had only been baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. Then they laid hands on them, and they received the Holy Spirit. And when Simon saw that through the laying on of the apostles' hands the Holy Spirit was given"* (Acts 8:14-17).

Furthermore, the apostles were able to foretell the future and were inspired to write and speak God's Word (Eph. 3:3-5). On Pentecost the outpouring of the spirit demonstrated that the apostles were God's spokesmen.

### **Subjects of Holy Spirit Baptism.**

Some hold the belief Holy Spirit Baptism is to be received by Christians today. There are only two examples of Holy Spirit baptism in the New Testament: in Acts 2 on the Day of Pentecost when received by the Apostles and in Acts 10 when received by Cornelius and his household.

Are there any other cases of Holy Spirit baptism in the Bible? The baptism of the Great commission was a command and not a promise like Holy Spirit Baptism (Mt. 28:19,20). The Pentecostians were commanded to be baptized by Peter (Acts 2:3). The Samaritans were baptized by Philip, but they did not receive the gifts of the Holy Spirit till Peter and John were sent (Acts 8). The Eunuch was baptized in water (Acts 8:38). Saul was commanded to be baptized to wash away his sins (Acts 22:16). Cornelius was also baptized with water (Acts 10:47,48). The Philippian Jailor was baptized with water (Acts 16:33). The one baptism added people to the one body, Holy Spirit baptism never did this. The Apostles received it before the church began and Cornelius received it before he was saved and added to the church (1 Cor. 12:13; Ac. 2:47).

There are many examples of water baptism, but only two cases of Holy Spirit Baptism. On Pentecost the apostle Peter witnessed two baptisms, Holy Spirit baptism upon the apostles and water baptism of the 3,000 converts in 30 A.D. In A.D. 41 Peter also witnessed two baptisms in the household of Cornelius, both Holy Spirit baptism and water baptism. The Baptism of the Holy Spirit ended with the cases of Acts 2 and 10, before Paul wrote Eph. 4:4,5; thus, Holy Spirit baptism is not the "one baptism".

## Cornelius' Household & Holy Spirit Baptism

The conversion of Cornelius and his household is a great mile marker in the progress of the gospel. In Acts 10 we not only find the first Gentile converts, but the visible signs of the middle wall of partition separating Jews from Gentiles coming down (Eph. 2:14f). The portals to the kingdom were opened to the whole Gentile world. Compared to Acts 2, this chapter exemplifies the "Gentile Pentecost".

This glorious event is not without controversy. A total of five times the household is said to have received some kind of manifestation of the Holy Spirit. Many have referred to this as the baptism of the Holy Spirit. Others have seriously questioned this conclusion, such as, Foy E. Wallace, Jr. in his book *The Mission and Medium of the Holy Spirit*. Consider the facts related with Cornelius demonstrating he and his household

**What happened with Cornelius' household is similar to the apostles' reception of the Holy Spirit.** The language consistently points to the Jews in general and the apostles specifically as parallel recipients of this type of Holy Spirit manifestation: "*the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out on the Gentiles also*" (Acts 10:45); "*received the Holy Spirit just as we have?*" (10:47); "*the Holy Spirit fell upon them, as upon us at the beginning*" (11:15); "*God gave them the same gift*" (11:17) and "*giving them the Holy Spirit, just as He did to us*" (15:8).

**Only Pentecost could be referenced as a parallel to what happened in Cornelius' house (11:15).** When referring to the Holy Spirit falling upon them, Peter went back to the "*beginning*" as an analogous incident. In the years, following Pentecost there wasn't a single manifestation of the Holy Spirit comparable to what he saw at Cornelius' house. Exactly what Peter meant by going back to Pentecost is made clear in verse 16 when he remembered Jesus words concerning the baptism of the Holy Spirit.

**Peter mentioned Jesus' promise of the Holy Spirit baptism in explaining what had happen in Cornelius' house (11:16).** The first promise of a baptism with the Holy Spirit was made by John the Immerser (Mt. 3:11). Later, this promise was recounted by Jesus a few days before His Ascension (Ac. 1:5; Lk. 24:44-49). Inspiration ties both the apostles and Cornelius to the promise Christ made in Acts 1:5.

**The power of the Holy Spirit was administered directly from heaven (11:17; 15:8).** The gifts of the Holy Spirit were not conferred by the normal means, that is, the laying on of the apostles hands, but straight from Heaven. This is compatible with the scriptural teaching that only Christ would administer the baptism of the Holy Spirit. John the Baptist could not administer it (Mt. 3:11) nor any of the apostles, but only Christ was to administer it (Acts 1:5).

**It was the "same gift" as that of the apostles at the beginning (11:17).** The corresponding word for "same" is translated in Phil. 2:6 as "equal", that is, Christ "did not consider it robbery to be equal with God." This "same" gift is mentioned as "the gift of the Holy Spirit" that was poured out on them (10:45). Thus, whatever the outpouring of the gift of the Holy Spirit was in relation to the apostles on Pentecost is the same thing or equal to the outpouring years later at Caesarea.

**It demonstrated "no distinction" between Jews and Gentiles (15:9).** How did Peter know that no distinction existed between Jew and Gentile? Because they were given the same gift from God. If they really didn't receive the same outpouring of the gift of the Holy Spirit then Peter's argument is unsupported.

**The event fulfilled the prophecy of Joel 2:28:32.** According to Joel's prophecy all flesh would receive the outpouring of the Spirit. Surely, all flesh does not include animal flesh nor those who are wicked, but those willing to call upon the name of the Lord to be saved (Ac. 2:21; 10:43). Jew and Gentile represent all flesh. Thus, the Holy Spirit was poured out upon the apostles representing Jewish flesh upon the day of Pentecost and then upon the household of Cornelius representing Gentile flesh (10:45). Furthermore, when the Apostles spoke in tongues having been filled with the Holy Spirit it represented Holy Spirit baptism promised by Jesus (1:5) and it also fulfilled the prophecy of Joel(2:17). Now, if it took the Holy Spirit baptism to fulfill Joel's prophecy and the promise of Jesus in reference to the Jews, then it would require Holy Spirit baptism for the Gentiles. After all, Cornelius' household was filled with the Holy Spirit, speaking in tongues, the Spirit poured out upon them as on the Jews at the beginning, and reminded the inspired apostle Peter of Jesus' promise to baptize with the Holy Spirit (11:16). Finally, if Cornelius' household did not receive Holy Spirit baptism in fulfillment of Joel's prophecy, then where is this prophecy

fulfilled?

Every reference to the experience of Cornelius' household points back to Pentecost (Ac. 10:44;45;47;11:15,16;15:8). Both Joel 2 and Acts 2 point toward the conversion of Cornelius' household in Acts 10 for fulfillment. This scriptural proof is convincing and conclusive.

### **Holy Spirit Baptism and Tongue Speaking**

Tongue speaking is found in most world religions both ancient and modern. Contemporary tongue speaking is an desperate longing to undergo the "miracle," done an very emotionally packed religious service, resulting in a frantic inarticulate speaking with babbling nonsense and not understandable language.

The gift of speaking in tongues was divinely regulated by commands from God. The individual who had the gift of tongues had complete control of himself and his gifts at all times (1 Cor. 14:26-32). Tongue speaking was never intended to be universal in the church (1 Cor. 12:30). Tongues were useless unless understandable (1 Cor. 14:7-11). Christians were not to use this gift unless someone could interpret (1 Cor. 14:18,19; 26:33).

The ability to speak in tongues according to the New Testament involved a human language understood by those who heard it in their own language. It was only temporary. The so-called tongue speaking of today is not understandable language by anyone and claims to be an on going gift.

### **Holy Spirit Baptism and Salvation**

Some denominations hold the belief that the Baptism of the Holy Spirit is involved in one's salvation. "Furthermore, we believe that a person demonstrates that they have been baptized with the Holy Spirit through the evidence of speaking in new tongues or languages as the Spirit leads them" (Preceptos Doctrinales de la Asamblea Apostolica de la Fe en Cristo Jesus, Inc.). Their plan of salvation is almost identical to that of the New Testament to a point. To be saved one must 1) hear the Word of God; 2) Believe Jesus is God's Son; 3) repent of sins; 4) confess belief in Jesus Christ; 5) be baptized in water; 6) be baptized with the Holy Spirit. After the second baptism one is saved. However, for proof of Holy Spirit baptism and thus proof one is saved, the one twice baptized must speak in tongues. Failure to speak in tongues is proof one has not yet been baptized in the Holy Spirit and consequently not saved.

