

***REPENT AND  
BE BAPTIZED***



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All Scriptures quoted are from the King James Version unless otherwise indicated.

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# 1. Introduction

## Definition of the Problem

Jesus Christ preached the Gospel, or good news, about the Kingdom of God. He challenged his hearers to “repent and believe” that Gospel, for the Kingdom was at hand (Mark 1:15). After Jesus ascended, the response to the Gospel according to Acts 2:38 was to “Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins.” Jesus said in Mark 16:16, “He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned.” The Scriptures clearly indicate that the proper response to hearing the Gospel is to believe it, to repent, and to be baptized. The exact nature, purpose and significance of this baptism have at times been misunderstood.

In some Christian circles today, there is a belief that the baptism which is an integral part of our response is a baptism in the holy spirit, and that baptism in water is no longer necessary or even desirable. For many years I was involved with a ministry which held to this belief.

In other words, with the coming of the greater (holy spirit), the lesser (water) came to an end. This replacement was initiated on Pentecost. On Pentecost the replacement first applied.<sup>1</sup>

In more recent years, some groups that started as “offshoots” of that ministry have espoused similar beliefs.

Scripture shows that the old, ceremonial, outer washing in water prescribed in the Mosaic Law for Israel pointed toward, and has now been superseded by, the new, actual, inner cleansing in holy spirit (the divine nature of God).<sup>2</sup>

Another variation of this doctrine says that baptism in water is obsolete because we are to be baptized figuratively, into the name of Jesus Christ.

Water baptism of any kind is irrelevant and obsolete. The only relevant baptism to those who profess Christ today is the figurative term “baptism” which is used of being “immersed” into Christ’s work, teaching and commandments via the working of the holy spirit and faith.<sup>3</sup>

Although there may be certain differences among the various versions of this doctrine, they all have the same basic premise in common: Baptism in water has been replaced by a spiritual, or figurative, baptism, making water baptism obsolete and unnecessary.<sup>4</sup> The problem with this idea, however, is that there is no clear Scripture that indicates this. The normal accepted meaning of baptism is a baptism in water. Let us begin by considering the word itself.

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<sup>1</sup> V. P. Wierwille, *The Bible Tells Me So* (New Knoxville, OH: American Christian Press, 1971), p. 134.

<sup>2</sup> John A. Lynn, *What is True Baptism?* (Indianapolis: Christian Educational Services, 2002), p. 1.

<sup>3</sup> Gary Gudlin, “Baptism Doth Now Save Us,” syllabus from a teaching at Summer School 2003 (Jamesville, NY: Christian Biblical Resources, 2003), p. 2.

<sup>4</sup> There are other doctrines regarding baptism that allow for the acceptance of both water and spirit. Some of these will be dealt with in later chapters, but the main focus of this writing is the doctrine which I held for many years, that water baptism is obsolete and was replaced by spirit baptism.

## The Words “Baptism” and “Baptize”

Part of the difficulty in understanding the meaning of “baptism” and “baptize” is that they are simply transliterations of Greek words. There was no corresponding English word at the time of translation. The noun “baptism” is from either of two Greek nouns, *baptisma* or *baptismos*, while the verb “baptize” is from the Greek verb *baptizo* (from the root *baptein*). This root means “to plunge, to immerse or to wash; it also signifies, from the Homeric period onward, any rite of immersion in water. The frequentative form *baptizein*, appears much later (Plato, *Euthydemus* 227d; *Symposium* 176b).”<sup>5</sup>

The verb *baptizo* is a derivative of another verb, *bapto*, which means to dip, which appears in Luke 16:24, John 13:26, and Revelation 19:13. The Online Bible Greek Lexicon describes the distinction between *bapto* and *baptizo* like this:

The clearest example that shows the meaning of *baptizo* is a text from the Greek poet and physician Nicander, who lived about 200 BC. It is a recipe for making pickles and is helpful because it uses both words. Nicander says that in order to make a pickle, the vegetable should first be ‘dipped’ (*bapto*) into boiling water and then ‘baptised’ (*baptizo*) in the vinegar solution. Both verbs concern the immersing of vegetables in a solution. But the first is temporary. The second, the act of baptising the vegetable, produces a permanent change.<sup>6</sup>

The verb was common in secular Greek, but the related nouns are confined to the vocabulary of the New Testament, according to Hasting’s Bible Dictionary.

[The noun] does not occur in the LXX [the Septuagint, the Greek translation of the Old Testament], neither is the verb with which it is connected ever used of an initiatory ceremony [in the LXX]. This verb is a derivative from one that means to dip (Jn 13:25, Rev 19:13), but itself has a wider meaning, = ‘to wash’ whether the whole or part of the body, whether by immersion or by the pouring of water (Mk 7:4, Lk 11:38).<sup>7</sup>

Because there was no English equivalent, these Greek words were merely transliterated into English. Like our English word “wash,” the Greek verb in its normal usage implies water. When I say I washed my hands, it is implied and understood that I mean “in water.” If washing or immersing in another substance is spoken of, then it is explicitly stated, whether it be a literal fluid other than water, or a figurative use of the word. But if the substance is not mentioned, water is assumed or implied.

There are a handful of occurrences in the Bible where the words are used in a way not referring to the rite of baptism, but for the most part the usage of baptism in the New Testament falls into one of three categories: John’s baptism, baptism in the name of Jesus, and baptism with the holy spirit. Much of the misunderstanding regarding baptism comes from the fact that both the noun and the verb are sometimes used in the Bible without qualification or definition; that is, the verse does not explicitly use the words “water” or “spirit.” It might seem that in these cases, the word “baptism”

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<sup>5</sup> *The Encyclopedia of Religion*, Mircea Eliade, ed. (NY: MacMillan Pub. Co., 1987), s.v. “Baptism”

<sup>6</sup> James Montgomery Boice, *Bible Study Magazine*, May 1989, quoted in Online Bible Greek Lexicon (software, Online Bible Foundation, 1995-2005)

<sup>7</sup> *Hastings Dictionary of the Bible*, James Hastings, ed., Hendrickson Publishers, Inc. edition (reprinted from Charles Scribner’s Sons edition, New York: 1909), s.v. “Baptism”

could be either water or spirit, and the meaning is often thought to be ambiguous. Therefore the interpretation is often read into the passages based on the preconceived ideas of those doing the interpreting. To avoid misunderstanding, we will examine how “baptize” and “baptism” are used in the Bible.

When used of the baptism of John, it is obviously referring to water. Beyond that, the word “baptize” or “baptized” appears by itself (i.e. not specifically designated as “water” or “spirit”) twenty times<sup>8</sup> and the word “baptism,” four times<sup>9</sup>. As we examine the Scriptures, we shall see that there is a clear pattern which differentiates the various kinds of baptism, and the context defines that pattern.<sup>10</sup>

We will begin with a broad discussion of the primary issues regarding baptism, and then examine the occurrences in detail after that. We will also look at the historical development of the doctrine of baptism, and consider its meaning and significance in relation to the new birth. Finally we will look at the reasons why one should be baptized, including a detailed examination of the textual evidence for Jesus’ commandment to baptize.

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<sup>8</sup> Mark 16:16; Acts 2:41; 8:12,13,36,38; 9:18; 10:47; 16:15,33; 18:8; 22:16; Romans 6:3; I Corinthians 1:13,14,15,16(2x),17; 12:13.

<sup>9</sup> Romans 6:4; Ephesians 4:5; Colossians 2:12; I Peter 3:21

<sup>10</sup> A list of all the occurrences of baptize/baptism is given in the Appendix.

## 2. Primary Issues

### Water Vs. Spirit?

The Scriptures that are usually cited as proof that spirit baptism replaced water are the ones that say, “John baptized with water, but Jesus baptizes with holy spirit.” Let’s look at these Scriptures.

Matthew 3:11 I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance: but he that cometh after me is mightier than I, whose shoes I am not worthy to bear: he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost, and with fire:

Mark 1:8 I indeed have baptized you with water: but he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost.

Luke 3:16 John answered, saying unto them all, I indeed baptize you with water; but one mightier than I cometh, the latchet of whose shoes I am not worthy to unloose: he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost and with fire:

In the Gospel of John, similar words are used, but the two halves of the statement are separated over two days.

John 1:

26 John answered them, saying, I baptize with water: but there standeth one among you, whom ye know not;

27 He it is, who coming after me is preferred before me, whose shoe’s latchet I am not worthy to unloose.

28 These things were done in Bethabara beyond Jordan, where John was baptizing.

29 The next day John seeth Jesus coming unto him, and saith, Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world.

30 This is he of whom I said, After me cometh a man which is preferred before me: for he was before me.

31 And I knew him not: but that he should be made manifest to Israel, therefore am I come baptizing with water.

32 And John bare record, saying, I saw the Spirit descending from heaven like a dove, and it abode upon him.

33 And I knew him not: but he that sent me to baptize with water, the same said unto me, Upon whom thou shalt see the Spirit descending, and remaining on him, the same is he which baptizeth with the Holy Ghost.

34 And I saw, and bare record that this is the Son of God.

In Acts, Jesus uses similar words as well, which Peter later recalls.

Acts 1:5 For John truly baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost not many days hence.

Acts 11:16 Then remembered I the word of the Lord, how that he said, John indeed baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost.

Notice that none of these passages says that Jesus would baptize with the holy spirit **instead** of water. To interpret these passages as saying that spirit would replace water is to read into it a false dichotomy that does not exist. It is assuming that **spirit** is set against **water**, as being antithetical and mutually exclusive, but that is not the point at all. The point is to **contrast** the baptism of John and the baptism of Jesus, and to contrast the nature of each, showing the differences between the two.

Furthermore, interpreting these verses as “spirit vs. water” assumes that these are the only two baptisms spoken of in the Bible. But there are actually three. John baptized in water, there is a baptism in water in the name of Jesus, and there is the baptism of the holy spirit, which Jesus would accomplish. The baptism in the holy spirit is truly a spiritual baptism, but in the book of Acts we also see instances of believers baptizing other individuals. This can’t be the baptism of the holy spirit, because only Jesus does that, according to Acts 2:33. But the baptism in water that the disciples perform in Acts is still distinct from the baptism of John.

The verses in John 1 show that John the Baptist was contrasting not just water and spirit but **his** ministry and **Jesus’** ministry. (“I baptize with water: but there standeth one among you ...who coming after me is preferred before me...”) Later, after Christ’s atoning sacrifice, it was **in the name of Jesus** that baptism was performed, and baptism in his name is said to be superior to the baptism of John (Acts 19:4, among other verses). But it was still water baptism, as seen from the records in Acts. Nowhere does it say that spirit and water are mutually exclusive, and nowhere does it say that one replaces the other or makes the other obsolete. That is being read into the verses that we’re considering.

When the word “but” is used to set two things in contrast, it doesn’t automatically follow that they are mutually exclusive. In fact the Greek word used in these verses is *de*, which is used to mark a transition between phrases, or a contrast that is not a strong one. There is another word, *alla*, which is used to mark stronger contrast, such as in Matthew 4:4, “Man shall not live by bread alone, but [*alla*] by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God.”

An example of such a transition can be seen in I Corinthians 8:1 where Paul writes, “Knowledge puffeth up, but [*de*] love edifieth.” This verse doesn’t mean you should have love without knowledge. It is simply contrasting the aspects of each. In fact, in this case, it is implying that knowledge without love is insufficient, and that one should have love **in addition to** knowledge. Similarly, John’s baptism involved water, while Jesus’ baptism would involve spirit. But it doesn’t automatically follow that spirit and water are mutually exclusive. Reading through the records in Acts, one sees that the disciples baptized with water in Jesus’ name, **and** Jesus baptized in holy spirit, usually at the same time (though not always). In fact on the occasions where one was present without the other,<sup>11</sup> it was considered unusual, and the apostles got involved to rectify the situation. Certainly John’s baptism in water alone could not produce a change on the inside, as the holy spirit could do. But there was also a purpose for the outward sign of water, as we shall see. Rather than spirit **replacing** water, it **complemented** it, making the Christian’s baptism complete.

### **Ceremonial Washings?**

Another reason for thinking that water baptism became obsolete is that it has wrongly been associated with the Old Testament Law of Moses. The New Testament **does** clearly state that the Old Covenant has been done away with, and that the ordinances of the Mosaic Law have been replaced, because

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<sup>11</sup> Acts 8 and Acts 10, which records we will look at in detail.



they were shadows which pointed to the greater sacrifice of Jesus Christ. Paul goes to great lengths to explain this in Galatians and Hebrews, as well as references in Colossians and I Corinthians. However, nowhere does he say that baptism in water was one of those shadows that was done away with.

It has been suggested that Hebrews 9:10 is referring to water baptism, calling it a figure for the earlier time which had been done away with.

Hebrews 9:

8 The Holy Ghost this signifying, that the way into the holiest of all was not yet made manifest, while as the first tabernacle was yet standing:

9 Which was a figure for the time then present, in which were offered both gifts and sacrifices, that could not make him that did the service perfect, as pertaining to the conscience;

10 Which stood only in meats and drinks, and divers washings [Greek, *baptismos*], and carnal ordinances, imposed on them until the time of reformation.

While it is true the word “washings” in verse 10 is the word *baptismos*, it must be kept in mind that this Greek word is not used exclusively of the rite of baptism. Three of the four occurrences of the noun form are referring to washing of things; and the verb form, *baptizo*, while it usually refers to baptism, is also used to refer to “the washing of cups and pots” in Mark 7:4. The translators correctly render the word as “washings” rather than “baptisms” in these cases.

The question is, then, does this verse in Hebrews 9 refer to water baptism as John preached it? The answer is no. There were, of course, ceremonial washings involved with the Old Testament Law<sup>12</sup>, but they were different from the baptism that John preached in several important ways. First, they involved washing of the flesh or of objects such as cups and pots, but they did not involve total immersion. Second, they were done by a person for himself, whereas John’s baptism was something that was done by another person: A baptizer baptized the candidate for baptism. Third, these ritual washings were performed on a regular, repeated basis, for periodic cleansing and purification. John’s baptism, on the other hand, was a one-time event with a very specific purpose. It was a baptism of repentance (Mark 1:4, Luke 3:3, Acts 13:24, 19:4) which symbolized the person’s turning away from his past life of sin, and turning to God, dedicating his life to Him. Specifically, it was preached in connection with the announcement of the Kingdom of God.