Holy Spirit Baptism is never said in the New Testament to bring salvation or proof of salvation. Cornelius and his household spoke in tongues having received the baptism of the Holy Spirit. It was only then that Peter commanded them to be baptized in water (Acts 10:48). Then there was two baptisms. By 62 AD Paul said there was but "*one baptism*" (Eph. 4:5).

Holy Spirit baptism is in contrast with water baptism. Holy Spirit Baptism is a promise to be received (Acts 1:8). Water baptism is a command to be obeyed (Acts 10:48). Only Christ could administer Holy Spirit baptism (Matt. 3:11). Just about any man can administer water baptism (Matt.28:19-20; 1 Cor. 1:17). The purpose of Holy Spirit baptism is to Guide the Apostles into all truth and bear witness for Christ, and witness to Peter the Gentiles are part of God's plan of salvation (John 14:26; 15:13; 16:13). The remission of sins and being added to the church is the purpose of water baptism (Acts 2:38; 2:47; 1 Cor. 12:13). Finally, the duration of Holy Spirit baptism was limited and ended with the Apostles on the Day of Pentecost and with the household of Cornelius in Acts 10. Water baptism is to continue until the end of time (Eph. 4:5; 2 Peter 3:9).

#### **Questions:**

1. Who promised to send the Holy Spirit?
2. To whom was this promise given?
3. Who is the only administrator Holy Spirit baptism?



4. What is the element and mode of Holy Spirit baptism?
  
5. List the five things the Helper or Comforter would do for the Apostles according to John 14:26; 15:26 and 16:13.
  
  
  
  
  
6. What was the purpose of Holy Spirit baptism of the household of Cornelius?
  
  
  
  
  
7. Where were the Apostles to receive the baptisms of the Holy Spirit?
  
  
  
  
  
8. What are the signs of the Apostles' Holy Spirit Baptism?
  
  
  
  
  
9. True False There are many cases of Holy Spirit baptism in the New Testament.
  
10. List in order from 1st to 5th.  
  - \_\_\_ speaking in tongues
  - \_\_\_ command to be baptized in water
  - \_\_\_ Peter sent to preach
  - \_\_\_ Holy Spirit baptism
  - \_\_\_ Apostles' Holy Spirit baptism
  
11. What similarities are there between the Holy Spirit baptism of the Apostles and that of the household of Cornelius?
  
  
  
  
  
12. What does Peter mean by "beginning" in Acts 11:15?

13. True False Peter mentioned Jesus' promise of the Holy Spirit baptism in explaining what had happened in Cornelius' house.
14. True False The power of the Holy Spirit was administered to the Cornelius' household by Peter.
15. What did this Holy Spirit baptism of this Gentiles demonstrate?
  
16. What were the regulations given by Paul in 1 Corinthians concerning the speaking of tongues in a public assembly?

**Application & Discussion:**

1. Why do you think Holy Spirit baptism came before water baptism in both cases?
  
2. How would you go about explaining to someone who was saved via water baptism and Holy Spirit baptism that they have not been saved and need to be baptized with Bible baptism?

**Homework:** Discuss with someone who believes that Holy Spirit baptism is for people today and show them why it cannot be the “one baptism.”

## The Baptism of Fire

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One afternoon while I lived in Florida a call come in asking about being baptized. Before I could answer the question the lady claimed that she had already been baptized with the Holy Spirit. She had been filled with so much joy she was praying to the Lord to baptize her next with fire. Like some many this lady had no idea what she was asking for from the Lord. What is the baptism of fire? Is it different from Holy Spirit Baptism?

The best place to begin our query is in Matthew 3:7-12. The only other place which discusses the Baptism of Fire is in Luke 3:

*But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees coming to his baptism, he said to them, "Brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come? Therefore bear fruits worthy of repentance, and do not think to say to yourselves, 'We have Abraham as our father.' For I say to you that God is able to raise up children to Abraham from these stones. And even now the ax is laid to the root of the trees. Therefore every tree which does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance, but He who is coming after me is mightier than I, whose sandals I am not worthy to carry. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire. His winnowing fan is in His hand, and He will thoroughly clean out His threshing floor, and gather His wheat into the barn; but He will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire."(Matthew 3:7-12).*

### **Holy Spirit Baptism and Fire Baptism Are Not the Same**

There was once a church named Baptism of Fire Church. They maintained that this prophecy of the baptism of fire found its fulfillment on the day of Pentecost when the apostles were baptized with the Holy Spirit. This view can be found again in 293 AD here an early Christian writer said,

"John said that we must be baptized in the Holy Spirit and in fire. Because he said 'and fire,'...very crafty men seek a way to thereby corrupt and violate - and even neutralize - the baptism of holiness. They derive and origin of their notion from Simon Magus, practicing it with manifold perversity through various errors...However, those who are not ignorant of the nature of the Holy Spirit, understand that what is said about fire is said about the Spirit Himself. For in the Acts of the Apostles,...they were baptized with the Holy Spirit and with fire. That is, they were baptized with the Spirit...This was similar to the fire that burned in the bush, but did not consume the bush" (Treatise on Re-Baptism about 257AD, 5.676,677).

Today, it is further argued from the context that Holy Spirit and fire baptism are one and the same. E. Ray Clendenen wrote, "The fact that there is only one Greek article governing the two nouns, "spirit" and "fire" indicates that only one baptism is in view and the addition of "and fire" further defines the character of the Messiah's baptism. Whereas water temporarily cleanses the outside, fire permanently purifies the whole." (Holman Illustrated Bible Dictionary, 169).

It is said that Acts 2:3 speaks of fire in the form of tongues which rested above the heads of the apostles while they were waiting on the Day of Pentecost in Jerusalem. Yet, there is no literal reference to fire in Acts 2:3: "*like as of fire.*" This means the tongues were only metaphorically fire and not actually or real fire. Hackett explains that "the change from the plural (tongues) to the singular (it sat) supports this conclusion. At first the fire-like appearance was in a single body, and then suddenly parted in this direction

and that; so that a portion of it rested on each of those present" (Hackett). " In the King James Version the phrase "cloven tongues" means tongues "distributing themselves," or "parting asunder."

The purpose of this manifestation that appeared unto the apostles was to symbolize the presence of the Spirit making known to them the language each was speaking. They spoke in tongues, or languages (Act 2:8,11), they had never learned. It was a fulfillment of prophecy concerning the promise of the baptism of the Holy Spirit and Joel 2. It was not baptism of fire for they were not overwhelmed with literal fire or even fire in a metaphorical sense.

Today, some claim that Christians are to experience the baptism of the Holy Spirit and fire as a kind of "second Pentecost." The fire symbolizes the purifying, energizing or enlightening work of the Spirit. This is made manifest in an experience or feeling.

However, the baptism of the Holy Spirit is not with fire but being immersed in the Holy Spirit. Fire does not accompany Holy Spirit baptism. If it does, why did fire not appear over the heads of Cornelius and his household when they received the baptism of the Holy Spirit in Acts 10?

### **Mormon View of Fire Baptism**

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints or Mormons have a unique take on the baptism of the Holy Spirit and Fire. They speak of it in their books: Doctrine and Covenants 20:41; Doctrine and Covenants 33:11; Doctrine and Covenants 39:6; and 2 Nephi 31:13–17. David A. Bednar, states, "the Holy Ghost is a sanctifier who cleanses and burns dross and evil out of human souls as though by fire". (Via website of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints). The Mormons go on to state, "the baptism of fire purifies a person's heart and Jesus said that all the pure in heart shall see God. So, whenever a person receives a baptism of fire, chances are real good that they will also see either an angel, vision or God Himself. At the very least some revelation or prophecy will occur along with the baptism of fire, or some other manifestation of one of the gifts of the Spirit."

This denomination states that the fire remits sin. "Whenever a person receives a baptism of fire, his sins are automatically remitted. In other words, he becomes justified, or guiltless, before the Lord. Nephi said, "For the gate by which ye should enter is repentance and baptism by water; and then cometh a remission of your sins by fire and by the Holy Ghost."

In the writings Mormons make the claim that there have been several baptisms of fire. Adam is said to have been baptized with fire in Moses 6:64-68. According to Hel. 5:20-49 about 300 Lamanites' received the baptism of fire. Even Jesus is said to have baptized little children with fire in 3 Neh. 17:21-25.

### **The Subjects are Those who are Disobedient and Impenitent**

Within the context of Matthew 3 two groups are addressed. The first group is composed of those genuine disciples who have been baptized by John in verse six. The second group is composed of the Pharisees and Sadducees who have failed to bring forth fruits of repentance (3:7,8). They are fruitless trees to be hewed down and cast into the fire, not the good trees that bore fruit. They were the chaff to be burned with unquenchable fire, not the wheat that is good.

Notice the two illustrations of speaking of judgment by fire have mention baptism of fire between them. 1) First, they are unfruitful trees cut down and cast into fire. 2) Jesus is the one who will administer baptism of fire. 3) And finally, the chaff will be burned with fire. What ever fire means in verses 10 and 12 it should mean the same in verse 11? H. Leo Boles explains it well:

"Is it credible that 'fire' should have one meaning in the first and third verses, and an entirely different meaning in the second? We must conclude that 'fire' has the same meaning in verses ten, eleven and twelve. With this conclusion, we must believe that two baptisms are mentioned here, that two classes are to receive the baptisms; that one class is to receive the baptism of the Holy Spirit and the other class the baptism of fire. 'Fire' as used here cannot be taken as a symbol of the Holy Spirit; this would be a confusion to say Christ would 'baptize in the Holy Spirit and in the Holy Spirit.' Where fire is used in a literal sense in the Bible, it invariably sets forth God's divine judgment upon sin; where it is used in a figurative sense it represents this process by which evil is removed, and destruction. No sound principle of interpretation admits of representing the same truth under a literal and figurative form in the same connection" (H. Leo Boles, "Holy Spirit and Fire," The Holy Spirit ? His Personality, Nature and Works, pp. 304-305).

The two groups are to receive two different baptisms. The first group are those disciples who are bringing forth fruits of repentance and are baptized by John in water. They are representative of those who are the fruitful trees and the wheat that will be gathered and not burned with fire. It is this group which will be blessed with the baptism of the Holy Spirit. The second group are made of the Pharisees and Sadducees who have not being penitent and are not being baptized by John. They are the unfruitful trees and the chaff that will not suffering fire. They will one day experience the baptism of fire. Surely, both groups will not experience both baptisms. And furthermore, this context shows that these are two baptisms not just two aspects of one baptism.

Later the Pharisees were condemned for not being baptized by John. *“And when all the people heard Him, even the tax collectors justified God, having been baptized with the baptism of John. But the Pharisees and lawyers rejected the will of God for themselves, not having been baptized by him”* (Luke 7:29-30).

### **The Propose is Divine Wrath & Judgment**

Both in Matthew 3 and Luke 3 the Baptism of the Holy Spirit and of fire are mentioned. However, it is interesting to note that any mention of fire is missing in Mark’s account. *“And he [John] preached, saying, ‘There comes One after me who is mightier than I, whose sandal strap I am not worthy to stoop down and loose. I indeed baptized you with water, but He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit’”* (Mark 1:7-8).

Neither is “fire” mentioned in account found in the Gospel of John. *“And John bore witness, saying, ‘I saw the Spirit descending from heaven like a dove, and He remained upon Him. I did not know Him, but He who sent me to baptize with water said to me, ‘Upon whom you see the Spirit descending, and remaining on Him, this is He who baptizes with the Holy Spirit.’ And I have seen and testified that this is the Son of God”* (John 1:32-34). Why is a mention of “fire” missing? The context of both Mark and John’s account have to do with the disciples hope of receiving the promise of the Holy Spirit baptism. They do not mention judgment upon the impenitent so there is no need to mention baptism of fire. This is also true when Jesus speaks to apostles before his ascension. *“And being assembled together with them, He commanded them not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for the Promise of the Father, “which,” He said, “you have heard from Me; for John truly baptized with water, but you shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now”* (Acts 1:4-5). When Peter observed the Baptism of the Holy Spirit upon the household of Cornelius he remembered the Lord’s promise. *“And as I began to speak, the Holy Spirit fell upon them, as upon us at the beginning. Then I remembered the word of the Lord, how He said, ‘John indeed baptized with water, but you shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit.’ If therefore God gave them the same gift as He gave us when we believed on the Lord Jesus Christ, who was I that I could withstand God?”* (Acts 11:15-17). The language about baptizing in fire is absent, because the group who are subject to it are absent. No disobedient or impenitent men in the audience means not mention of judgment or wrath to come upon them in the from of the baptism of fire.

### **The Element Is Fire**

The subjects are the wicked who refuse to obey or repent. They element they are going to be baptized in is fire. God has often used fire as a means to punishing the wicked. Nadab and Abihu were overwhelmed and consumed with fire (Lev. 10:1-3). Twice a captain with his fifty soldiers were consumed by fire from heaven when they made demands of God’s prophet Elijah. In the wilderness *“when the people complained, it displeased the Lord; for the Lord heard it, and His anger was aroused. So the fire of the Lord burned among them, and consumed some in the outskirts of the camp”* (Num. 11:1). During the rebellion of Korah *“a fire came out from the Lord and consumed the two hundred and fifty men who were offering incense”* (Num. 16:35).

On the Day of Pentecost the Spirit was “poured out”. This is in relation to the Baptism of the Holy Spirit. However, when God comes in judgment and wrath He pours out fire upon as in the Old Testament passages listed below.

*“Therefore wait for Me,” says the Lord, “Until the day I rise up for plunder; My determination is to gather the*

*nations To My assembly of kingdoms, To pour on them My indignation, All My fierce anger; All the earth shall be devoured With the fire of My jealousy (Zephaniah 3:8).*

*Standing like an enemy, He has bent His bow; With His right hand, like an adversary, He has slain all who were pleasing to His eye; On the tent of the daughter of Zion, He has poured out His fury like fire. (Lamentations 2:4).*

*The Lord has fulfilled His fury, He has poured out His fierce anger. He kindled a fire in Zion, And it has devoured its foundations. (Lamentations 4:11).*

*Who can stand before His indignation? And who can endure the fierceness of His anger? His fury is poured out like fire, And the rocks are thrown down by Him. (Nahum 1:6).*

*Therefore I have poured out My indignation on them; I have consumed them with the fire of My wrath; and I have recompensed their deeds on their own heads," says the Lord God.(Ezekiel 22:31).*

When lexiconographers translate the use of fire in the context of Luke 3 and Matthew 3 they connect it with God's judgment and wrath and not the workings of the Holy Spirit. W. E. Vine noted regarding the "fire" of this passage: "of the fire of Divine judgment upon the rejectors of Christ, Matt. 3:11 (where a distinction is to be made between the baptism of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost and the fire of Divine retribution)" (1991, 308). Arndt and Gingrich speak of the "fire of divine Judgment Mt. 3:11; Lk. 3:16" (1967, 737). J. H. Thayer commented: "to overwhelm with fire (those who do not repent), i.e., to subject them to the terrible penalties of hell". (Thayer 1958, p. 94).

When Luke speaks of "*unquenchable fire*" in 3:17, he is not describing the results of being baptized by the Holy Spirit. The phrase is akin to that one found in Mark chapter nine: "*the fire is not quenched*" (Mark 9:43,44,45,46,48). This phrase is used to is depicting the eternal flames of Hell.