Finally, had John’s baptism been part of the Mosaic Law it would have been practiced by the Pharisees, who delighted in following the most minute details of the letter of the Law, although they missed the heart of it. Yet they rejected John and his baptism (Luke 7:29,30) and questioned his authority to baptize, because it was something new (Matthew 21:25-27; Mark 11:30-33; Luke 20:4-8; John 1:25).

It has also been suggested that John’s baptism, and Christian water baptism after it, were somehow based on or related to the practice of proselyte baptism. When a Gentile wanted to be a convert to Judaism, in addition to being circumcised, he would undergo a baptism in water. However, there is no solid evidence that this practice was even in existence before the end of the first century. Even if it had been in practice at the time of John, there is no Scriptural basis for it. It was not based on any Old Testament law and was not ordained of God. The baptism of John, on the other hand, was

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<sup>12</sup> See for example, Exodus 29:4; Leviticus 11:32; 14:8-9; 16:4,24; 17:15-16; 22:6.

ordained of God (Luke 7:30; John 1:33) as was the water baptism which Jesus authorized his disciples to perform (John 3:26,27).

Neither the Old Testament cleansing rituals nor the practice of proselyte baptism were direct forerunners of John's baptism. It was something new and unique, ordained of God. John announced the coming of the Kingdom of God and called on people to repent in light of that (Matthew 3:1,2). Jesus likewise proclaimed the Kingdom of God, and called for repentance (Matthew 4:17; Mark 1:15). This was the meaning and purpose of baptism in water.

### **Repentance and Baptism**

Repentance, far from being obsolete, was and is the requirement for forgiveness or remission of sins, which is required for salvation<sup>13</sup>. John preached "the baptism of repentance **for the remission of sins**" (Mark 1:4; Luke 3:3). But it was not complete, since Jesus had not yet shed his blood for that purpose. At the last supper, Jesus said that his blood of the new testament, or new covenant, is shed for the remission of sins. (Matthew 26:28; Mark 14:24; Luke 22:20). His blood is also linked with forgiveness of sins in the Epistles.

Romans 3:25 Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God;

Ephesians 1:7 In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace;

Colossians 1:14 In whom we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins:

Hebrews 9:

13 For if the blood of bulls and of goats, and the ashes of an heifer sprinkling the unclean, sanctifieth to the purifying of the flesh:

14 How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?

15 And for this cause he is the mediator of the new testament, that by means of death, for the redemption of the transgressions that were under the first testament, they which are called might receive the promise of eternal inheritance.

Hebrews 10:

11 And every priest standeth daily ministering and offering oftentimes the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins:

12 But this man, after he had offered one sacrifice for sins for ever, sat down on the right hand of God;

13 From henceforth expecting till his enemies be made his footstool.

14 For by one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified.

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<sup>13</sup> In Luke 1:77, a prophecy about Jesus said that he would "give knowledge of salvation unto his people by the remission of their sins."

15 Whereof the Holy Ghost also is a witness to us: for after that he had said before,  
16 This is the covenant that I will make with them after those days, saith the Lord, I will  
put my laws into their hearts, and in their minds will I write them;  
17 And their sins and iniquities will I remember no more.  
18 Now where remission of these is, there is no more offering for sin.  
19 Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus,  
20 By a new and living way, which he hath consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to  
say, his flesh;  
21 And having an high priest over the house of God;  
22 Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts  
sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water.

Hebrews 12:24 And to Jesus the mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of  
sprinkling, that speaketh better things than that of Abel.

Once the sacrifice of Jesus Christ was complete, he instructed his followers what they were to preach.

Luke 24:

46 And said unto them, Thus it is written, and thus it behoved Christ to suffer, and to rise  
from the dead the third day:

47 And that **repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name** among  
all nations, beginning at Jerusalem.

John had preached a baptism of repentance that pointed to the one who would come after him. The  
disciples of Jesus were to preach repentance and remission of sins in the name of Jesus Christ. In  
Acts we read of them doing just that, and Peter, like John, links it with baptism.

Acts 2:38 Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the  
name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy  
Ghost.

Acts 8:12 But when they believed Philip preaching the things concerning the kingdom of  
God, and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women.

From John the Baptist onward, water baptism was a symbol of repentance for the forgiveness of sins.  
But it was incomplete until Jesus shed his blood, which is why John said that **his** baptism pointed to  
the one who was to come after, namely Jesus. (Paul said the same thing in Acts 19:4). When Christ's  
sacrificial work was finished, the repentance became complete, and Peter and the others called for  
repentance and baptism in his name for the forgiveness of sins. They baptized with water, now in the  
name of Jesus Christ instead of with John's baptism, and when they did so, Jesus baptized them with  
spirit, something only he can do, not any man. This is why John said that Jesus would baptize with  
holy spirit, in contrast to what he or any man could do.

Both aspects are necessary, and both were the norm in the Christian Church. In the epistles, baptism  
in water is completely absent from Paul's declaration that the Old Testament Law was done away  
with. He speaks of circumcision, of the Sabbath system, of sacrifices and offerings, and other aspects  
of the Mosaic Law that became obsolete when Jesus Christ instituted the New Covenant. But  
nowhere does Paul refer to water baptism as such an obsolete element.

### 3. Examining the Scriptures

#### The Gospels

Having laid a foundation, I would now like to closely examine the pattern of usage presented in the Scriptures. First there was John's baptism in water. This is called "The baptism of John" (Matthew 21:25, Mark 11:30, Luke 7:29, Luke 20:4, Acts 1:22, Acts 18:25) or "The baptism of repentance" (Mark 1:4, Luke 3:3, Acts 13:24, Acts 19:4). John called the people to repent of their past lives, and to believe the Gospel, because the Kingdom of God was at hand. The people responded by being baptized in water. Jesus partook of this baptism as well, even though he did not need to repent.

Matthew 3:

13 Then cometh Jesus from Galilee to Jordan unto John, to be baptized of him.

14 But John forbad him, saying, I have need to be baptized of thee, and comest thou to me?

15 And Jesus answering said unto him, Suffer it to be so now: for thus it becometh us to fulfill all righteousness. Then he suffered him.

16 And Jesus, when he was baptized, went up straightway out of the water: and, lo, the heavens were opened unto him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove, and lighting upon him:

17 And lo a voice from heaven, saying, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.

Jesus told John to allow him to be baptized, "for it becometh us to fulfill all righteousness." It has been suggested that this is referring to the fact that Jesus needed to be baptized in water in order to fulfill the Old Testament Law. But as we saw previously, John's baptism in water was not a part of the Law of Moses. Rather than fulfilling the Old Testament, Jesus' words, "it becometh *us*" indicate that he was setting an example for his Church to follow. He was baptized in water, and received the holy spirit at that time, just as Christians would receive the holy spirit at their baptism throughout the New Testament.

In addition to John's baptism, it must be remembered that Jesus also baptized with water, and in fact made **more** disciples than John. He did not personally baptize, but authorized his disciples to perform it.

John 3:22 After these things came Jesus and his disciples into the land of Judaea; and there he tarried with them, and baptized.

John 3:26 And they came unto John, and said unto him, Rabbi, he that was with thee beyond Jordan, to whom thou barest witness, behold, the same baptizeth, and all men come to him.

John 4:

1 When therefore the Lord knew how the Pharisees had heard that Jesus made and baptized more disciples than John,

2 (Though Jesus himself baptized not, but his disciples,)

It has been suggested that the baptism which Jesus had his disciples carry out was an extension of the baptism of John. But we are told that he baptized “more disciples than John,” indicating that he was not merely working for or with John. Those who were baptized became **his** disciples, not John’s. When John’s disciples pointed out in chapter 3 that Jesus was baptizing too, John told them, “Ye yourselves bear me witness, that I said, I am not the Christ, but that I am sent before him” (verse 28) and “He must increase, but I must decrease.” (verse 30). The Pharisees also pointed out differences between the disciples of John and the disciples of Jesus (Luke 5:33). Jesus’ ministry was not a mere extension of John’s. Rather, John’s ministry pointed to and paved the way for that of Jesus.

It is sometimes pointed out that this was early in Jesus’ ministry, and that baptism was not mentioned when Jesus sent out the twelve (Luke 9:1,2) and the seventy (Luke 10:1,9). The disciples at that time were instructed to preach the Kingdom of God, and to heal the sick. There is no mention of baptism in the commands that Jesus gave them. But Mark 6:12 states that when the twelve were sent out, “...they went out, and preached that men should repent.” How did men repent? We saw that repentance was demonstrated by water baptism at that time, first under John’s ministry, and then when Jesus authorized his disciples to baptize in water. Although the Lord’s instructions in Luke 9 and 10 do not mention baptism, there was also no instruction forbidding them to baptize, or informing them that water baptism was going to be replaced in the near future.

## **Acts 1 & 2**

So far we have seen literal baptisms in water, performed by John and Jesus, and we have their reference to baptism in the holy spirit. The literal meaning of the word “baptize” is to immerse, and as previously mentioned, water is implied in its meaning if no other substance is explicitly indicated. There are also figurative uses of the word “baptize.” Matthew 3:11 and Luke 3:16 mention both the baptism in the holy spirit and a baptism in fire, which refers to the future judgment, as indicated by the context (Matthew 3:12; Luke 3:17). Other figurative uses of the word “baptize” are found in Matthew 20:22,23; Mark 10:38,39; Luke 12:50 (referring to Jesus’ suffering and death) and I Corinthians 10:2 (referring to Old Testament believers being baptized into Moses). Holy spirit is not a physical substance that one can literally be immersed in. Receiving it is figuratively called a baptism in order to draw a comparison with literal immersion in water, yet at the same time the spirit is contrasted with water showing its superiority. But it is only used in this way in those six verses which contrast the baptisms of John and Jesus, discussed earlier.

Only one other verse, I Corinthians 12:13, uses the word baptized in the same context as holy spirit, where it says “by one spirit are we all baptized into one body and have been made to drink of the holy spirit.” Here, “drink” is used figuratively. Spirit is obviously not something one can literally drink, but it is compared to water, in connection with the reference to baptism<sup>14</sup>. Again, this figurative usage makes sense in the context.

Because of its intangible nature, a number of different figurative terms are used to refer to the receiving of the holy spirit. ‘Baptize’ is only one of them. The scriptures also speak of people receiving it, being given it, anointed with it, having it come upon them or fall on them, being filled with it, having it poured out, etc. (‘Filled with’ and ‘full of’ are also used to refer to instances when the holy spirit works in a person in a specific way.) Since ‘baptize in the holy spirit’ is only one of several figurative expressions, and is only used in those few verses which make a point of comparing

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<sup>14</sup> Being baptized “into” the Lord’s body has to do with the entrance into the Church which is his body. We will see more about this later.

and contrasting it with baptism in water, there is no basis for assuming that when the word 'baptize' is used by itself in an unqualified way, it must automatically mean a spiritual or figurative baptism. A word must be understood in light of its normal meaning, unless a figure is directly indicated in the immediate context. When the Bible refers to baptism of the spirit, it is clearly defined.

Beginning in Acts, Jesus instructed his apostles by saying, "...Wait for the promise of the Father, which, saith he, ye have heard of me. For John truly baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost not many days hence" (Acts 1:4,5). He further elaborates on this idea in verse 8, "But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth." From the context we see that to be baptized with the Holy Ghost is the same thing as the Holy Ghost coming upon them. This came to pass in Acts 2:4, "And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance." So being "filled with the holy spirit," "the holy spirit coming upon" them, and being "baptized with the holy spirit" are all ways of referring to the same thing. (Verse 33 ties it back in with the "promise of the Father.") These three phrases are used interchangeably throughout the New Testament.

Later on that same day of Pentecost, Peter proclaimed the Gospel and the people responded by asking what they should do. Peter's reply and their response begin to define the third type of baptism (besides John's baptism and baptism in the holy spirit).

Acts 2:

38 Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.

39 For the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call.

40 And with many other words did he testify and exhort, saying, Save yourselves from this untoward generation.

41 Then they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls.

Notice that Peter connects baptism with repentance in verse 38, as discussed before. Also notice what he does NOT say. He doesn't say, "Repent and be baptized with the Holy Ghost." He knew that baptism with the Holy Ghost would be done by Jesus, as foretold by John<sup>15</sup>. But he commands them to repent and be baptized, and **in conjunction with that** they would "receive the gift of the Holy Ghost" (another phrase equivalent to "baptized in the Holy Ghost"). What baptism is Peter commanding then? He commands them to be baptized "in the name of Jesus Christ."

We saw that the baptism of John was incomplete, and that John had pointed to the coming Messiah, saying that belief in him and his name would be the key to repentance for the remission of sins. This is the significance of baptism **in the name of Jesus Christ**. Then we see the people's response in verse 41. They "were baptized" - it doesn't say water or spirit. From the context we know that it is

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<sup>15</sup> John said that Jesus would baptize with the holy spirit, and in Acts 2:33, Peter said that Jesus, "...having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost, he hath shed forth this, which ye now see and hear." Nowhere does it say that the apostles or disciples baptized in the holy spirit, but the New Testament does refer to people being baptized. Sometimes it is in the passive voice, i.e., "they were baptized," and sometimes it is in the active voice, i.e., "he baptized him."

talking about being baptized in the name of Jesus Christ. The word “baptized” by itself is a frequently used “shorthand” way of saying “baptized in the name of Jesus Christ.”

The word baptize was sufficiently definite in meaning, and that meaning so understood by all as to need no explanation, there being no misunderstanding or controversy on the subject during the whole of the apostolic period.<sup>16</sup>

## Acts 8

“They were baptized” was another way of referring to baptism in the name of Jesus Christ. But what kind of baptism was it? We can see this “shorthand” used in the record of Philip in Samaria, as well.

Acts 8:

12 But when they believed Philip preaching the things concerning the kingdom of God, and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women.

13 Then Simon himself believed also: and when he was baptized, he continued with Philip, and wondered, beholding the miracles and signs which were done.

14 Now when the apostles which were at Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the word of God, they sent unto them Peter and John:

15 Who, when they were come down, prayed for them, that they might receive the Holy Ghost:

16 (For as yet he was fallen upon none of them: only they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus.)