### **The Administrator Is the Almighty and Just God and Christ**

John was baptizing with water those who would repent of their sins. He could not bless the obedient with the promises of the Holy Spirit or punish the disobedient with the fires of Hell. This belonged to the one who was to come after him: Jesus. In Matthew 3 there was to come with an axe and cut down the unfruitful trees and cast them into the fire. He was coming with a winnowing fork to separate the wheat from the chaff. The chaff would be cast into the fire. He would bless some of the disciples of John with the Baptism of the Holy Spirit for they were the of the wheat and the fruitful trees. Those who were like unfruitful trees and chaff He alone will judge and immerse them into the fires of Hell.

In the parable of the one talent man it is the master who command they "*cast the unprofitable servant into the outer darkness. There will be weeping and gnashing of teeth*" (Matt. 25:30). In the parable of the sheep and the goats "*He will also say to those on the left hand, 'Depart from Me, you cursed, into the everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels...And these will go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into eternal life*" (Matthew 25:41,46).

### **The Time is in the Future**

The phrase "baptism by fire" is used by the military to refer to the first time a soldier face combat. The phrase "baptism of fire" represents the final end of those at war with Christ. They will one day in the future experience the fires of hell. "*... when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven with His mighty angels, in flaming fire taking vengeance on those who do not know God, and on those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. These shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power*" (2 Thess. 1:7-9). John saw this great event in his Revelation: "*And I saw the dead, small and great, standing before God, and books were opened. And another book was opened, which is the Book of Life. And the dead were judged according to their works, by the things which were written in the books. The sea gave up the dead who were in it, and Death and Hades delivered up the dead who were in them. And they were judged, each one according to his works. Then Death and Hades were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. And anyone not found written in the Book of Life was cast into the lake of fire*" (Rev. 20:12-15). These texts are primarily a warning about coming judgment and the need to repent before it's too late.

## Summary

Jesus commanded, "He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned" (Mark 16:16), In about 198 AD Tertullian wrote, "True and stable faith is baptized with water, unto salvation. Pretended and weak faith is baptized with fire, unto judgment" (3.674). How fitting is the analogy of those who are wicked and refuse to be baptized in a lake of water just once, will be baptized in the lake of fire and brimstone forever. Then they will beg like the rich man in torment for even a few drops of water. No one should look forward to or pray for the baptism of fire, instead they need to repent and be baptized to be saved and be faithful till death in order to avoid being immersed in the fires of hell.

### Questions:

1. Why do some believe that Holy Spirit Baptism and Baptism of Fire are one and the same?
2. Does Acts 2:3 mention literal fire? Explain.
3. What do some mean by a "second Pentecost"?
4. Is fire connected in any way with the Baptism of the Holy Spirit and the household of Cornelius?
5. What benefits are there to the Baptism of fire according to the Mormons?
6. List the occasions of the Baptism of fire according to the Book of Mormon.
7. What does fire mean in verse 10 and 12 of Matthew 3? What does it mean in verse eleven?
8. What two groups was John addressing in Matthew 3?
9. Why is the mention of "fire" absent in Mark 1:7-8; John 1:32-34; Acts 1:4-5; 11:15-17?
10. How is fire used in the Old Testament with regard to the wicked?

11. If "*unquenchable fire*" is akin to "*the fire is not quenched*" what would it mean?
  
12. Why is Jesus (God) the only one who can administer the baptism of fire?
  
13. When will the baptism of fire be administered?

**Application & Discussion:**

1. How would you go about teaching someone that the baptism of the Holy Spirit and the baptism of fire are two distinct things?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
2. How might John's warning about the baptism of fire be used to help teach someone the Gospel and lead them to water baptism?

**Homework:** Do everything you can to avoid the baptism of fire.



## Baptism of the Dead

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The Bible has several passages which can be quite the challenge to interpret the meaning. Peter indicated that Paul was at times difficult to understand when he wrote. "...our beloved brother Paul, according to the wisdom given to him, has written to you, as also in all his epistles, speaking in them of these things, in which are some things hard to understand, which untaught and unstable people twist to their own destruction, as they do also the rest of the Scriptures" (2 Peter 3:15-16). Unfortunately some took advantage of these passages to concoct their own doctrines. One such passage from Paul is 1 Corinthians 15:29: "Otherwise, what will they do who are baptized for the dead, if the dead do not rise at all? Why then are they baptized for the dead?" There are anywhere from 30 or 40 up to 200 different interpretations of this passage. In studying such difficult verses one must take care to overcome the temptation to reinterpret other simple or easily understood passage of Scripture into order to promote one's interpretation of one single difficult passage.

The first order of business when tackling a difficult passage is to have an accurate understanding of the context. 1 Corinthians chapter fifteen is Paul's defense of the resurrection. First, he provides the historical proof (15:1-11). Then Paul mentions his own personal witness of the resurrection of Christ. In verses 20-23 he gives a list of the benefits of Christ's resurrection for Christians. He mentions the present rule of Christ in His kingdom and what will take place with that kingdom when Christ comes again (15:24-28). Then in verse 29 He resumes the argument for the resurrection which was interrupted at verse 19.

Paul's main line of argument for the resurrection is to remind the saints of Corinth the consequences of there being no resurrection of the dead. If there is no resurrection, Christ is not risen (15:13); Gospel preaching is done in vain (15:14); personal faith, based on the preaching, is in vain; the Apostles are false witnesses (15:15); everyone is still in their sins (15:17); All of those how are asleep in Christ (that is, dead) have perished forever (15:18); hope in Christ is limited to this life, so we are to all men most miserable (15:19); it is without purpose that some have been baptized for the dead (15:29); the Apostles stand in jeopardy for preaching a dangerous Gospel (15:30); and what purpose is there in living a godly life (15:32).

There are several factors to keep in mind when interpreting verse twenty-nine. First, the argument is over the believer's resurrection. Is it real? Whatever it is it was well known to the Corinthians. It had to be applicable to the argument in support of the resurrection. Those who denied the resurrection were as yet worshipping with the saints at Corinth (15:12).

### Vicarious Baptism

The most well-known doctrine and practice surrounding this verse is the Mormon's baptism for the dead. Mormons will trace a person's genealogy and be baptized via proxy for the dead person. This is why the Latter-Day Saints have one of the largest genealogical libraries in the world attached to over forty temples around the globe. Many Mormons have been baptized many times; baptized over 150 times.

The founder of Mormonism, Joseph Smith, wrote: "That they, my saints, may be baptized for those who are dead; for this ordinance belongeth to my house..for which the same was instituted from the foundation of the world" (Doctrine & Covenants 124:28). "God has made a provision that every spirit in the eternal world can be ferreted out and saved, unless he has committed that unpardonable sin (disobeying the Gospel). And so you can see how far you can be a savior." (Journal of Discourses, Vol. 6, pp. 7,8). "The greatest responsibility in this world that God has laid upon us is to seek after our dead" (History of the Church, VI:313). "Those Saints who neglect it in behalf of their deceased relatives, do it at the peril of their own salvation" (History of the Church, IV: 426; cited in Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith).

In fact, Smith claims that the salvation of every Mormon depends on saving the lost by way of being baptized for the dead. "And now, my dearly beloved brethren and sisters, let me assure you that these are principles in relation to the dead and the living that cannot be lightly passed over, as pertaining to our salvation. For their salvation is necessary to our salvation...neither can we without our dead be made perfect." (Doctrine & Covenants 128:15).

This doctrine of baptism by proxy for the dead is in fact incompatible with the Book Of Mormon. If fact, it is totally unknown to the book of Mormon. This book condemns those who reject the gospel having died without obeying it.

"For behold, this life is the time for men to prepare to meet God..for after this day of life which is given us to prepare for eternity, behold, if we do not improve our time while in this life, then cometh the night of darkness wherein there can be no labor performed. Ye cannot say, when ye are brought to the awful crisis, that I will repent, that I will turn to my God. Nay ye cannot say this...For behold, if ye have procrastinated the day of your repentance even until death, behold, ye have become subjected to the spirit of the devil, and he doth seal you his; therefore, the Spirit of the Lord hath withdrawn from you, and hath no place in you, and the devil hath all power over you; and this is the final state of the wicked" (Alma 34:32-35).

Notice the final statement in this quote: "this is the final state of the wicked."

Why does the Mormon Church send tens of thousands of missionaries into the world to give people and opportunity to reject the "fullness of the gospel" and be lost forever? The Mormon church should abandon its missionary program so that no one on earth will have an opportunity to reject the "fullness of the gospel." Instead just have people wait till someone is dead and be baptized for them.

Some Mormons rejected this doctrine of baptism for the dead. One of the original three witnesses in favor of the book of Mormon, David Whitmer, has written an address to ALL Believers in the bible and the Book of Mormon. In it he claims to have received revelation from God saying that Joseph Smith was led away by the Devil in introducing the D & C which brings in polygamy, celestial marriages, priesthood and baptism for the dead. The largest off-shoot, the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints (Josephites), headquarters in Independence, Missouri, doesn't teach or practice this baptism.

More importantly, this Mormon doctrine is contrary to New Testament teaching on Salvation. The Bible teaches that every man is accountable for what he personally does (Ezek. 18:20; Rom. 14:12; 2 Cor. 5:10; Heb. 9:27). One's final destiny is completely sealed at death (Lk. 16:19-31; Heb. 9:27. 2 Cor. 5:10). A "great gulf" is fixed separating the righteous and the wicked in the place of departed spirits, and it allows for no crossing over (Luke 16:26). Mormon baptism for the dead must wash away the "great gulf" before it can wash away any sins. Everywhere throughout the New Testament every case of conversion or command to obey the Gospel is deals with the living. Each individual person must repent (Luke 13:3). Every man must confess with his own mouth that he believes Jesus to be the Son of God (Rom. 10:9,10). God sent Ananias to tell Paul to "arise and be baptized to wash away YOUR sins" (Acts 22:16) not someone else's sins

The New Testament says there is but one baptism (Eph. 4:5). Water baptism for one's own sins and another for the dead definitely makes two baptisms. When ONE becomes TWO addition to God's Word has taken place (Rev. 22:18,19).

Another form of vicarious baptism for the dead was said to be practiced by the followers both of Marcion and Cerenthus . Those who hold that one could be baptized vicariously for catechumens who had not yet been baptized. When any catechumen (candidate for church membership) among them died without baptism, the Marcionites would conceal a living person under the couch where the corpse lay and ask if it would like to be baptized. The hidden person would reply yes and then would be baptized on behalf of the dead one. Chrysostom refers to the Marcionite practice only to say that their practice is a mockery of baptism. It is believed that this practice grew out of Paul's statement in 1 Corinthians 15:29 and not the other way around. The Gospel does not require an extended teaching program before being baptized. The Biblical pattern of baptism made it possible for men to be baptized after hearing one sermon (Ac. 2:1-4; 8:21,40; 16:25-34).

## **Baptism in the Metaphorical Sense**

Catholic scholars with their concepts of purgatory have a variety of rituals designed to for the living Catholics to assist dead Catholic in getting out of purgatory, such as, voluntary afflictions such as prayer, alms giving, fasting, etc., designed to help the dead. Some believe this baptism for the dead was an early work of penance for the dead. However, the doctrine of purgatory did not exist at the time of Paul's letters to Corinth. It is a tradition of men and not a teaching of the Apostles.

This passage has been taken to mean one who is immersed in sorrow on behalf of those who have already died. Yet there is nothing in the text to indicate Paul meant baptism in a metaphorical sense.

Because Christians suffered overwhelming persecutions some scholars like Adam Clarke taught,

The sum of the apostle's meaning appears to be this: If there be no resurrection of the dead, those who, in becoming Christians, expose themselves to all manner of privations, crosses, severe sufferings, and a violent death, can have no compensation, nor any motive sufficient to induce them to expose themselves to such miseries. But as they receive baptism as an emblem of death in voluntarily going under the water, so they receive it as an emblem of the resurrection unto eternal life, in coming up out of the water; thus they are baptized for the dead, in perfect faith of the resurrection.

Still others claim this was saints being immersed in meaning persecutions in order to hasten the return of the Lord. However, the Bible does not teach the Second Coming is dependent upon the amount of persecutions endured by the saints.

Finally, there is the view that the Apostles were suffering persecution to bring the Gospel to those dead spiritually. So if there is no resurrection, why would they keep on preaching to those dead in their sins.

## **Baptism Understood Literally, but Applied to a Washing of the Body**

Based on a Jewish ritual the bodies of the dead were carefully washed and purified when buried, on account of their hope of the resurrection. Nowhere does the history either of Jews or Gentiles teach us that the care exercised on the dead arose out of their ideas on the resurrection. Neither is this practice mentioned in the Old Testament. If it was practiced it would seem more likely to have been done in Jerusalem instead of Corinth.

The Jews would engage in a ritual washing to cleanse them when they came in contact with the dead. However, this has no connection with the resurrection of the dead. Keep in mind the baptism is not for the removal of the filth of the flesh (1 Peter. 3:21).

Some Jews may have practiced a form of vicarious purification for those Jews who died while they were unclean. Again, what has this to do with Christians and the hope of the resurrection from the dead?

## **Baptism for Sins of Participant**

John Chrysostom held the notion that "for the dead" can mean "for our mortal bodies." Baptized in view of the fact that their bodies will one day die. The problem with this is the interpretation identifies the one being baptized (they) as being the same person as the "dead".

Calvin, Estius, and others thought it referred to those who were baptized who were at the point of death. However, no one in the New Testament procrastinated baptism. They were baptized immediately.

It has been assumed by some that a plague or some other disaster may have claimed the lives of many saints at Corinth. The baptisms that were taking place were replacing live saints with the dead saints, thus baptized and taking the place of the dead. Doddridge renders it, "in the room of the dead, who are just fallen in the cause of Christ, but are yet supported by a succession of new converts, who immediately offer themselves to fill up their places, as ranks of soldiers that advance to the combat in the room of their companions who have just been slain in their sight." This is mere conjecture without any support.

Others hypothesize that persecutions forced the church at Corinth to baptize converts in the burial tombs. They were baptized over the dead. Again there is not historical evidence of this at Corinth.

"As older Christians fell terminally ill and it became apparent that their departure was near, they

would summon their loved ones to their bedside and urge those of them who were as yet unconverted to get right with God” (Gleason L. Archer, Encyclopedia of Bible Difficulties, p. 401). These were baptized being motivated by those saints which were dying. The reality of the resurrection is a motivation for evangelism.

An interesting attempt to simplify this verse by interpreting it to mean baptism for the dead Christ. The term “dead” is a plural noun and could not apply to Christ.

Another take on this baptism is that it was done in hopes of joining the ranks of the dead. Although Christians are comforted by the thought of being re-united with the saints that sleep in Christ (1 Thess. 4:18), this is never thought as a benefit or motive for baptism in the New Testament.

Christ died to free us from the fear and power of death (Heb. 2:12-15). Some believe baptism for the dead is to free one from the fear and power of death. Matthew Henry wrote “...these executions might terrify some into Christianity; as the miraculous earthquake did the jailer, Ac. 16:29,30,. Persons baptized on such an occasion might be properly said to be baptized for the dead, that is, on their account.”. Obedience to the gospel because one fears the judgment to come (Ac. 17:30-31). However, the context is dealing with belief in the resurrection of the dead.

Romans 6:3-6 offers an appealing explanation for this baptism for the dead. Baptism is in the likeness of the death, burial, and RESURRECTION of Christ. Notice what Romans 6 says about the connection between death and baptism: “baptized into his death,” “buried with him by baptism into” “planted together in the likeness of his death,” “our old man is crucified with him,” and “he that is dead is freed from sin.” Sinners are “dead in sins” (Eph. 2:5). Baptism is for the dead (Col. 2:12,13). Just as they are dead and baptized for a resurrection into newness of life, so one also is baptized in hope of a future resurrection by Christ. Since baptism is in the likeness of the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ, to deny the resurrection is to deny the validity of baptism. If there is no resurrection for the dead, why baptism for those dead in sin? What good is there to be resurrected in baptism in newness of life if there is not resurrection to eternal life? Paul said, “*knowing this, that our old man was crucified with Him, that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves of sin*” (Rom. 6:6). “It is difficult to believe that the Corinthians would be baptized with the specific hope of the general resurrection of their bodies and then turn around and deny that resurrection” (Wiersbe).