17 Then laid they their hands on them, and they received the Holy Ghost.

It just says “they were baptized” and “he was baptized” in verses 12 and 13, but verse 16 defines it as being “baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus.” But is “baptized in the name of Jesus” referring to water baptism or baptism in the spirit? We saw in Acts 2:38, that Peter commanded them to repent and be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ, and in conjunction they would receive the holy spirit. Further distinction between the two is seen here in chapter 8.

It has sometimes been taught that being baptized in the name of Jesus Christ is equal to being baptized with the Holy Ghost, since there is only “one baptism,” according to Ephesians 4:5<sup>17</sup>. However, here, as in Acts 2:38, we clearly see a distinction between receiving the holy spirit and baptism in the name of Jesus Christ. In verse 12, when they believed the preaching, they “were baptized” which verse 16 defines as “baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus.” Then (in verses 14-16) the apostles sent Peter and John to pray that they might receive the Holy Ghost, “For as yet he was fallen upon none of them...” Notice, they had been baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus but they had not received, or been baptized with, the holy spirit. So the two things cannot be the same. (We also see a similar distinction in Acts 19:5 and 6, which we will look at later.)

One theory that has tried to explain this passage holds that they had been baptized in the holy spirit, but simply hadn’t manifested it outwardly yet. According to this theory, the phrase “they received

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<sup>16</sup> Jonas Hartzel, *The Baptismal Controversy: Its Exceeding Sinfulness* (Central Book Concern, 1877), p. 177.

<sup>17</sup> “Endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling; One Lord, one faith, one baptism, One God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all.” (Ephesians 4:3-6) The context of this verse is about maintaining unity, not about how many kinds of baptism there are. More on this verse later.

the word” (v. 14) implied that they were born again and had received holy spirit. The phrase “fallen upon” (in the Greek, *epiipto epi*) was interpreted as “came into manifestation.” That is, something that was received at an earlier time was then brought into manifestation. But there is no basis for defining the phrase this way. In Acts 10:44, “fell upon” is also *epiipto epi*, but there it is clear that they were receiving the holy spirit for the first time, not bringing into manifestation something that was received before. (“While Peter yet spake these words, the Holy Ghost **fell on** all them which heard the word.”) Fell upon means fell upon. Why should it be anything different in Acts 8?

Connected to this theory was the notion that there was a distinction between *dechomai* and *lambano*, two Greek words which are both translated “receive.” It was said that *dechomai* meant to receive subjectively, while *lambano* meant to receive to the end of manifesting. However, after checking several Bible dictionaries and lexicons, I find that there is no basis for making such a distinction between these two words. Not even E. W. Bullinger<sup>18</sup> makes this distinction in his lexicon. *Dechomai* is defined as receiving passively that which is offered, while *lambano* is a more forceful receiving, rather like “taking to oneself.” Even with that, there is nothing on which to base the notion that one form of receiving becomes the other when manifesting comes into play.

A simpler reading makes more sense. The Samaritans were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus, but didn’t receive the holy ghost. This was unusual, and so Peter and John were sent to find out why and to pray for them to receive the holy spirit. From that we can conclude that the norm for the Church was baptism in the name of the Lord Jesus, accompanied by receiving the holy spirit. As we saw, “baptized” was the shorthand way of referring to being baptized in the name of Jesus, and it cannot be the same as being baptized in, or receiving, the holy spirit. The question then is, what sort of baptism is this “baptism in the name of Jesus?” It must be a baptism in water. This becomes even clearer as we read on.

The next illustration, which is further on in the same chapter of Acts, helps to define “baptism in the name of Jesus.” It is the record dealing with the Ethiopian eunuch.

Acts 8:

26 And the angel of the Lord spake unto Philip, saying, Arise, and go toward the south unto the way that goeth down from Jerusalem unto Gaza, which is desert.

27 And he arose and went: and, behold, a man of Ethiopia, an eunuch of great authority under Candace queen of the Ethiopians, who had the charge of all her treasure, and had come to Jerusalem for to worship,

28 Was returning, and sitting in his chariot read Esaias the prophet.

29 Then the Spirit said unto Philip, Go near, and join thyself to this chariot.

30 And Philip ran thither to him, and heard him read the prophet Esaias, and said, Understandest thou what thou readest?

31 And he said, How can I, except some man should guide me? And he desired Philip that he would come up and sit with him.

32 The place of the scripture which he read was this, He was led as a sheep to the slaughter; and like a lamb dumb before his shearer, so opened he not his mouth:

33 In his humiliation his judgment was taken away: and who shall declare his generation? for his life is taken from the earth.

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<sup>18</sup> The 19<sup>th</sup> century theologian, author of *The Companion Bible* and other works, who greatly influenced the doctrines of the group with which I was formerly involved.



34 And the eunuch answered Philip, and said, I pray thee, of whom speaketh the prophet this? of himself, or of some other man?

35 Then Philip opened his mouth, and began at the same scripture, and preached unto him Jesus.

36 And as they went on their way, they came unto a certain water: and the eunuch said, See, here is water; what doth hinder me to be baptized?

37 And Philip said, If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest. And he answered and said, I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God.

38 And he commanded the chariot to stand still: and they went down both into the water, both Philip and the eunuch; and he baptized him.

39 And when they were come up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord caught away Philip, that the eunuch saw him no more: and he went on his way rejoicing.

40 But Philip was found at Azotus: and passing through he preached in all the cities, till he came to Caesarea.

In this passage, Philip preaches Jesus to the eunuch; the eunuch says, “Here is water. What hinders me from being baptized?” Philip responds, “If you believe with all your heart, you may.” The attempted explanation has been that Philip is saying it’s permitted for the eunuch to be baptized in water if the eunuch really believes that it’s necessary. But is that what Philip was saying? First of all, where did the eunuch, who knew nothing of Messiah before Philip preached to him, get the idea that water baptism was necessary? Where would he have even heard of baptism, except from Philip? We can only guess and conjecture about that. But when Philip said, “If you believe with all your heart, you may,” is he talking about believing that baptism is necessary, or is he talking about believing with all his heart **in Jesus?** The eunuch’s reply makes it clear: “I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God.” Then Philip baptized the eunuch, in agreement with the conditions that are stated elsewhere, namely that they must first believe in the Gospel of Jesus Christ before being baptized (Acts 2:41; 8:12,13; 18:8). Once again, the word “baptized” without any other qualifier is used referring to baptism in the name of Jesus Christ, and from the context it is clearly baptism in water.

## Acts 9

The next occurrence of baptism is in the record of the conversion of Saul. He was on the way to Damascus when he saw a blinding light, and heard a voice. He asked, “Who art thou Lord?” and the reply came, “I am Jesus whom thou persecutest.” Saul was instructed to arise and go into the city, where he would be told what to do. Meanwhile, Ananias had a vision telling him to go and pray for Saul. He resisted at first, but was convinced to go.

Acts 9:

17 And Ananias went his way, and entered into the house; and putting his hands on him said, Brother Saul, the Lord, even Jesus, that appeared unto thee in the way as thou camest, hath sent me, that thou mightest receive thy sight, and be filled with the Holy Ghost.

18 And immediately there fell from his eyes as it had been scales: and he received sight forthwith, and arose, and was baptized.

Here it just says he “was baptized.” From the pattern we have seen in Acts so far, it would be safe to assume that it is the shorthand way of saying he was baptized in the name of Jesus, which refers to baptism in water. Verse 17 says that he would be filled with the holy spirit. Can we assume then that “was baptized” in verse 18 is referring to the baptism in the holy spirit, and not water? To interpret it

that way would be to give a completely new meaning to the word “baptize” which would break with the normal usage we have so far seen. While verse 17 does refer to holy spirit, it uses a different figurative term, “filled with,” rather than “baptized.” If the figurative term “baptized” is not specifically used for the spirit in this verse, it would be incorrect to force that meaning onto the word “baptized” in the next verse, when the usual, literal meaning would fit better.

Paul’s account of his conversion, in Acts 22:16, gives further insight. He quotes Ananias as saying, “And now why tarriest thou? Arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord.” Ananias tells Saul to be baptized, which involved washing away his sins and calling on the name of the Lord. This fits with the meaning of baptism in water, as a symbol of repentance for the remission of sins.

### Acts 10 & 11

Words and phrases are generally defined by looking at the first few occurrences of them. We see a pattern developed in Acts that the first century Church knew of two kinds of baptism, one literal and one figurative. Upon hearing and believing the Gospel, a new believer was expected to repent and be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ. Baptism in water was an outward sign of his repentance, and his initiation into the Church body. It would usually be simultaneous with, or closely followed by, the receiving of, or baptism with, holy spirit. When this normal pattern did not occur, it was unusual, and the apostles got involved to rectify the situation in the case of the Samaritans in Acts 8. Another exception to the usual pattern occurs in Acts 10. Here we have the record of the first Gentiles to be baptized.

Acts 10:

42 And he commanded us to preach unto the people, and to testify that it is he which was ordained of God to be the Judge of quick and dead.

43 To him give all the prophets witness, that through his name whosoever believeth in him shall receive remission of sins.

44 While Peter yet spake these words, the Holy Ghost fell on all them which heard the word.

45 And they of the circumcision which believed were astonished, as many as came with Peter, because that on the Gentiles also was poured out the gift of the Holy Ghost.

46 For they heard them speak with tongues, and magnify God. Then answered Peter,

47 Can any man forbid water, that these should not be baptized, which have received the Holy Ghost as well as we?

48 And he commanded them to be baptized in the name of the Lord. Then prayed they him to tarry certain days.

Peter is sent, through a vision from God, to the Gentile’s house. He learns that God had told Cornelius to send for him. He began to preach to them, specifically about remission of sins through faith in the name of Jesus. While he yet spoke, the holy spirit fell upon them, and Peter and the other Jewish believers were astonished. Peter then says, “Can any man forbid water, that these should not be baptized which have received the holy spirit as well as we?” The Greek text literally reads, “**the** water,” that is, “Can anyone forbid **the** water...” indicating that water was well known. It is rendered this way in the NASB, and other English versions of the Bible. Whereas in Samaria they had been baptized in water but did not receive the spirit, here we have just the opposite. They received the holy spirit, but had not yet been baptized in water. Peter then says, “Can any man forbid the (well known or expected) water...?” He then commanded them to be baptized in the name of the Lord.

We know from both the previously established pattern, and the immediate context, that Peter is commanding water baptism.

The explanation has been that Peter got “carried away with the moment” and forgot that he shouldn’t be promoting water baptism. We supposedly know this because in the next chapter Peter is relating what had happened and says, “Then remembered I the word of the Lord, how that he said, John truly baptized with water, but ye shall be baptized with the holy ghost.” Chapter 10 didn’t record Peter’s “coming to his senses,” and nothing in that record indicates that his command was not carried out. But according to this explanation, it’s implied in his account of what happened in the next chapter. “Then remembered I...” is taken to mean, “I commanded water baptism, but then I remembered that it would be wrong.” However, this would be reading much into the record, and would not fit with the ordinary flow of language, or with the context of the chapter.

Acts 11:

- 1 And the apostles and brethren that were in Judaea heard that the Gentiles had also received the word of God.
- 2 And when Peter was come up to Jerusalem, they that were of the circumcision contended with him,
- 3 Saying, Thou wentest in to men uncircumcised, and didst eat with them.
- 4 But Peter rehearsed the matter from the beginning, and expounded it by order unto them, saying,
- 5 I was in the city of Joppa praying: and in a trance I saw a vision, A certain vessel descend, as it had been a great sheet, let down from heaven by four corners; and it came even to me:
- 6 Upon the which when I had fastened mine eyes, I considered, and saw fourfooted beasts of the earth, and wild beasts, and creeping things, and fowls of the air.
- 7 And I heard a voice saying unto me, Arise, Peter; slay and eat.
- 8 But I said, Not so, Lord: for nothing common or unclean hath at any time entered into my mouth.
- 9 But the voice answered me again from heaven, What God hath cleansed, that call not thou common.
- 10 And this was done three times: and all were drawn up again into heaven.
- 11 And, behold, immediately there were three men already come unto the house where I was, sent from Caesarea unto me.
- 12 And the Spirit bade me go with them, nothing doubting. Moreover these six brethren accompanied me, and we entered into the man’s house:
- 13 And he shewed us how he had seen an angel in his house, which stood and said unto him, Send men to Joppa, and call for Simon, whose surname is Peter;
- 14 Who shall tell thee words, whereby thou and all thy house shall be saved.
- 15 And as I began to speak, the Holy Ghost fell on them, as on us at the beginning.
- 16 Then remembered I the word of the Lord, how that he said, John indeed baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost.
- 17 Forasmuch then as God gave them the like gift as he did unto us, who believed on the Lord Jesus Christ; what was I, that I could withstand God?
- 18 When they heard these things, they held their peace, and glorified God, saying, Then hath God also to the Gentiles granted repentance unto life.

The overall subject of chapters 10 and 11 is that the Gentiles were for the first time becoming a part of the Church. Had Peter not seen the holy spirit manifested as he did, he would never have thought

that the Gentiles should be allowed to partake of the baptism that he and the other Jewish believers had partaken in. This fits with the pattern we have seen, that baptism in the name of Jesus was accompanied by receiving the holy spirit. The outward symbolic action of baptism with water was only to be administered to those who had heard and believed the Gospel and were committing their lives to Christ. (Philip to the eunuch: “If you believe with all your heart, you may”) The Gentiles believed, but Peter would not have guessed that they would share the same experience had he not seen the manifestations of holy spirit.

When he saw this sign of God’s acceptance of the Gentiles, it was “then” that he remembered the word of the Lord. Jesus had said they, the Jewish disciples, would be baptized in the holy spirit. Peter and those with him were astonished to see that these Gentiles received the same holy spirit which Jesus had said **they** would be baptized with. So Peter said, “Can any man forbid the water that these should not be baptized?” The reason he commanded water baptism was, as he said in verse 17, “Forasmuch then as God gave to them the like gift as he did to us, who believed on the Lord Jesus Christ, what was I that I could withstand God?” Is this saying that he would be withstanding God by carrying out the command to be baptized in water, as has been suggested? To interpret it that way would be missing the whole point of the passage. To withstand God in this case would have been to forbid the Gentiles from being baptized and becoming Christians. This is the overall theme of chapters 10 and 11—that God was teaching the Jewish believers that He was including the Gentiles in His plan. That there was some conflict between forms of baptism in the first century Church is simply not the issue.