### Summary

Only the individual sinner can choose to obey the Gospel. If he dies before he is baptized for the remission of his sins, he dies in his sins. No one can hear, believe, repent, confess and be baptized for another person.

Since there will be a resurrection from the dead, no one should put off being baptized and prepare their souls to be resurrected unto eternal life.

Whatever the baptism for the dead means does not change the fact that “*He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned*” (Mark 16:16).

### Questions:

1. What temptation must be avoided with dealing with difficult verses?
2. What is the first thing to investigate when dealing with a difficult passage?
3. What is the context about in 1 Corinthians 15?

4. Why do Mormon's get baptized for those who are dead?
5. True False Mormons who are not willing to be baptized for their dead relatives jeopardize their own salvation.
6. Does the Book of Mormon support this doctrine of vicarious baptism for the dead?
7. True False All Mormons support the doctrine of baptism by proxy for the dead.
8. Show how this Mormon doctrine contrary to the Bible.
9. Give an example of a belief in baptism for the dead in a metaphorical sense.
10. What is wrong with understanding this baptism to be a literal washing of a dead body or a living body for the dead?
11. Is there any evidence of a great plague or persecution in Corinth at or before the time of 1 Corinthians?
12. Why can't this mean the baptism for the dead Christ?
13. What is the connection between 1 Corinthians 15:29 and Romans 6:3-6?

**Application & Discussion:**

1. What can be done for a dead relative who had rejected the Gospel and was not baptized for the remission of their sins?
2. Which view or views do you think are the most likely interpretation of this verse?

**Homework:** Talk to a lost relative before it is too late.

## Early Christians & Baptism

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Although Baptism is mentioned many times in the New Testament and many more times in the writings of the early Christians writers, it remains one of the most controversial topics between New Testament Christians and denominations. The denominations also disagree with all the early Christians writers.

### The Value of the Early Christian Writers

Previous lessons quoted from some early Christian writers such as Tertullian, Justin Martyr; Clement of Rome; Polycarp; Irenaeus; Origen; Cyprian; etc. Just who are these men? What relevance do they have for the modern Christian? Most of these writers quoted lived between 90 and 300 A.D. They were Christians and wrote in defense of their beliefs to the world and one another.

Before we investigate them further let's see what they are not. These men are not quoted as a source of authority. Catholicism view these writers differently. Often they have been referred to as the Church Fathers. They considered their writings to be authoritative or equivalent to the Scriptures. However, we will simply refer to them as early Christians.

For their authority these early Christian writers appealed to the writings of the apostles. They did not claim to be inspired writers, but believed that revelation was complete and that there would be no new revelations from God.

Most of them suffered persecution and gave their lives for their beliefs.

These men often weeded out the spurious writings of fake gospels of the life of Jesus and fictitious acts of the apostles.

These writings of early Christians serve as a valuable tool for Textual Criticism. J. Harold Greenlee says that the quotations of the Scripture in the works of the early Christian writers "are so extensive that the New Testament could virtually be reconstructed from them without the use of New Testament manuscripts." Tertullian alone quotes some 7,000 times from the New Testament.

These writers from the first couple of centuries of the existence of Christianity provide us with great insight to historical facts, customs of the day, false teachings and teachers, and demonstrate the unity in doctrine they possessed among one another. They also are in great contrast to the teachings of many denominations of our day.

The early Christians had some unique advantages that modern Christians simply cannot have. They had the advantage of time. The second century Christians were a lot closer to the time of the teaching of the first century apostles and prophets. We are some 19 centuries removed. Have you ever set at the feet of the apostle John or Paul or Peter as they taught the Gospel. Clement of Rome was a personal disciple of both Paul and Peter (cf. Phil. 4:3). Origen describes Clement as "a disciple of the apostles" (Origen First Things bk. 2, chap. 3, sec. 6). Furthermore, Polycarp (69-156 AD) was a disciple of John along with Papias (60-130 AD). Ignatius who lived from 35-107 AD was an elder at Antioch and personally knew more than one of the apostles. Still we can read what they had to say from a perspective of having known the apostles or the men taught by the apostles.

The New Testament was written in Koine Greek. This is now a dead language, that is, no one speaks this by means of every day communication and thus the language does not change. The early Christians did not need a translation of the New Testament. They had the advantage of reading the Scriptures in the original Greek.

For the purpose of this lesson, the early Christian writers give insight as to what they believed and practiced concerning the action, subjects, and purpose of baptism.

## Early Christians Believed the Action of Baptism Was Immersion

In many of today's denominations a candidate for baptism is given a choice between immersion or sprinkling or pouring. However, referencing the actions of Philip and the Ethiopian in Acts 8 and Paul's statement about the death burial and resurrection of Christ in Romans 6:3-5 compared to the sinner's baptism, the early Christian writers demonstrated this belief in immersion as the proper mode of baptism.

BARNABAS: Blessed are they who, placing their trust in the cross, have **gone down into the water**. ...we indeed **descend into the water** full of sins and defilement, but come up, bearing fruit, in our heart, having the fear [of God] and trust in Jesus in our spirit. (Epistle of Barnabas, XI, Vol. 1, p. 144).

HERMAS: And I said, "I heard, sir, some teachers maintain that there is no other repentance than that which takes place, when we **descended into the water** and received remission of our former sins. He said to me, "That was sound doctrine which you hear; for that is really the case." (Shepherd of Hermas, II, 3, Ante-Nicene Fathers, Vol. 2, p. 22).

TERTULLIAN: ...in the same way as the act of baptism itself too is carnal, in that we are **plunged in water**, but the effect spiritual, in that we are freed from sins." (On Baptism, Ante-Nicene Fathers, Vol. 3, p. 672).

CYRIL OF JERUSALEM: For thou goest **down into the water**, bearing thy sins, but the invocation of grace having sealed thy soul, suffereth thee not afterwards to be swallowed up by the terrible dragon. Having **gone down dead** in sins, **thou comest up quickened** in righteousness. ....so thou by going **down into the water**, and being in a manner **buried in the waters**, as he was in the rock, art raised again walking in newness of life." (Catechetical Lectures, III, On Baptism, Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, vol. 7, p. 17).

CYRIL OF JERUSALEM: ...for as he who **plunges into the waters** and is baptized is **Encompassed on all sides by the waters**, so were they also baptized completely by the holy Ghost. The **water however flows round the outside only**, but the Spirit baptize also the soul within, and that completely. (Catechetical Lectures, XVII, 14, Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, vol. 7, p. 127).

BASIL: How then are we made in the likeness of His death? In that we are **buried with Him by baptism**. ...How then do we achieve the descent into hell? By imitating, through baptism, the burial of Christ. For the bodies of the baptized are, as it were, **buried in the water**. (On the Spirit, XV, 35. Nicene and Post Nicene Fathers, Vol. 8, p. 21).

JOHN CHRYSOSTOM: In Baptism are fulfilled the pledges of our covenant with God; **burial** and death , **resurrection** and life; and these take place all at once. For when we **immerse** our heads in the water, the old man is buried as in a tomb below, and wholly sunk forever; then as we raise them again, the new man rises in its stead" (Homilies on John, XXV, 2. Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, vol. 14, p. 89).

JOHN CHRYSOSTOM: For the being baptized and **immersed and then emerging**, is a symbol of the descent into Hades and return thence. Wherefore also Paul calls baptism **a burial**, saying, "Therefore we are buried with Him by Baptism into death." (Rom. 6:4) (Homilies on First Corinthians, XL, 2. Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, vol. 14, p. 245).

### Early Christians on Infant Baptism

As noted in lesson three some early Christians do practice infant baptism. Such as, Irenaeus in about 180 AD. He wrote, "He came to save all persons by means of Himself—all, I say, who through Him are born again to God—infants, children, boys, youth, and old men" (Irenaeus 1, 391). The Apostolic Constitutions compiled around 390 AD instructed, "baptize your infants also and bring them up in the nurture and admonition of God. For He says, 'Allow the little children to come unto me and do not forbid them'" (Apostolic Constitutions, 7.457).