It has been suggested that verse 48, according to the Greek, should actually read, “He commanded them in the name of the Lord to be baptized,” rather than, “He commanded them to be baptized in the name of the Lord.”<sup>19</sup> But that actually wouldn’t change anything. Whichever way you read it, you still have to answer the question, “What kind of baptism is Peter commanding?” It couldn’t be baptism in the holy spirit, because they had already received it.

The context of this passage is Peter commanding water baptism. If you read verse 48 as “He commanded them in the name of the Lord to be baptized,” then you have a clear implication that this baptism in water was a command “in the name of the Lord,” and not just Peter getting “caught up in the moment” and mistakenly ordering water baptism. Notice it doesn’t say that **Peter** said “I command you in the name of the Lord...” These are not just Peter’s words, but the words of Luke, the writer of Acts, speaking as inspired by the holy spirit. If it was a mistake on Peter’s part to command baptism in water, why would Luke’s inspired narration refer to it as a command “in the name of the Lord” when it was not the Lord’s will to baptize in water?

On the other hand, if you read it as “commanded them to be baptized in the name of the Lord,” then we have another clear indication, from the context, that baptism in the name of the Lord is water baptism. Either way, you can’t get past the simple truth that Peter ordered water baptism, and that it was in the name of the Lord. Combined with the other passages we have examined where “baptized in the name of Jesus” or “baptized in the name of the Lord” is used, two things are clear: There is a distinction between baptism in the name of Jesus and baptism in the holy spirit; and to be baptized in the name of Jesus is to be baptized in water.

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<sup>19</sup> Gudlin, in “Baptism Doth Now Save Us,” p. 8, says, “The Nestle/Aland, Westcott and Hort, and Weymouth Resultant critical Greek texts all give the more accurate rendering: ‘And he commanded them in the name of Jesus Christ, to be baptized.’ Rotherham’s Emphasized Bible translates Acts 10:48a ‘And He commanded them in the name of Jesus Christ to be immersed.’”

## Acts 19

A passage that clearly illustrates the distinction of the three types of baptism in the New Testament is the record of Paul in Ephesus. When he came there and found disciples that had not heard of the holy spirit, he expressed a distinction between John's baptism and baptism in Jesus' name.

Acts 19:

- 1 And it came to pass, that, while Apollos was at Corinth, Paul having passed through the upper coasts came to Ephesus: and finding certain disciples,
- 2 He said unto them, Have ye received the Holy Ghost since ye believed? And they said unto him, We have not so much as heard whether there be any Holy Ghost.
- 3 And he said unto them, Unto what then were ye baptized? And they said, Unto John's baptism.
- 4 Then said Paul, John verily baptized with the baptism of repentance, saying unto the people, that they should believe on him which should come after him, that is, on Christ Jesus.
- 5 When they heard this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus.
- 6 And when Paul had laid his hands upon them, the Holy Ghost came on them; and they spake with tongues, and prophesied.

First we see John's baptism contrasted with the baptism in the name of Jesus. John's was a baptism of repentance, but pointing to the one who should come after him. John's baptism foreshadowed the baptism in the name of the Lord Jesus mentioned in verse 5, which superceded it. Then after they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus, the holy spirit came upon them. Once again it fits the pattern found throughout the book of Acts, that of baptism in the name of Jesus, which is baptism in water, being closely associated with baptism in the holy spirit.

By now you might be thinking, how can there be a baptism in water **and** a baptism in the holy spirit? Doesn't Ephesians 4:5 say there is only "one baptism?" In that passage there is no word "only," and in that context, Paul was not talking about how many types of baptism there are. He was talking about unity in the body, based on the things we have in common.

Ephesians 4:

- 1 I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called,
- 2 With all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love;
- 3 Endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.
- 4 There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling;
- 5 One Lord, one faith, one baptism,
- 6 One God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all.

We are exhorted to keep the unity of the spirit, based on the fact that we are all members of the same body, with **the same** spirit, **the same** hope, **the same** Lord, **the same** faith, **the same** baptism, **the same** God and Father of all. The one baptism in verse 5 is not referring to baptism in the holy spirit, since "one spirit" was already mentioned in verse 4, and baptism in the spirit is only one of several figurative ways of referring to it. The one baptism, according to the normal usage in the New Testament, is baptism in the name of Jesus Christ, which we saw is a baptism in water.

When a pattern is established in this fashion, in the early occurrences of a word or phrase, any subsequent change in the meaning must clearly be indicated. Luke, in his writing of Acts, never

gives any indication that there is a difference in meaning and usage of the words “baptize” and “baptism,” nor does he ever indicate a change in policy, in which water has been replaced or made obsolete. Paul, likewise, gives no indication of such a change in any of his epistles.

If “baptism” by itself meant water at one place and spirit at another, or if it was literal in one place and figurative in another with no clear indication, the change would have been abrupt and caused great confusion for the readers, without specific explanation, and God is not the author of confusion. But there is nothing in the entire New Testament that explicitly states that the meaning of the word “baptism” changed, or that a spiritual baptism replaced baptism in water. The only Scriptures that say anything remotely resembling that are the ones contrasting John’s baptism with that of Jesus, which, as we saw, do not indicate a replacement, but an addition. This principle is described by Wayne Jackson in an article from Christian Courier:

Finally, there is a principle of interpretation that is paramount in sound Bible exegesis. Frequently it is the case that Bible words will form a pattern. That is, a consideration of several passages containing a term will reveal that the word has a commonly understood significance. Such being the case, that *normal* meaning is to be attached to the term unless an exceptional context suggests that it has taken on a special significance (i.e., a figurative sense).

The term “baptize,” and its cognate “baptism,” occur together about 100 times in the New Testament. A consideration of these passages will reveal that the word may, on occasion, take on a figurative application (cf. Mt. 3:11; Lk. 12:50; Acts 1:5). Unless, though, there is *clear contextual evidence* that a symbolic sense has been employed, the conclusion must be that the common usage (an immersion in water) is in view.

In view of this principle, there is no reason to conclude the baptism mentioned in Matthew 28:19; Mark 16:16; Acts 2:38, 22:16; Romans 6:3-4; 1 Corinthians 12:13; Galatians 3:27; Colossians 2:12, and 1 Peter 3:21 is anything other than water baptism – an act of obedience, predicated upon faith and repentance, which secures forgiveness of sins and brings one into union with Jesus Christ.<sup>20</sup>

The words “baptize” and “baptism” when used without qualifiers are short for baptism in the name of Jesus Christ, which is baptism in water. When the baptism with holy spirit is referred to, it is a figurative use of the word, and is clearly expressed as such, for it is only one of several figurative terms used to refer to receiving the spirit. This pattern holds true throughout the New Testament.

### **The Epistles**

Now that we have seen how baptism is defined in the book of Acts, one might wonder what the purpose of baptism is. Many of the objections to water baptism as being unnecessary fail to take into account its tremendous significance as a symbol of Jesus Christ’s sacrificial atonement for our sins, and our partaking in it. We have seen from Acts how baptism was administered. Now as we look at the epistles, we shall gain an understanding of the purpose and significance of it.

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<sup>20</sup> Wayne Jackson, “New Testament Baptism: In Water or the Spirit?”, Christian Courier, <http://www.christiancourier.com/questions/waterSpiritQuestion.htm> (accessed November 22, 2005)

Remember we saw how John's baptism was a baptism of repentance, but was incomplete because Jesus had not yet shed his blood for us. Yet it linked repentance with forgiveness of sins (Mark 1:4; Luke 3:3). Later when Jesus was raised from the dead, he instructed the disciples to preach repentance and remission of sins in his name (Luke 24:46-47). When they did so in Acts, the required response was for the hearers to repent and be baptized (Acts 2:38; 8:12; etc.) and it would be for the remission of sins. We see from the New Testament that remission (forgiveness) of sins is possible because of the shed blood of Jesus (Matt. 26:28; Luke 24:47; Romans 3:25; Ephesians 1:7; 2:13; Colossians 1:14, 20; Hebrews 9:22). Baptism is said to be the way in which we partake of that sacrifice, and thus receive remission of sins.

Romans 6:

- 1 What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound?
- 2 God forbid. How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein?
- 3 Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death?
- 4 Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.
- 5 For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection:
- 6 Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin.
- 7 For he that is dead is freed from sin.
- 8 Now if we be dead with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with him:
- 9 Knowing that Christ being raised from the dead dieth no more; death hath no more dominion over him.
- 10 For in that he died, he died unto sin once: but in that he liveth, he liveth unto God.
- 11 Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord.

According to G. R. Beasley-Murray, there are three broad classifications of opinions regarding the interpretation of this passage. One is that "...in baptism the believer suffers a death and resurrection like Christ's."<sup>21</sup> Some theologians have argued rather that "...the death and resurrection of the baptized is the death and resurrection of Christ on the cross and at the first Easter."<sup>22</sup> A third view "stresses the ethical nature of baptism as a 'dying' to sinful passions and conduct by the renunciation of self and a 'rising' to new life for the glory of God by the grace of the Spirit of Christ."<sup>23</sup> Beasley-Murray concludes that all three views have merit.

It is my conviction that each of these three views has essential truth and that none is complete in isolation from the rest. If we take into account Paul's theology generally – indeed, the text and the context provide enough evidence – it can be shown that his interpretation of baptism in relation to the redemptive event of Christ has a threefold reference: first, it relates the baptized to the death and resurrection of Christ, involving him in the actual dying and rising of Christ Himself; secondly, it involves a corresponding

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<sup>21</sup> G. R. Beasley-Murray, *Baptism in the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1962) p. 131.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 132.

event in the life of the baptized believer, whereby an end is put to his old God-estranged life and a new one begins in Christ and His Kingdom and His Spirit; thirdly, it demands a corresponding ‘crucifixion’ of the flesh and a new life in the power of the Spirit that accords with the grace received, which ‘dying’ and ‘rising’ begins in the baptismal event.<sup>24</sup>

Since it is clear that Paul viewed baptism as that by which we share in the death, burial and resurrection of Christ, one may ask, is this referring to baptism in water, or baptism in the holy spirit? We saw that throughout Acts the word “baptism” by itself was a shorthand form of “baptized in the name of Jesus Christ,” through which remission of sins was given, which is available because of Christ’s sacrifice. We saw that this baptism in the name of Jesus Christ was a baptism in water, as the outward symbol of the hearers repenting and turning to God, in response to the Gospel. If Paul was suddenly referring to the baptism of the holy spirit, or to a figurative baptism, it would represent a change in policy, as well as a change in meaning of the word “baptism.” As previously noted, had there been such a change, it would have been well defined in Paul’s writing, as he did with the changes regarding aspects of the Old Covenant.

Participation in the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ is said by Paul to be the key event in the life a believer. We died, were buried, and raised with him, and as a result we now walk in newness of life. Death and sin have no more power over us. This shall be most fully completed when we are raised from the dead at the return of Christ. But Paul speaks of it as something that began in this life with baptism.

Paul speaks of baptism in I Corinthians chapter 1, and here he is obviously referring to baptism in water, since he is referring to something that he performed himself. Jesus, you’ll remember, is the only one who baptizes with the holy spirit.

I Corinthians 1:

11 For it hath been declared unto me of you, my brethren, by them which are of the house of Chloe, that there are contentions among you.

12 Now this I say, that every one of you saith, I am of Paul; and I of Apollos; and I of Cephas; and I of Christ.

13 Is Christ divided? was Paul crucified for you? or were ye baptized in the name of Paul?

14 I thank God that I baptized none of you, but Crispus and Gaius;

15 Lest any should say that I had baptized in mine own name.

16 And I baptized also the household of Stephanas: besides, I know not whether I baptized any other.

17 For Christ sent me not to baptize, but to preach the gospel: not with wisdom of words, lest the cross of Christ should be made of none effect.

Paul’s wording, especially in verse 17, is sometimes used to prove that water baptism is not God’s will. However, when Paul says that Christ did not send him to baptize but to preach the Gospel, does that mean Christ forbade him to baptize? If that were the case, then the fact that he baptized those mentioned in verses 14 and 15 means he disobeyed Christ’s command. This can’t be what he is referring to, or it would contradict Paul’s other writings on the great significance of baptism.

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<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*



The context is talking about unity in the body, and how there were divisions in the Church, based on which leaders people were following. Some followed Paul, some Peter, some Apollos. Verse 13 indicates that they were certainly baptized in somebody's name, and it wasn't Paul! It also links baptism with crucifixion. Paul emphatically states that it was Jesus Christ who was crucified for them, and they were baptized in his name, regardless of whether they heard the Gospel from Peter or Paul or Apollos.

The phrase "Christ sent me not to baptize, but to preach the Gospel" is an example of the common Semitic practice of emphasizing one thing above another by using extreme "black and white" terminology. Where we would say, for example, that one person is to be given preference over another, in Semitic terminology, it is said that we are to "hate the one and love the other" (Luke 16:13), or that in coming to Christ, we are to hate everyone else (Luke 14:26).<sup>25</sup> Paul was not saying that he should not baptize, but that he was sent to preach the Gospel **rather than** to baptize, that is, he put greater emphasis on preaching the Gospel than on baptizing.

Then he states that he thanked God he had only baptized a few individuals. Is this because he shouldn't be baptizing, or that it was being phased out? This would not fit with the context. The point he is making is that there should not be division based on following individuals. He was glad he only baptized a few people, because had he baptized more, they might be tempted to think their baptism was somehow "better." The emphasis in Paul's ministry was to preach the Gospel. As in Acts, the required response to the Gospel was to believe, repent, and be baptized. Who specifically performed the baptism was immaterial, and to avoid the carnal attitude that being baptized by Paul was superior, the actual baptism would have been performed by others.<sup>26</sup>

In his first epistle to the Corinthians, Paul states that we are baptized in one body, by the holy spirit.

I Corinthians 12:

13 For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit.

Some consider this to be a reference to the baptism of the holy spirit as distinct from baptism in water, since it says we are baptized "by one spirit." Griffith Thomas asked, "How is it possible for the application of water to accomplish the spiritual act of incorporating us into the Body of Christ? How can that which is physical effect that which is spiritual?"<sup>27</sup> This question, however, assumes that baptism is **only** the outward act of immersion in water, without taking into account the essential meaning and significance of it.