However, others taught against this practice. In about 198 AD Tertullian wrote,

And so, according to the circumstances and disposition, and even age, of each individual, the delay of baptism is preferable; principally, however, in the case of little children. For why is it necessary — if (baptism itself) is

not so necessary — that the sponsors likewise should be thrust into danger? Who both themselves, by reason of mortality, may fail to fulfil their promises, and may be disappointed by the development of an evil disposition, in those for whom they stood? The Lord does indeed say, Forbid them not to come unto me. Let them come, then, while they are growing up; let them come while they are learning, while they are learning whither to come; let them become Christians when they have become able to know Christ. Why does the innocent period of life hasten to the remission of sins? More caution will be exercised in worldly matters: so that one who is not trusted with earthly substance is trusted with divine! Let them know how to ask for salvation, that you may seem (at least) to have given to him that asks. For no less cause must the unwedded also be deferred — in whom the ground of temptation is prepared, alike in such as never were wedded by means of their maturity, and in the widowed by means of their freedom — until they either marry, or else be more fully strengthened for continence. If any understand the weighty import of baptism, they will fear its reception more than its delay: sound faith is secure of salvation. (Tertullian, 3:678).

## Early Christians on the Purpose of Baptism

Although we do not hold the writings of the early Christians to be authority, we do believe that they more accurately followed the writings on baptism in the New Testament than the modern denominations listed above. The early Christians believed baptism comes before salvation just as is taught in the New Testament.

- **They Believed Baptism Is For The Remission of Sins**

On the day of Pentecost the Jews responded to Peter's sermon requesting what they needed to do about their sin. *"Then Peter said to them, 'Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit'"* (Acts 2:38).

The following Christian writers of the first centuries agree.

CYRIL (345 AD): "For all things whatsoever thou hast done shall be forgiven thee, whether it be fornication, or adultery, or any other such form of licentiousness. What can be greater sin than to crucify Christ? Yet even of this Baptism can purify. For so spake Peter to the three thousand who came to him, to those who had crucified the Lord, when they asked him, saying, 'Men and brethren, what shall we do?' For the wound is great. Thou hast made us think of our fall, O Peter, by saying, 'Ye killed the Prince of Life.' What salve is there for so great a wound? What cleansing for such foulness? What is the salvation for such perdition? 'Repent,' saith he, 'and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, for the **remission of sins**, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.' O unspeakable loving-kindness of God! They have no hope of being saved, and yet they are thought worthy of the Holy Ghost. Thou seest the power of Baptism!" [Acts 2:38] (Cyril of Jerusalem, 348AD, "On Baptism," Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, vol. 7, pg. 16).

JUSTIN MARTYR wrote about ninety years after Matthew wrote his gospel: "this food we call eucharist, of which none are allowed to be partakers but such only as are true believers, and have been baptized in the laver of regeneration for the **remission of sins**." (Orchard's History, Vol. I, p. 241).

HERMAS (200 AD): "And I said, 'I heard, sir, some teachers maintain that there is no other repentance than that which takes place, when we descended into the water and received **remission of our former sin**.' He said to me, 'That was sound doctrine which you heard; for that is really the case.'" (Hermas, "The Shepherd," Ante-Nicene Fathers, vol. 2, pg. 22).

FIRMILIAN "But indeed you are worse than all heretics..... although they confess that they are in sins, and have no grace, and therefore come to the Church, you take away from them **remission of sins**, which is given in baptism, ..." (Firmilian, "The Epistles of Cyprian," Ante-Nicene Fathers, vol. 5, pg. 396).

- **They Believed Baptism Washes Away Sin**

God sent Ananias to Saul in Damascus to tell him what he needed to do. Saul was told *"And now why are you waiting? Arise and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on the name of the Lord"* (Acts 22:16). Ambrose, a bishop of Milan, in A.D. 390 wrote the following concerning baptism: "The body plunged into this water to **wash away sin**."

- **They Believed Baptism Is Burial of The Sinful Man**



In Paul's letter to the Romans he told them that baptism is in the likeness of Christ's death, burial and resurrection (Rom. 6:3-5). They are to die to sin, then are buried in the water, and arise to walk in newness of life. John Chrysostom wrote, "The Gospel takes hold on thousands of homicides and robbers, and baptizing delivereth them from their former vices. ...For in Baptism the sins are buried, the former things are blotted out, the man is made alive, the entire grace written upon his heart as it were a table." ("Homilies on Second Corinthians," 390 AD, Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, vol. 12, pg. 307)

- **They Believed That One Is Baptized into the Church**

Paul told the Corinthians *"For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body -- whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free -- and have all been made to drink into one Spirit"* (1 Cor. 12:13). "Nicomedes of Segersmae said: My opinion is this, that heretics coming to the Church should be baptized, for the reason that among sinners without they can obtain no remission of sins" ("The Seventh Council of Carthage Under Egyptian," Ante-Nicene Fathers, vol. 5, pg. 567). Cyprian (200-258 AD) quoting from 1 Peter 3:20,21 wrote, "Moreover, Peter himself... has commanded and warned us that we cannot be saved, except by the one only baptism of one Church. 'In the ark,' says he, 'of Noah, few, that is, eight souls, were saved by water, as also baptism shall in like manner save you.'

- **They Believed That One Is Baptized Into Christ**

Again, Paul told the Galatians, *"For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ"* (Gal. 3:27). A few centuries later Cyprian wrote: "For he who has been sanctified, his sins being put away in baptism, and has been spiritually re-formed into a new man, has become fitted for receiving the Holy Spirit; since the apostle says, 'As many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ.' [GAL. 3:27]" (Cyprian, "The Epistles of Cyprian," Ante-Nicene Fathers, vol. 5, pg. 387-388)

- **They Believed There Is One Baptism**

Around 62 A.D. Paul informed the church at Ephesus that there is only *"one baptism"* (Eph. 4:5). Carthage (200-258 AD): "Caecilius of Bilita said: I know only **one baptism** in the Church, and none out of the Church. This one will be here, where there is the true hope and the certain faith. For thus it is written: 'One faith, one hope, one baptism;' not among heretics, where there is no hope, and the faith is false, where all things are carried on by lying." (The Seventh Council of Carthage Under Cyprian, September, 258 AD, Ante-Nicene Fathers, vol. 5, pg. 565)

- **They Believed the Sinner Must Be Born Again of Water**

Just as Jesus taught that one must be born again of water in order to enter the Kingdom (John 3:3,5), so early Christians taught the same. Around 180 AD, Theophilus wrote, "The things proceeding from the waters were blessed by God, that this also could be a sign of men being destined to receive repentance and remission of sins, through the water and bath of regeneration - as many as come to the truth and are born again" (Ante-Nicene Fathers, 2.101).

- **They Believed That Baptism Was The Washing of Regeneration**

In his letter to Titus, Paul reminds him that salvation is *"not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us, through the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit"* (Tit. 3:5). Toward the middle of the third century Cyprian wrote, "But what a thing it is, to assert and contend that they who are not born in the Church can be the sons of God! For the blessed apostle sets forth and proves that baptism is that wherein the old man dies and the new man is born, saying, 'He saved us by the washing of regeneration.' But if regeneration is in the washing, that is, in baptism."

- **They Believed Those Who Refuse Baptism Will Be Lost**

Jesus not only commanded belief in baptism in order for one to be saved when He said, *"He who believes and is baptized will be saved,"* He also warned of the eternal consequences of failing to believe and thus not being baptized: *"but he who does not believe will be condemned"* (Mark 16:16). The early Christians also believed this.

JUSTIN MARTYR (110-165 AD): "He that, out of contempt, will not be baptized, shall be condemned as an unbeliever, and shall be reproached as ungrateful and foolish. For the Lord says: 'Except a man be baptized of water and of the Spirit, he shall by no means enter into the kingdom of heaven.' And again: 'He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved but he that believeth not shall be damned.'" (Justin Martyr

"Constitutions of the Holy Apostles," Ante-Nicene Fathers, vol. 7, pg. 456-457.)

CYRIL in the year 385 A.D. wrote: "if any man receive not Baptism, he hath not salvation;..." (Cyril of Jerusalem, Catechetical Lectures, III, On Baptism, Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, Vol. 7, p. 16).

CYRIL, Bishop of Jerusalem, "If any one receive not baptism he can not be saved." (ibid, p. 43).

"If he was not baptized, neither are any of us baptized. Yet, if there is no baptism, neither will there be any remission of sins. Father every man will die in his own sins." (Disputation of Archelaus and Manes (c. 320); (6.228).

- **They Believed Those who Taught Otherwise were False Teachers**

The New Testament is filled with warnings concerning false teachers and the danger they pose to those who are still lost in sin, newly baptized and even those seasons saints in Christ. The early Christians warned against, attacked and exposed those who came preaching another Gospel than that which the Apostles preached (Gal. 1:6-19).

IRENAEUS (C. 180): "When we come to refute them [the Gnostics], we will show in its proper place that this class of men have been instigated by Satan to a denial of baptism which is regeneration to God. Thus, they have renounced the whole faith...For the baptism instituted by the visible Jesus was for the remission of sins" (1.346).

TERTULLIAN (140-230 AD): "..., by washing away the sins of our early blindness, we are set free and admitted into eternal life! A treatise on this matter will not be superfluous; instructing not only such as are just becoming formed in the faith... The consequence is, that a viper of the Cainite heresy, lately conversant in this quarter, has carried away a great number with her most venomous doctrine, making it her first aim to destroy baptism. Which is quite in accordance with nature; for vipers and asps and serpents themselves generally do affect arid and waterless places. But we, little fishes after the example of our ikthus, Jesus Christ, are born in water, nor have we safety in any other way than by permanently abiding in water; so that most monstrous creature, who had no right to teach even sound doctrine, knew full well how to kill the little fishes, by taking them away from the water!" (On Baptism, Ante-Nicene Fathers, vol. 3, pg. 669.)

FIRMILIAN: "But indeed you are worse than all heretics..... although they confess that they are in sins, and have no grace, and therefore come to the Church, you take away from them remission of sins, which is given in baptism, by saying that they are already baptized and have obtained the grace of the Church outside the Church, and you do not perceive that their souls will be required at your hands when the day of judgment shall come" (Firmilian, "The Epistles of Cyprian," Ante-Nicene Fathers, vol. 5, pg. 396).

- **They Believed One Could Be Falsely Baptized**

When Paul came to Ephesus he found twelve men who only new of the baptism of John. Since this was not the one baptism of the great commission these men were all baptized in the belief that Jesus had come died for their sins, was buried for three days and arose (Acts 19:1-8). Early Christians also believed that one could be falsely baptized. Novatus of Thamugada (200-258 AD) said: Although we know that all the Scriptures give witness concerning the saving baptism, still we ought to declare our faith, that heretics and schismatics who come to the Church, and appear to have been falsely baptized, ought to be baptized in the everlasting fountain; and therefore, according to the testimony of the Scriptures, and according to the decree of our colleagues, men of most holy memory, that all schismatics and heretics who are converted to the Church must be baptized; ... (The Seventh Council of Carthage Under Cyprian, September, 258 AD, Ante-Nicene Fathers, vol. 5, pg. 565).

- **They Did Not Teach Salvation by Faith Only**

There is no more personal important questions for an individual to ask than: "What must I do to be saved?" The New Testament speaks at length in answering this question. Most denominations answer this in many different ways. All of them answer differently from the post - apostolic Church. Just what did the early Christians believe with regard to salvation? Did they believe is salvation by faith alone?

A doctrine that is the cornerstone of the Reformation is the teaching that salvation is by "faith only".

The very notion of a man doing more than this to be saved is considered as a vain attempt by men to merit salvation instead of trusting the grace of God.

According to the early writings by Christians in the first few centuries the view of working out our salvation was predominantly believed and taught. Most denominations would be labeled as heretical by early Christians. Clement of Rome a disciple of Paul did not understand Paul to teach one is saved by faith only and not works, he wrote, "For what reason was our father Abraham blessed? Was it not because he worked righteousness and truth through faith?" (Clement of Rome 1.13). Another quote by Clement demonstrates that he believed there was no contradiction between what Paul taught regarding justification by faith and not works of man: "We are justified by our works, and not our words" (ibid.). Around 180 AD Irenaeus said, "To believe in Him is to do His will" (Irenaeus 1.468). Hermas also stated, "Only those who fear the Lord and keep His commandments have life with God. But as to those who do not keep His commandments, there is no life in them.... All, therefore, who despise Him and do not follow His commands deliver themselves to death, and each will be guilty of his own blood. But I implore you to obey His commands, and you will have a cure for your former sins " (Hermas Shepherd bk. 2, comm. 7; bk. 3, sim. 10, chap). Clement of Alexandria taught the importance of obedience for salvation: "The Word, having unveiled the truth, showed to men the summit of salvation, so that either repenting they might be saved, or refusing to obey, they might be condemned. This is the proclamation of righteousness: to those who obey, rejoicing; to those who disobey, condemnation." (Clement Exhortation to the Heathen chap. 11). He also, clearly points to the need of works that lead to salvation: "Whoever obtains [the truth] and distinguishes himself in good works shall gain the prize of everlasting life.... Some people correctly and adequately understand how [God provides necessary power], but attaching slight importance to the works that lead to salvation, they fail to make the necessary preparation for attaining the objects of their hope." (Clement, Rich Man chaps. 1, 2). Hippolytus wrote: "The Gentiles, by faith in Christ, prepare for themselves eternal life through good works." (Hippolytus Fragments from Commentaries "On Proverbs.").

Did they mean to teach that Christians earn their salvation by works? No, Barnabas taught, "To this end the Lord delivered up His flesh to corruption, that we might be sanctified through the remission of sins, which is effected by His blood." Clement of Alexandria wrote, "Abraham was not justified by works, but by faith [Rom. 4:3]. Therefore, even if they do good works now, it is of no advantage to them after death, if they do not have faith."

The problem is that modern theologians teach that salvation works or salvation by faith are mutually exclusive. This is a false dilemma. Salvation according to the early Christians and the New Testament is by both faith and works (James 2:17-26). The Christians of the first centuries affirmed the place of faith, grace and works of God in salvation.

## Summary

By now it should be clear that modern day denominations do not have much in common with the teachings of the early Christians. Instead they have more in common with the teachings of heretics.

Everyone who has been baptized in a denomination must ask themselves, "Is my baptism Bible Baptism?" Remember, you can't be taught wrong about baptism and then be baptized right and you can't be baptized in the wrong way, at the wrong time, and for the wrong reason and be right. If you cannot answer with an affirmative, then you have not been truly baptized. If you have been baptized in a denomination and have not correctly been baptized according to the Bible, then will you not examine it and make it right today? The purpose of Bible Baptism is to provide man with many spiritual blessings. Those who are not baptized with true Bible baptism cannot hope to have these blessings.

### Questions:

1. How does the Catholic Church view these early Christian writers? What do they call them?
2. List the ways these early Christian writers can assist our Bible study today?

3. List the names of the early Christians writers who knew various Apostles? Why would this be of significance to us today?
4. Why would being able to read the Scriptures in Koine Greek have been such a valuable advantage for these early Christian writers?
5. How might the writings of the early Christians be considered valuable to Textual Criticism?
6. Sum up the early Christian writer's views on the action of baptism?
7. What does the fact that some early Christian writers support infant baptism and others refuted it prove?
8. List those early Christian writers by name who believed the purpose of baptism was for the remission of sins.
9. What passage of Scripture is Ambrose, a bishop of Milan, referring to when he wrote the following concerning baptism: "The body plunged into this water to wash away sin"?
10. Who quoted Galatians 3:27 and what application did they make?
11. What did the early Christian writers believe would become of those who were not baptized?
12. What did they think of those teachers who reject the necessity of baptism?

13. True False The early Christians writers supported the idea of salvation by "faith only."

### **Application & Discussion:**

1. What role can the beliefs of early Christian writers on baptism and salvation play in teaching the lost today?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
2. How would you go about helping someone who was baptized with denominational baptism see the need to obey the command to be baptized according to the New Testament?

**Homework:** Go online and research what additional things the early Christian writers had to say about baptism and salvation.

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