Baptism is described in the New Testament as demonstrating one's faith in, and thus participating in the power of, Christ's death and resurrection. In Galatians, Paul ties baptism and faith together, stating that believers have been baptized into Christ by faith.

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<sup>25</sup> James Patrick Holding, "Returning Japanese: Some Lessons From Another Culture," Tektonics Apologetics Ministries, <http://www.tektonics.org/af/culturegram.html> (accessed October 4, 2004)

<sup>26</sup> Some theologians suggest that this is also the reason Jesus did not personally baptize with water in his early ministry, but authorized his disciples to do so.

<sup>27</sup> Griffith Thomas, "The Place of the Sacraments in the Teaching of St. Paul", *Expositor*, vol. xiii (1917), p. 379, quoted in G. R. Beasley-Murray, *Baptism Today and Tomorrow* (London: MacMillan, 1966), p. 53.

Galatians 3:

25 But after that faith is come, we are no longer under a schoolmaster.

26 For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus.

27 For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ.

28 There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus.

Christians have believed the Gospel and entered into a new relationship with God in Christ. Paul then links the putting on of Christ with baptism, in verse 27.

Christians have received the Gospel of the new age that came with Christ (verse 25). They have believed it and entered into the new age, and they rejoice in the new relationship with God which is theirs in Christ. Yet Paul immediately affirms that the believers, who are sons of God in Christ, ‘put on’ Christ in baptism. They finished with their old life apart from Christ at that time and began a new one ‘in Christ’. I cannot see how the force of verses 26-27 can be justly preserved other than by recognizing that Paul views baptism as the moment of faith in which the adoption to sonship in Christ is realized. Faith reposed in Christ as Lord and baptism in the name of the Lord Jesus are viewed as one.<sup>28</sup>

Colossians also links baptism with faith in Christ’s death and resurrection.

Colossians 2:

10 And ye are complete in him, which is the head of all principality and power:

11 In whom also ye are circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, in putting off the body of the sins of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ:

12 Buried with him in baptism, wherein also ye are risen with him through the faith of the operation of God, who hath raised him from the dead.

13 And you, being dead in your sins and the uncircumcision of your flesh, hath he quickened together with him, having forgiven you all trespasses;

14 Blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross;

Just as circumcision was a sign of the covenant that Israel had with God, the circumcision made without hands is here identified with the putting off of the body of sins. This is possible because we were buried with Jesus, who paid the price for our sins. We were dead in sins, but have now been made alive, just as Jesus was raised from the dead. All these things were made available through the redemptive work of Jesus Christ.

Verse 12 plainly states that our participation in Christ’s redemptive work is “in baptism” and “through faith.” To say that baptism is nothing more than a physical ritual involving water is to deny what the Scriptures declare about it. It is at the point of baptism, when our faith is demonstrated, that we enter into participation in Christ’s death and resurrection, put on Christ, and are incorporated into the Body of Christ. When we are dipped into the water, it represents our sharing in his death and

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<sup>28</sup> *Baptism Today and Tomorrow*, p. 54.

burial, and when we come up from the water, it is a symbol of our being raised with him. Thus it is the point at which we begin a new life in him. Our old life is dead, and we are now in him.<sup>29</sup>

Colossians 3:

- 1 If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God.
- 2 Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth.
- 3 For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God.

Because we died with Christ, and were raised up, our new life is in Christ, and it had a beginning point. Paul identified baptism as that point. But it is due to the work of Christ, and our subsequent faith in it, rather than just an outward washing with water.

I Peter 3:21 states that baptism is able to save us because of Christ's resurrection. Baptism is our entrance into the body of Christ, and therefore we are baptized into Christ. The holy spirit is God's power, and it is by God's power that Christ was raised from the dead, and it is by the same power that baptism brings us into Christ, and not because of the water. When we are baptized into Christ we are "in Christ" and we are "in the spirit," for the spirit is the spirit of Christ. "If any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his" (Romans 8:9). "Now the Lord is that Spirit: and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty" (II Corinthians 3:17). "But ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God" (I Corinthians 6:11). The spirit of Christ, the spirit of God, and the spirit of the Lord, are all ways of referring to one thing, and by this spirit we are given entrance into the Body of Christ. But it takes place when we demonstrate our faith in the Gospel, and in the power of Christ's resurrection, by being baptized according to his commandment. It is at that point that God's power meets with our faith, and by sharing in Christ's resurrection we are given new life.

In light of this, one can see that when I Corinthians 12:13 says that "by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body," it is not meant to imply baptism in the holy spirit to the exclusion of baptism in water. When we are baptized in the name of Jesus Christ (which is in water), it is by the Spirit that it has the results that it does, which is why Peter can say that baptism "saves us."

I Peter 3:

- 18 For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit:
- 19 By which also he went and preached unto the spirits in prison;
- 20 Which sometime were disobedient, when once the longsuffering of God waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was a preparing, wherein few, that is, eight souls were saved by water.
- 21 The like figure whereunto even baptism doth also now save us (not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God,) by the resurrection of Jesus Christ:

Verse 21 has been used to demonstrate that water baptism is no longer valid.

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<sup>29</sup> This is not to suggest that once we are "in him" we have a permanent salvation which cannot change. This will be dealt with in a subsequent chapter.

That it isn't water baptism is clearly indicated by the parenthetical comment, '(not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God)'. No amount of water can cleanse a conscience. But putting on Christ – immersion into his truth via the spirit – can!<sup>30</sup>

This interpretation assumes that water baptism is equal to “the putting away of the filth of the flesh” and spiritual baptism is equal to “the answer of a good conscience toward God,” and thus concludes that the baptism that truly saves is spiritual and not water. But this is not the point of the passage. It is not saying that water baptism is “the putting away of the filth of the flesh.” It is saying that the **reason baptism saves** is that rather than being the putting away of the filth of the flesh, it is the answer of a good conscience toward God. And what enables baptism to save is stated in the last phrase in the verse: “by the resurrection of Jesus Christ.”

There is some disagreement among scholars as to whether the Greek in verse 21 actually means, “the prayer to God for a good conscience” or “the pledge to God to maintain a good conscience.” In the former, the baptismal candidate is praying to God for a good conscience, which he would receive because of God's salvation and his response to God in faith. In the latter, the candidate is making a pledge before God to maintain a good conscience, since living a godly life is expected, and part of repentance is the decision to turn away from the past life of sin and turn the heart towards God.

Both views have merit, but the important point is that in either case, it is the resurrection of Christ that makes baptism something that can save. Beasley-Murray writes, concerning this verse:

According to this declaration, the power of baptism is the resurrection of Christ. The first thought in the writer's mind will be the impartation of new life to the believer (as perhaps in some fashion it might be said that Noah emerged into a new world after the Flood), as indicated in [I Peter] 1:3: ‘the Father regenerated us to a living hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead’. This is not the identical doctrine of Romans 6:3ff but it is close to it. In baptism the Lord who rose from his redemptive death acts for the believer's deliverance from sin and death to new life and righteousness (hence the ‘clear conscience’).<sup>31</sup>

As was noted before, the significance of baptism is not in the physical water itself, but in what it represents. As Peter wrote, it is not “the putting away of the filth of the flesh,” because physical cleansing is not the point. Those who deny that water baptism is necessary often point out that water cannot cleanse the heart, which is quite true. It is not water but the power of Christ's resurrection that gives us a new life and cleanses the heart. When we repent and believe the Gospel, and submit to the rite of baptism in order to partake of Christ's death and resurrection for forgiveness of sins, that step of believing action, in obedience to God, begins a new life in Christ. This is what makes baptism significant, as opposed to being a mere cleansing ritual. And it is in this sense that Peter says baptism saves us.

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<sup>30</sup> Gudlin, “Baptism Doth Now Save Us,” p. 9.

<sup>31</sup> *Baptism in the New Testament*. p. 261-2

## 4. Historical Considerations

### Supposed Origins of Baptism

One point sometimes made about the origins of baptism, besides the idea that it originated with the Mosaic Law, was that it developed from pagan rituals of purification. While there is certainly a similarity, since purification rituals involved water, the primary difference was in the meaning and purpose.

Water was widely used in the ancient world as a means of purification. Washing was preliminary to initiation in some of the Hellenistic mystery religions, as in the cult of Demeter at Eleusis and of the Egyptian goddess Isis.<sup>32</sup>

The baptismal rite is similar to many other ablution rituals found in a number of religions, but it is the symbolic value of baptism and the psychological intent underlying it that provide the true definition of the rite, a rite usually found associated with a religious initiation.<sup>33</sup>

Often the initiation was associated with purifying and/or regenerative properties of water (especially the Nile's cold water). Greek mystery religions associated it with immortality, and transformation, and it was therefore instrumental in the initiation into these cults. In the cult of Cybele, a baptism of blood was practiced, involving the blood of a bull. This was supposed to have provided the initiate with physical vitality, but later it took on a more spiritual significance.

In other inscriptions...the word *natalicium* seems to be the exact equivalent of the Christians' *natalis*, suggesting that the day of the baptism of blood is also the day of a new and spiritual birth. However, the fact that this baptism was repeated periodically shows that the idea of complete spiritual regeneration was not originally associated with it. Only under the influences of Christianity and the Mithric cult does the idea of an atonement for past sins through the shed blood appear.<sup>34</sup>

Thus, most pagan ablution rites were primarily for the purpose of purification as well as initiation. In contrast, John preached a baptism of repentance which was later supplanted by Christian baptism, the focus of which was initiation into Christ, based on accepting his vicarious sacrifice. And rather than the sacrificial aspect of Christian baptism being a development of a pagan ritual, the idea of baptism as atonement for sins by shed blood was borrowed from Christianity and adulterated into the Cybele ritual.

A similar claim is that baptism was derived from Jewish proselyte baptism. In the first century the Jews adopted a practice of baptizing proselytes (converts to Judaism) after their circumcision. There is no evidence that this practice was known before the Christian era, however.

The opinion of Rabbi Eliezer [concerning the importance of baptism for proselytes] is cited twice in the Talmud...and there can be little doubt that it is a genuine view coming

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<sup>32</sup> *Encyclopedia of Early Christianity*, second edition, Everett Ferguson, ed. (NY & London: Garland Publishing, Inc., 1997), s.v. "Baptism".

<sup>33</sup> *The Encyclopedia of Religion*, s.v. "Baptism".

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*

down from the close of the 1st century. Now it is just at this same period that the first evidence for the practice of requiring a ritual bath of proselytes is available. The evidence, from Epictetus and others, can be found summarized by Plummer (in H.D.B. I, 240) or by Brandt (in E.R.E II, 408). In spite of the lack of any evidence that takes the inquiry back to a date earlier than the fall of Jerusalem, Plummer was quite certain that the “baptism” of proselytes must have been known in the time of Christ and even before it.<sup>35</sup>

Even if the practice did exist, there is no evidence that either John’s baptism or Christian baptism was derived from it. Proselyte baptism was for cleansing and purification, like the Old Testament rituals, and did not hold the symbolic meaning of repentance, or identification with Christ’s sacrifice.

Neither the practice of ritual cleansing, common in Judaism, nor the particular use of water cleansing for proselytes ever acquired a sacral meaning, but remained a legalistic rite of purification. Christian baptism belongs to the class of rites of passage or initiation in religions, but any direct connection between them and the Christian rite is difficult if not impossible to establish.<sup>36</sup>

### **Development of Doctrines**

Rather than being derived from pagan or Jewish rituals, John’s baptism was authorized by God, and was the only true forerunner to Christian baptism. We saw how the doctrine was presented in the New Testament. After the Apostolic age, various doctrines concerning baptism began to creep into the Christian Church. But in all the controversies, whether baptism of the spirit had replaced water baptism was not an issue.

Among the earliest changes in doctrine was a gradual change in the form of baptism, from total immersion as the apostles practiced, to the allowing for effusion (pouring water). This diminished the effectiveness of baptism as a symbol of sharing in Christ’s death, burial, and resurrection. In addition, as unbiblical ideas about the person of Jesus began to take hold, Jesus’ command to baptize in the name of the Father, the Son, and the holy spirit (in Matthew 28:19) gradually began to be seen as a specific baptismal formula, which, as we shall see later, it was not intended to be. These changes were in place as early as the end of the first century, as seen in *The Didache*, a document dated from that time.

After the foregoing instructions, baptize in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, in living [running] water. If you have no living water, then baptize in other water, and if you are not able in cold, then in warm. If you have neither, pour water three times on the head, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.<sup>37</sup>

During the last half of the second century, there was an increasing occurrence of infant baptism, and it had become commonplace by the third century. Hippolytus, in the early third century, described in detail how to perform a baptism.

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<sup>35</sup> Joseph Crehan, *Early Christian Baptism and the Creed* (London: Burns Oates & Washbourne Ltd., 1950), p.2,3.

<sup>36</sup> *Westminster Dictionary of Church History*, (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1971) s.v. “Baptism”.

<sup>37</sup> Didache 7:1, quoted in “Trinitarian Baptism,” Catholic Answers, [http://www.catholic.com/library/Trinitarian\\_Baptism.asp](http://www.catholic.com/library/Trinitarian_Baptism.asp) (accessed May 3, 2006)

At the moment when the cock crows first a prayer is said over the water. It should be water flowing into a font or flowing from above unless this is impossible. If it is impossible for some reason which is permanent and pressing, use what water you can find. They are to remove their clothes; and you must baptize the children first. All those who can speak for themselves should do so; and those who are unable to speak for themselves; their parents should speak for them, or someone in their family. After this baptize the men, and lastly the women after they have loosed their hair and put aside jewelry of gold and silver that they are wearing. None is to take anything unsuitable into the water.<sup>38</sup>

The obvious problem with baptizing children that can't speak for themselves is that it loses the element of belief in the Gospel and repentance of sin. It was clear that the apostles attached utmost importance to those elements, and even in the writings of the Early Church Fathers, there was emphasis on teaching and preparation of the heart before baptism, and living a holy life afterward. By the fourth century, it was common to put off baptism until late in life, or even just before death, since one was expected to live a pure life after baptism. The Emperor Constantine is perhaps the most famous example of this practice. But the trend was away from the elements of faith and repentance as time went on.

Whether the growing predominance of infant baptism was its cause or a result of it (more likely both), there was a decided trend in the first four centuries to construe baptism as an *opus operatum* (a work effective in itself) whereby the baptized one not only entered a new life but was also changed in character. This development effectually eliminated the prebaptismal confession of sin and put increasing emphasis on what was done to and for the one baptized. One aspect of the trend is seen in the conflict over heretical and schismatic baptism in the mid-3<sup>rd</sup> century.<sup>39</sup>

By this time, a controversy developed because smaller Christian sects performed baptism as their rite of initiation, and leaders of the Roman Church disagreed on whether rebaptism should be required when those baptized by heretics requested entrance into the orthodox church. Cyprian of Carthage (c. 195–258 AD) denied the validity of baptism outside the official church, while Stephen I, Bishop of Rome, contended that water and the right confession were sufficient. In time the position of Stephen became the approved practice; but the controversy reappeared in the fourth century. At that time, two groups, the Donatists and the Pelagians, contended that a baptism performed by an immoral priest was not valid. The position was officially rejected by the Council of Arles in 314, but continued to be influential.

In response to this, the theologian Augustine of Hippo firmly established the doctrines that are still held by the Roman Catholic Church today: One, the sacraments (including baptism) were considered *ex opere operato* (i.e. “by the very fact of the action being performed”) which meant they were holy and appointed by God, regardless of who administers them. Two, baptism is necessary for salvation. And three, children are contaminated with “original sin” from birth, and baptism is needed to remove it.

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<sup>38</sup> Hippolytus, “Apostolic Tradition,” Quoted in Peter Cramer, *Baptism and Change in the Early Middle Ages* (Cambridge University Press, 1993), p. 9.

<sup>39</sup> *Westminster Dictionary of Church History*, s.v. “Baptism”.

It was also Augustine who established what has become the traditional definition of a “sacrament.” The word sacrament comes from the Latin word *sacramentum*, which is equivalent to the Greek *mysterion*, from which we get the English word “mystery.” In the New Testament the word is used to refer to the mysteries of God, but Augustine defined a sacrament as “an outward and temporal sign of an inward and enduring grace.”<sup>40</sup>

Although it was a common practice, infant baptism was seen as the exception rather than the rule as late as the fourth century, but the development of the doctrine of original sin gave rise to the spread of the practice through the fourth century. By the fifth century, Augustine used the doctrine of original sin in his argument for infant baptism, and the practice was made compulsory by Emperor Justinian I in the sixth century.

With the rise in infant baptism, a separation was introduced, between baptism and the laying on of hands accompanied by anointing with oil, which were associated with receiving the holy spirit. This developed into a new sacrament, confirmation. Thomas Aquinas (13<sup>th</sup> century) provided the theological framework not only for baptism but for all seven official sacraments. He was the first to trace all seven back to Christ, and he taught that baptism, confirmation, and ordination stamp an indelible mark on the soul; consequently, these three sacraments cannot be repeated. This was the foundation of one of the biggest schisms among the 16<sup>th</sup> century reformers.

### **Reformation Controversies**

Martin Luther is famous for contending that we are saved by grace and not by works. Yet he maintained that baptism was necessary for salvation, even though it outwardly appears as works. In his *Large Catechism*, after quoting Matthew 28:19 and Mark 16:16, he states:

In these words you must note, in the first place, that here stand God's commandment and institution, lest we doubt that Baptism is divine, not devised nor invented by men. For as truly as I can say, No man has spun the Ten Commandments, the Creed, and the Lord's Prayer out of his head, but they are revealed and given by God Himself, so also I can boast that Baptism is no human trifle, but instituted by God Himself, moreover, that it is most solemnly and strictly commanded that we must be baptized or we cannot be saved, lest any one regard it as a trifling matter, like putting on a new red coat. For it is of the greatest importance that we esteem Baptism excellent, glorious, and exalted, for which we contend and fight chiefly, because the world is now so full of sects clamoring that Baptism is an external thing, and that external things are of no benefit.

But if they say, as they are accustomed: Still Baptism is itself a work, and you say works are of no avail for salvation; what then, becomes of faith? Answer: Yes, our works, indeed, avail nothing for salvation; Baptism, however, is not our work, but God's (for, as was stated, you must put Christ-baptism far away from a bath-keeper's baptism). God's works, however, are saving and necessary for salvation, and do not exclude, but demand, faith; for without faith they could not be apprehended. For by suffering the water to be poured upon you, you have not yet received Baptism in such a manner that it benefits you anything; but it becomes beneficial to you if you have yourself baptized with the thought that this is according to God's command and ordinance, and besides in God's name, in

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<sup>40</sup> *New International Dictionary of the Christian Church* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1974), s.v. “Sacrament”



order that you may receive in the water the promised salvation. Now, this the fist cannot do, nor the body; but the heart must believe it.<sup>41</sup>

Luther recognized that baptism meant immersion, but felt that the mode was less important than the sacrament itself. He admitted that the normal New Testament pattern was adult believer's baptism, yet allowed that sometimes the essential element of faith was to be supplied by the sponsoring adult. In this way he supported infant baptism, while opposing the Roman Catholic Church on most of its other major doctrines.

John Calvin, one of the founders of the Reformed Church, also agreed with the Roman Catholic Church that baptism should only be administered once, and that the character of the person administering it was immaterial. He also held, with Hippolytus and other Early Church Fathers, that the mode of baptism made no difference; pouring and sprinkling were as valid as immersion. However, he did not believe that baptism was an *opus operatum*, a work significant in and of itself as that which confers salvation. He rather considered it to be a public demonstration of faith, with which one joins the Universal Church, and therefore endorsed infant baptism on the grounds that infants are considered part of the Church, being called heirs of the Kingdom. But he did not consider baptism to be necessary for salvation.

Peter also says that "baptism also doth now save us" (1 Peter 3:21). For he did not mean to intimate that our ablution and salvation are perfected by water, or that water possesses in itself the virtue of purifying, regenerating, and renewing; nor does he mean that it is the cause of salvation, but only that the knowledge and certainty of such gifts are perceived in this sacrament.<sup>42</sup>

We must not deem baptism so necessary as to suppose that everyone who has lost the opportunity of obtaining it has forthwith perished. By assenting to their fiction, we should condemn all, without exception, whom any accident may have prevented from procuring baptism, how much soever they may have been endued with the faith by which Christ himself is possessed.<sup>43</sup>

The Anabaptist movement (16<sup>th</sup> century) began largely in response to the practice of infant baptism. Because they considered the practice unbiblical and invalid, they required adult believers to be re-baptized (which is the meaning of the name "Anabaptist"). This began a controversy that continues to this day. Anabaptists declared that there was no example or allowance for infant baptism in the Scriptures, and that the commission in Mark 16:16 especially, declares that faith is to precede baptism. Since an infant cannot yet understand or believe the Gospel (much less repent of sins), then baptism cannot be applicable.

In the 17<sup>th</sup> century, two groups which were dissatisfied with the Church of England were the Puritans and the Separatists. Puritans wanted to "purify" the church from within, while Separatists favored splitting from the church. A group of Separatists led by John Smyth relocated to Amsterdam, where they were greatly influenced by the Mennonites, who were descendants of the Anabaptist movement.

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<sup>41</sup> Martin Luther, "Part Fourth; Of Baptism," *Large Catechism* (orig. pub. 1528), Translated by F. Bente and W. H. T. Dau, Published in: *Triglot Concordia: The Symbolical Books of the Ev. Lutheran Church* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1921).

<sup>42</sup> John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*. p. 1451

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.* p. 1493

They made their final split from the Augustinian view of baptism by being rebaptized, and the Baptist church was born. The movement spread to both England and the New World. J. M. Ross wrote that "...the main tendency of Baptist thought has been to regard this ordinance as having no more than a symbolic value" and could find no claim by a Baptist earlier than 1925 that the holy spirit is given in baptism.<sup>44</sup> Nevertheless they have been distinguished by the practice of believer's baptism rather than paedobaptism (infant baptism). This debate has been one of the biggest areas of division in the Church. The other areas of disagreement caused less of a stir in the early years of the Reformation.

Only with the English Baptists around 1633 did the issue of immersion arise among the Particular Baptists. Prior to this, even the Baptists practiced affusion or sprinkling, since the issue was believer's baptism as opposed to paedobaptism. Among the spiritualists, especially the seventeenth-century Quakers, baptism and the Lord's Supper were rejected as irrelevant to the age of the Spirit.<sup>45</sup>

### **Development of Water/Spirit Dichotomy**

Besides the debate over paedobaptism, a number of other controversies have developed throughout the history of Christianity. The booklet by John Lynn mentioned earlier refers to these divisive elements.

Christians cannot agree upon, and have even literally warred over, the issues related to water baptism, such as: The meaning of baptism; whether or not baptism actually brings about forgiveness of one's sins by God; the qualifications and age of those to be baptized; who can administer baptism; the method of baptism (dipping, dunking, or sprinkling); formulas in the baptismal procedure; and pre-baptismal instruction. Through the centuries, disagreements about these issues have often been so intense and violent that the world has wondered how people who are supposedly commanded by God to love one another could be so violently opposed to another's interpretation of Scripture. In modern times, the controversy has been toned down, but there are still denominations teaching not only that their particular understanding of baptism is the right one, but also that adherence to it is a requirement for salvation, or at least membership in their church.<sup>46</sup>

While division and controversy have arisen over many aspects of baptism, it was not until around the seventeenth century that anyone ever suggested that water baptism was eliminated in favor of spirit baptism. Even then it was a small minority who held this view, and it was quickly and simply refuted (as in Martin Luther's catechism, above) by pointing to the fact that the Lord had commanded it. A document from 1647, entitled *A Testimony to the Truth of Jesus Christ and to Our Solemn League and Covenant* listed a number of doctrines being propounded at the time that were considered in error. Under "Errours [*sic*] against the sacrament of baptism" it lists the following ideas considered to be in error:

*That, The Baptism of water was a legal washing, and therefore reckoned among things that are legal, Heb. 9.10.*

—Sparkles of glorie, by *John Saltmarsh, Lon. 1647, p.29,30.*

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<sup>44</sup> *Baptism Today and Tomorrow*, p. 14,15

<sup>45</sup> *New International Dictionary of the Christian Church*, s.v. "Baptism".

<sup>46</sup> *What is True Baptism?*, p. 2.

*That, John's Baptism, which was by water, did end at the coming of Christ.*  
—*Webbs Pamphlet against M. Edwards, p.6.*

*That, Baptism being but a shadow of Christ in the N.T. it is to go out, as the substance comes in; if not in use, yet in our esteem.*  
—*Becons Catechisme, London 1646. p.194,195.*

*That, None ought to give Baptism now, because they cannot give the holy Ghost with it.*  
—*Smoak, &c. by John Saltmarsh, Lond, p.17.*<sup>47</sup>

This shows that there were some at that time who held these views, although they were small “sects” and very much in the minority. The particular reasoning was similar to points that are still made today in claims against water baptism. As demonstrated in previous chapters, however, baptism was not an aspect of the Mosaic Law, nor did John or Jesus mean to imply that baptism of the spirit would replace water, but rather be added to it. For the most part, though, the Christian Church has held that the baptism commanded by the Lord is baptism in water.

For nearly two thousand years almost all who profess to be followers of Christ have sought to obey His command quoted at the head of this article [Matthew 28:19,20]. Through the centuries various groups have worked out differing traditions as to when, who, why, and how candidates are to be baptized.

Nevertheless there is a very broad consensus: People have universally made contact with water in a rite signifying that they are Christians or that they are meant to be brought up in the Christian faith.

Perhaps the handful of exceptions to the practice of water baptism constitutes an example of what is popularly called “the exception that proves the rule.”

Three groups in contemporary Christendom, one harking back to the seventeenth century, and two from the nineteenth, have chosen not to believe in or practice water baptism at all. Two of these, the Society of Friends (popularly called “Quakers”) and the Salvation Army, have been very active in valuable social work. The third group, generally identified as “ultra-dispensationalists” (though obviously not their own chosen designation) rests on such subtle “dividing” of the Scriptures as to attract chiefly those of an intellectual bent to their circle of fellowship.<sup>48</sup>

As to the exceptions, the Quakers’ rejection of outward rites, including baptism, was in reaction to the over-emphasis on ritualism in the established Church in the 17<sup>th</sup> century. The followers of George Fox (the founder of the Society of Friends) believed that living in the spirit was to be a way of life, and those who were “spiritually advanced” had no need of what they considered mere outward ordinances.

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<sup>47</sup> “A Testimony to the Truth of Jesus Christ and to Our Solemn League and Covenant” posted on Testimony Bearing Home Page, on the web site of the Reformed Presbyterian Church (Covenanted), [www.covenanter.org/TestimonyBearing/testimonytothetruth.html](http://www.covenanter.org/TestimonyBearing/testimonytothetruth.html) (accessed April 18, 2006).

<sup>48</sup> Arthur L. Farstad, “Water Baptism,” *Journal of the Grace Evangelical Society*, Spring 1990—Volume 3:1

The sacraments of baptism and the Lord's Supper have no place in Quaker Meetings. All life being considered a religious sacrament, occasional ceremonies were thought to obscure the need for continual spiritual striving, and just as a special oath was dispensed with by speaking the truth at all times, in the same way special sacraments were considered unnecessary.<sup>49</sup>

We believe Christ's baptism to be the inward receiving of the promised holy spirit, whereby the believer is immersed in Jesus' power, purity, and wisdom. This baptism is the essential Christian baptism: an experience of cleansing from sin that supplants old covenant rituals. The sanctification that is initiated with this experience is a continuing work of the holy spirit in which we are instructed into righteous living and perfected in love. Thus sanctification is the work of God's grace by which our affections are purified and exalted to a supreme love of God.<sup>50</sup>

The Salvation Army, on the other hand, originally did practice baptism and only discontinued it because they didn't want to be considered another denomination, nor did they want to be associated with the denominational divisions in the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

The Toronto *War Cry* for August, 1959, lists eight reasons why the Salvation Army abandoned the ordinances: "In discarding the use of sacraments the Army Founder was led to do so for the following reasons: 1. There was no uniformity of practice. 2. There was great argument and conflict between religious denominations. 3. The bitterness engendered was harmful to the interests of the kingdom. 4. A large proportion of Church members gave no outward sign of an inward change, although they placed great importance upon the observance of the sacraments. 5. There was no scriptural warrant for the way the sacraments were observed. 6. They were not necessary to salvation or spiritual progress. 7. Some forms were positively harmful to the Army type of converts. 8. Salvation by the blood of the Lamb and regeneration by the holy spirit were the essentials. The only baptism enjoined in the New Testament was the baptism of the holy spirit."<sup>51</sup>

While these ideas were relatively in the minority in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the third "exception" mentioned above brought them more widespread exposure in the nineteenth century. Ultra-Dispensationalism is not a single group, but rather a system of theology, which developed from "traditional" or "classic" Dispensationalism. The traditional form developed in the early 1800's with a group called the Plymouth Brethren, and particularly by a man named John Nelson Darby. Prior to that the dominant theology was Covenantal Theology (also called Reformed Theology) in which the Church was said to be the spiritual fulfillment of the Old Testament prophecies of God's Kingdom. Dispensationalism opposed this idea, and favored a literal interpretation of the Scriptures, including a literal Kingdom of God on earth, as Jesus had proclaimed. However, they believe that Jesus' Kingdom Gospel was addressed to Israel, and that at some point that gospel was withdrawn and replaced by a new and different gospel, as revealed to Paul, which concerns the Mystery of the Church as the Body of Christ. The Church Age is considered a "parenthesis" between Jesus' proclamation of the Kingdom and his future return, when the Kingdom will be finally restored to Israel, thus literally fulfilling the prophecies.

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<sup>49</sup> Sidney Lucas, *The Quaker Story* (New York: Harper & Brothers Publishers 1949), p. 52

<sup>50</sup> "What Friends Believe (Faith Expressed as Doctrine)", Online Faith and Practice (Quaker Book of Discipline), <http://worship.quaker.org/qfp/displaypassage.asp?passageid=329>.

<sup>51</sup> Quoted by Alfred Gibbs, *Christian Baptism* (Kansas City, KS: Walterick Publishers, 1966), p. 109.

The exact time that the current dispensation of the Church began is the subject of debate among the various forms of Dispensationalism, although all agree that the Church and Israel are separate and distinct bodies. "Traditional" Dispensationalism considers the Church to have begun on Pentecost (Acts 2), while various other subdivisions believe that it started either at Paul's conversion (Acts 9), the beginning of his teaching ministry (Acts 13), or even after his imprisonment (Acts 28). These other groups are often referred to as "Ultra-" or "Hyper-" Dispensationalists, and are considered to be too extreme by the "traditional" branch.

Among the beliefs that Ultra-Dispensationalists hold to is the idea that certain of the New Testament Scriptures are addressed to, and contain doctrine that applies to, Israel, while others (mainly Paul's epistles) are addressed to the Church. Water baptism is considered to be among the doctrines and practices that apply only to Israel. Some previously "fringe" ideas, such as water baptism being associated with legalism, and being only a shadow which was replaced by baptism of the spirit, were easily refuted by pointing out that baptism was commanded by the Lord and performed by his disciples. Ultra-Dispensationalism provided a rebuttal to that argument. Some have taught that the baptism of John was for Israel in the Gospels, and that water baptism as commanded by Jesus will again be observed in the future when he returns. They teach that in the current dispensation, baptism of the holy spirit replaces it. One theologian who held this view was E. W. Bullinger. In his book, *How To Enjoy the Bible*, he states that the command to baptize in Matthew 28:19 was addressed to a future dispensation, completely "leaping over" (his words) the current dispensation of the Church.

It seems clear, therefore, that the proclamation referred to in Matthew 28:19, 20, is yet future; and that it is closely connected with the then imminent personal appearance and promised presence of the Son of Man.

From all this it is abundantly manifest that, to take a command which belongs to a Past and Future Dispensation and to interpret it as being operative during the whole of this Present Dispensation can lead only to difficulty and contradiction.

Indeed, the bringing of John's baptism, which belonged to the kingdom, into this present Church period has led to confusion and disruption. It has proved a bomb which has rent the visible Church into fragments.<sup>52</sup>

The dispensation in which the Kingdom was proclaimed ended (according to Bullinger) when the Kingdom was rejected in Acts. Since that time, the new dispensation of the Mystery which Paul proclaimed has superceded it, and the Kingdom will not be proclaimed again until the future dispensation when Christ returns. The baptism in water and baptism of the holy spirit, then, were each for different purposes and performed during different times, with an overlap during Acts.

As long as the Divine offer of the kingdom made by Peter in Acts 3:19-21 (RV) was open, baptism with material water was carried on, side by side with the baptism with spiritual water (*pneuma hagion*), which was administered by the laying on of hands (compare Acts 19:6); the one decreasing and the other increasing, on the principle of John 3:30.

This coming change had been four times foretold (Matt 3:11; Mark 1:8; Luke 3:16 and Acts 1:5), and we see it taking place; but the change is not complete until the offer of the kingdom made in Acts 3:19, 20 was finally and formally closed and withdrawn in Acts

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<sup>52</sup> E. W. Bullinger, *How To Enjoy the Bible* (Reprint, Grand Rapids: Kregel, 1990), p. 133. (Originally published, London: Eyre and Spottiswoode, 1916)

28:25, 26. Until then baptism with water was continued, though it was decreasing. And it is mentioned only in those Pauline Epistles written during that period (1 Cor and Rom 6), but never again afterward. In the Epistles written after that solemn epoch it is never once referred to; but only the “one baptism” with pneuma hagion. In Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, and the Pastoral Epistles there is no mention of any ordinances; except to emphasize the fact that they no longer exist, but are all done away in that completeness which is ours “in Christ.”

Ordinances that had to do with the flesh have no place in the Mystery or Secret which was revealed to Paul. There, all is Spiritual.

When the Mystery was revealed to Paul, and by him was “made known to the sons of men,” the Hebrew “doctrine of baptisms” was left behind with many other things, and the new doctrine of the “one baptism” with pneuma hagion, or with a spiritual (instead of a material) medium, was brought in.<sup>53</sup>

Thus Bullinger and other Ultra-Dispensationalists recognize that baptism was associated with entrance into the Kingdom of God, but believed that this was addressed to Israel only. Other more moderate “Ultra-” versions consider water baptism to have been valid for the primarily Jewish Church in the early part of Acts, but gradually phased out in favor of baptism of the holy spirit. “Traditional” Dispensationalists generally reject this concept and practice water baptism as well as the Lord’s Supper.

The distinctions among dispensationalists sometimes blur, however. The ministry to which I belonged believed that the Church began on Pentecost, as do “traditional” Dispensationalists, yet they held some beliefs in common with Ultra-Dispensationalists. They considered the Gospels, the epistles of James, Peter, John, and Jude, and the book of Revelation to be addressed to, or at least primarily relating to, Israel. Also, they rejected water baptism on the grounds that it was originally addressed to Israel, and practiced by the earliest Christians, but phased out during Acts, similar to the moderate form of Ultra-Dispensationalism. As previously discussed, the practice of water baptism is said to have been carried out by the disciples because they had not yet fully understood that spirit baptism had replaced water. The group that published John Lynn’s *What is True Baptism?* also hold to a similar view. In their booklet entitled *Defending Dispensationalism*, author Mark Graeser gives the following description of their belief:

“Dispensationalism,” as we understand and teach it, holds that the Christian Church began on the day of Pentecost, inaugurated by the giving of holy spirit. At that time, God suspended His program of salvation for Israel as instituted via the Covenants (including the Abrahamic, Mosaic, Davidic and the still future “New”) and instituted a new program of salvation and sanctification for the Church of the Body of Christ. According to 1 Corinthians 12:13, the beginning of this Body was whenever the gift of holy spirit was given, which we know was on the day of Pentecost as recorded in Acts 2. From this dispensational perspective, the Book of Acts is a *transitional* period for the Church, which at first was exclusively Jewish. However, as these Jews grew in the faith, they gradually began to realize what had actually transpired on the Day of Pentecost and “got with the program” by admitting Gentiles into the congregation (Acts 10), letting go of water

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<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 134-6.

baptism (Acts 18:25ff), ceasing to require circumcision, *etc, etc*. With a change of “administration” came a change of requirements for salvation and behavior.<sup>54</sup>

While they consider Acts a transitional book, they do not consider it a separate administration, and refute Ultra-Dispensationalism on those grounds.<sup>55</sup> However, the rejection of water baptism is most often a tenet of moderate and extreme versions of Ultra-Dispensationalism, while traditional Dispensationalists recognize its practice and significance in the book of Acts. The following shows how “classic” Dispensationalists view Hyper-Dispensationalism.

Hyper-dispensationalism abandons many church practices. Some forsake the local church. They teach that the church started after Acts 28 and that Paul was not sent to baptize: therefore, baptism has no place in the Church age.

However, this abuse of a Bible truth is not a license to reject the true teaching about dispensations. Paul *did* baptize some of his converts. He, himself, was also baptized. He baptized the Philippian jailer. He gave a list of some whom he had baptized at Corinth. He confessed that there were others whose names he could not remember.

Paul's baptism has a different significance than that of John the Baptist. However, there is no scriptural grounds for rejecting water baptism today.

Hyper-dispensationalists also reject the Lord's Supper, assuming it to be a Jewish rite. Yet it is the Apostle Paul who gave instruction to a Gentile church at Corinth on its order and purpose. Water baptism and the Lord's Supper are local church ordinances and should be practiced as the Lord commanded.

Many who reject dispensations are guilty of the same mistake the "Hypers" make. The Hypers throw out the local church practices mentioned above. Others throw out all dispensations and make ship wreck.<sup>56</sup>

To summarize, the idea that spirit baptism replaced water had its earliest roots in the small “sects” of the seventeenth century, including the Quakers. The Salvation Army abandoned baptism for other reasons in the nineteenth century, which also saw the development of Dispensational theology. Ultra- or Hyper- Dispensationalism rejected water baptism on the grounds that it was for Israel while spirit baptism was for the Church. As noted above, however, these remain the exceptions to the view held by the vast amount of the Christian Church, for whom baptism has always been recognized as involving water, while the baptism of the holy spirit is recognized as a figurative use of the term.

Among that majority, however, there have been various disputes over the exact meaning and significance of baptism. The most heated debate was over infant baptism, which has at its root the question of whether baptism bestows grace in and of itself, or if it is a sign or seal of a work accomplished in a believer by faith in Christ. Although water and spirit were not thought to be mutually exclusive, there was distinction made between the two.

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<sup>54</sup> Mark H. Graeser, *Defending Dispensationalism: Standing Fast in the Liberty* (Indianapolis: Christian Educational Services, 1999), p. 1-2.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 4

<sup>56</sup> Ken Blue, “Dispensationalism Misunderstood”, BibleBelievers.com, <http://www.biblebelievers.com/BlueDISP.html>, (accessed April 16, 2006)

Previously the Roman Catholic Church had made a division between baptism in water and receiving the spirit, resulting in two separate sacraments. When the Reformers reduced the sacraments to just two, baptism and the Lord's Supper, they still made a distinction between baptism in water and baptism in spirit. But as Beasley-Murray writes, the distinction is often vague.

A curious uncertainty prevails in the Churches concerning the relation between baptism and the gift of the Holy Spirit. Most Christians take it for granted that there is some operation of the Holy Spirit in baptism, though what it is remains nebulous and vague. Catholic traditions, Anglican and Roman, that separate confirmation from baptism but interpret the former in a sacramental manner tend to divorce the gift of the Spirit from baptism and locate it in confirmation, and many of their adherents feel thoroughly uncomfortable about it. A persistent strain in Lutheranism and Presbyterianism, joined nowadays by the enthusiastic voice of Pentecostalism, makes a radical distinction between water baptism and Spirit baptism: the former is viewed as a sign, while the latter is believed to be the gift of God for faith alone.<sup>57</sup>

While this distinction was made, only in the previously discussed exceptions was baptism in water considered irrelevant or obsolete. Water baptism and spirit baptism were both considered valid. For the most part Protestant churches since the middle of the seventeenth century have viewed baptism as a symbol of what is accomplished by the holy spirit in the believer, in contrast to the typical Roman, Lutheran, and Anglican view of baptism as the channel through which God bestows His grace. However, this changed somewhat in the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

With the advent of dialectical theology and its recapturing of Biblical insights, baptism as well as confirmation has come in for greater consideration. The ecumenical movement brings together many different traditions from the Reformation and, in this context, the whole concept of church membership has been reexamined with the result that baptism has been a much discussed question in modern Protestant theology.<sup>58</sup>

The early English Baptists thought of baptism primarily as the scriptural mode of entry into the church, but this view became replaced (under Calvinist influence) by a conception of baptism as a symbolic testimony to what Christ has done for the believer. This does not hold good of British Baptists today...A considerable change of viewpoint has taken place in recent years among their ministers as well as theological teachers, and a similar development is observable on the continent of Europe, particularly among the younger men. The change is due, I believe, partly to a fresh examination of the teaching of the Scriptures on baptism and partly to participation in ecumenical discussion. In the nature of the case the latter had been inter-confessional and conducted in a spirit of willingness to evaluate afresh all confessional teaching.<sup>59</sup>

The more recent reexamining of the doctrine of baptism has brought about a trend toward recapturing the original Apostolic views of the subject as revealed in the New Testament. This can be seen in the writings of a number of 20<sup>th</sup> century theologians, many of whom are quoted, discussed, and critiqued in the books by G. R. Beasley-Murray cited in this study.

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<sup>57</sup> *Baptism Today and Tomorrow*, p. 52.

<sup>58</sup> *Westminster Dictionary of Church History*, s.v. "Baptism".

<sup>59</sup> *Baptism Today and Tomorrow*, p. 15.



It is only by examining the Scriptures that a balanced understanding of baptism can be reached. In the next two chapters we will look at whether baptism is only a sign or something more, as well as whether or not baptism is necessary for salvation. We will see that the Scriptures present a balance between two opposing viewpoints.

## 5. Baptism and the New Birth

An ongoing debate about baptism involves the question, “Can one be saved without baptism?” The answer depends to a large degree on what is meant by “saved.” Different views of salvation or the New Birth result in different views about what is necessary for it. There are two nearly opposite views of the New Birth to which I have been exposed in my life as a Christian. This chapter is not meant to be an exhaustive study of the subject of rebirth, but rather an examination of the two extreme views, and their corresponding relationship to baptism, in contrast to the Biblical view, which is a balance between the two extremes.

### Once Saved Always Saved?

For many years I believed that when a person “confesses Romans 10:9” (i.e., confesses Jesus as Lord and believes God raised him from the dead), he is “saved” or “born again” and nothing can change that. The Bible says we are saved by grace and not by works (Ephesians 2:8), so I was taught that once we were saved our subsequent works were irrelevant, except in terms of rewards. Implicit in this notion is the idea that if a person has a moment of faith, he is still saved, even if he later turns away from God in his heart. This belief is often expressed by the phrase, “once saved, always saved.” However, there are a number of places in the New Testament which clearly describe a conditional salvation. While salvation is certainly by grace through faith, one must continue in that faith until the end.

I Corinthians 15:

- 1 Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you the gospel which I preached unto you, which also ye have received, and wherein ye stand;
- 2 By which also ye are saved, if ye keep in memory what I preached unto you, unless ye have believed in vain.

Colossians 1:

- 21 And you, that were sometime alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now hath he reconciled
- 22 In the body of his flesh through death, to present you holy and unblameable and unproveable in his sight:
- 23 If ye continue in the faith grounded and settled, and be not moved away from the hope of the gospel, which ye have heard, and which was preached to every creature which is under heaven; whereof I Paul am made a minister;

I Thessalonians 3:

- 8 For now we live, if ye stand fast in the Lord.

II Timothy 2:

- 12 If we suffer, we shall also reign with him: if we deny him, he also will deny us:

Hebrews 6:

- 11 And we desire that every one of you do shew the same diligence to the full assurance of hope unto the end:

The idea of unconditional salvation comes about in part because being saved is equated with receiving the holy spirit. I was taught that the holy spirit was a “new birth spirit” which was the spirit of God in Christ in me. Once I received it, I could not lose it, and that seed remained in me unconditionally. They explained it like this: Just as I always remain the son of my earthly father regardless of my fellowship with him because his seed is in me, so after I have confessed Christ, I remain a son of God because God’s seed remains in me, even if I turn away and am out of fellowship with God.

The idea of unconditional seed comes from a misunderstanding of I Peter 1:23, “Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever.” The misunderstanding is that while the **seed** is incorruptible, it does not say that **I** am incorruptible, or that the seed would **remain in me** no matter what I did. Peter says here that we are born of incorruptible seed by, or through, the word of God. Verse 25 tells us that it is the word of the Lord that endures for ever, and identifies it as “the word which by the Gospel is preached unto you.” This is not just “the Bible” in general, but specifically the message of the Kingdom of God (more on that later). Jesus identifies the seed as the Word of God in Luke 8:11, and belief of this message as the key to salvation (Luke 8:12; Mark 4:11,12). Peter also says that we are begotten unto a lively hope (I Peter 1:3), and James says that we are begotten “by the truth” (James 1:18). It is the Word that is the incorruptible seed, not my state; the seed must take root and grow in me as I continue in faith until the end.

Because the ministry I was involved with believed that the “seed” was a “new birth spirit” which was unconditional, the baptism of the holy spirit, which is when that seed was received, was seen as the only valid baptism necessary. Water baptism was considered part of the Old Covenant, and was therefore obsolete. In their version of Dispensationalism, the Old Covenant was based on salvation by keeping the Law, which was a conditional salvation, but the new birth was a seed you could not lose, thus the idea of permanent salvation. To “have holy spirit” was synonymous with being saved, born again, etc.

They believed that a person could be sure he was saved because he had holy spirit, which was evidenced by the gifts of the spirit (or manifestations, as they called them). It was taught that speaking in tongues, especially, was positive proof of the new birth and salvation. All were encouraged to speak in tongues and operate the other manifestations. In a discussion about baptism, it was not uncommon for one to say, “I have holy spirit and speak in tongues. What do I need to be baptized with water for?” In considering whether baptism was necessary for salvation, they would point to cases where the holy spirit was received before baptism in water (particularly the Gentiles in Acts 10) and claim that they were saved without baptism because they received the holy spirit and spoke in tongues.

There are two problems with this theory. First, nowhere in the Scriptures is receiving the holy spirit equal to being saved. The Spirit is a token or down payment of the salvation we will receive, but it is not guaranteed that it will remain in us if we choose to no longer believe in and walk with the Lord. It was frequently said that the holy spirit was “sealed” in us. However, the Bible does not say **it** is sealed **in us**, but rather, **we** are sealed **with it**, as long as we remain faithful (Ephesians 1:13).

The second problem with the theory is that nowhere in the Bible is speaking in tongues said to be positive proof of being saved or born again. The debate as to whether or not tongues and the other gifts are genuinely in evidence today is beyond the scope of this study. But even if they are, it is a misunderstanding of their purpose to claim that all believers are supposed to operate all the gifts, or

that the one gift of tongues is most important, and is the only positive proof of the new birth. Jesus said that there would be some who will say, “Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works?” He replied, “I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity” (Matthew 7:22,23). Prophesying, casting out demons, and doing mighty works are obviously not a guarantee that one is born again, according to Jesus.

I was taught that all believers should speak in tongues, yet Paul, in I Corinthians 12, asks rhetorically, “Are all apostles? are all prophets? are all teachers? are all workers of miracles? Have all the gifts of healing? do all speak with tongues? do all interpret?” The answer that I was taught was that in a Church **meeting** not everyone spoke in tongues, but everyone had the ability to. But that is not the meaning of the passage. Verses 27-28 indicate what the subject being spoken of is. “Now ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular. And God hath set some in the church, first apostles, secondarily prophets, thirdly teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, governments, diversities of tongues.” The context of the chapter is positions of service in the Body of Christ, not what certain individuals should or shouldn’t do in a meeting.

So having the holy spirit is not equal to being saved, but is something that accompanies conversion, as we shall see. Therefore those who claim that some people were “saved” without baptism because they had received the holy spirit are misunderstanding what it means to be saved. And salvation is not a permanent state that you cannot lose. We are saved by grace through faith, but that faith must remain in us until the end, and then we will receive the gift of eternal life at the resurrection (Romans 2:7; I Corinthians 15:22, 23, 53, 54).

### **Are We Born Again Yet?**

On the other hand, there is an opposite view which I have also encountered. It came about partly in response to the “once saved always saved” viewpoint. Those who hold this view understand that the holy spirit is not a permanent seed that cannot be lost, and that one must maintain faith until the end in order to enter the Kingdom of God. However, they believe that the new birth is not a present reality in this lifetime, but rather a figurative, prophetic reference to what is to come in the future. This idea is based in part on the KJV rendering of a verse in Acts 13.

Acts 13:

33 God hath fulfilled the same unto us their children, in that he hath raised up Jesus again; as it is also written in the second psalm, Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee.

34 And as concerning that he raised him up from the dead, now no more to return to corruption, he said on this wise, I will give you the sure mercies of David.

35 Wherefore he saith also in another psalm, Thou shalt not suffer thine Holy One to see corruption.

The wording in verse 33 seems to suggest that the “day” referred to in “this day have I begotten thee” is the day of his resurrection. From this (and also Colossians 1:18, which calls him the “firstborn from the dead”) it is concluded that Jesus Christ’s “new birth” was at his resurrection. Similarly our new birth will take place when we are resurrected at the return of Christ. New Testament references to the new birth are therefore considered to be prophetic of a future event in the same sense that many Old Testament prophecies speak of future events using past or present tense wording.

The problem with this theory is that, first of all, the word “again” is not in the Greek texts of Acts 13:33, and does not in fact appear in many other English versions of the Bible, including the ASV, NASV, RSV, and NRSV.<sup>60</sup> The phrase “raised up” is translated from one Greek word, *anistemi*, elsewhere translated “arise,” “rise,” “rise up,” “rise again,” “raise up,” “raise up again,” and “stand up.” It is sometimes used to refer to Christ’s resurrection (as in Matthew 17:9, Mark 8:31, etc.) but is also used in a variety of other ways, including to rise up and go somewhere, to raise up seed, to rise up in the morning, or to arise and do something. Another meaning is to rise up to prominence, in the sense of coming on the scene. This usage occurs in several places, such as Acts 5:36, 37 and Acts 7:18. It is used specifically referring to Jesus as the fulfillment of prophecy two other times in Acts (“God will raise up a prophet” -Acts 3:22 & 7:37) and twice in Hebrews (“another priest arises” - Hebrews 7:11 & 15). The context must determine which way the word is being used.

The word *anistemi* in and of itself does not demand that it be understood as his resurrection, if the words “from the dead” or “again” are not included. Verse 33 just says that God “raised up” Jesus and refers to Psalm 2, “Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee.” There is nothing else in the Bible that explicitly defines the day he was begotten as his resurrection, and it makes better sense to interpret “raised up” in the sense of bringing him on the scene.

The next verse (v. 34) begins, “And as concerning that he raised him up from the dead.” The word *anistemi* is used here too, but this time the words “from the dead” are included. It is in this verse that the resurrection is specifically mentioned, and that is tied with two **other** prophecies (Isaiah 55:3 and Psalm 16:10), and elaborated on in the following verses. This whole section of Acts 13 refers to Jesus and his fulfilling of God’s promises, regarding his birth and rise to prominence, and also his resurrection. But verse 33 is not saying that his resurrection was when he was begotten.

While Jesus is the firstborn from the dead because he was resurrected first, there is nothing in the New Testament on which to base the notion that our new birth is **only** in the future. On the contrary, while there are references to salvation as having both past and future aspects, there are also references to the new birth and being born again that are clearly referring to something that happens during this life.

I Peter 1:

3 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead,

4 To an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you,

5 Who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.

This passage refers to the **past** reality of Christ’s resurrection, the hope reserved in heaven of a **future** inheritance, and the **present** state of being kept by God’s power through faith, **unto** the future salvation. There are past, present, and future aspects of our salvation. With regards to the present aspect, is it only a promise of a future reality, or is there something we have now?

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<sup>60</sup> American Standard Version, New American Standard Version, Revised Standard Version, and New Revised Standard Version.

I Peter 1:

22 Seeing ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit unto unfeigned love of the brethren, see that ye love one another with a pure heart fervently:

23 Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever.

24 For all flesh is as grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of grass. The grass withereth, and the flower thereof falleth away:

25 But the word of the Lord endureth for ever. And this is the word which by the gospel is preached unto you.

Here Peter refers to the fact that we have (past tense) purified our souls in obeying the truth. The result is that we are purified **unto** unfeigned love. He exhorts us therefore to love one another (now, in the present), **being** born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible. Clearly this is referring to our current state. The seed is the word, which “is preached unto you,” according to verse 25. It is not a permanent “new birth spirit,” as I was once taught, but it is the Word of the Gospel, which we receive now in this life, and which begins the regeneration process in us.

Related to this notion of a future new birth is the idea that God’s blessings are for the future, and we have only the promise of them now. Granted, some of the promises of abundance, especially in the Psalms, are related to the coming Kingdom, and not to be claimed today, as the popular “prosperity gospel” does. But Jesus did promise that there would be great blessings even in this life, albeit with persecutions.

Mark 10:

29 And Jesus answered and said, Verily I say unto you, There is no man that hath left house, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my sake, and the gospel’s,

30 But he shall receive an hundredfold now in this time, houses, and brethren, and sisters, and mothers, and children, and lands, with persecutions; and in the world to come eternal life.

Many (though not all) of those who hold to this idea of the new birth being only prophetic of the future resurrection also hold to a view of a spiritual or figurative baptism. Such an idea fits more closely with the notion of a figurative or prophetic new birth. If one believes that what we have now is **only** a promise for the future, then we are not **literally** regenerated at baptism. But the Scriptures speak of people believing and being baptized, and being reborn, and it is described as a specific event in time. Before it, the person is a sinner, unsaved, and outside of the Body of Christ. Afterward, the person has been changed, and is from that point on a new creature in Christ.

This notion of a spiritual or figurative baptism is closely related to that which we have discussed before, and is built on the same foundation, that is, that the contrast between John’s baptism and Jesus’ baptism meant that a spiritual baptism would supercede water. It is believed, by those who hold this position, that to be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ means to be fully immersed in the name of Jesus and everything that name represents.

This baptism of the spirit, into Christ (that is into Christ’s work, his teaching, his commandments, etc.) is the only baptism one needs if one is to be saved and enter the Kingdom of God.

Ephesians 4:4,5 – “There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling; One Lord, one faith, one baptism.”

For those who are Christ’s there is only one baptism. This baptism is to be baptized with (or in) holy spirit, or to be baptized into Christ. It is the spirit that enables one to be “immersed” in Christ.<sup>61</sup>

To begin with, this is not the meaning of the passage quoted from Ephesians, as we have seen. The one baptism in verse 5 is baptism in the name of Jesus Christ, which is in water. The holy spirit is referred to in verse 4, “one spirit.” But while recognizing that baptism in the name of Jesus cannot be the same as receiving the holy spirit, as we have discussed, this version of the doctrine maintains that they are two aspects of a spiritual baptism that is considered to be the only valid baptism, water being irrelevant and obsolete.

“Baptism in holy spirit” emphasizes the power or agency by which we are baptized. “Baptized in the name of Christ,” “into Christ,” etc., emphasizes the “substance” into which we are to be immersed. They portray two aspects or phases of the same baptism.<sup>62</sup>

The first problem with this theory is that there is simply no Scriptural basis for it. Nowhere is such an idea presented in the New Testament. There *are* “two aspects” of Christian baptism, in the sense that baptism in the name of Jesus Christ was usually accompanied by baptism in the holy spirit. But nowhere does it say that both are “spiritual” as opposed to physical, or that water has been replaced.

Secondly, the explanation of the phrases are the reverse of what normal meaning and usage of words would indicate. In normal usage the phrase “in the name of” would be the one that denotes “power or agency” while “baptized in,” using the Greek preposition *en*, would refer to “the substance into which we are to be immersed.” And yet, in all six occurrences of the phrase “baptized with the holy spirit,” the preposition *en* is used, and all are comparing and contrasting baptism **in** water with baptism **in** the holy spirit. This is what defines the substance in which we are baptized.

Regarding the phrase, “baptized in the name of,” it cannot be shown to mean “immersed into the name of,” as if the name were the substance being immersed into. There are only five verses in the New Testament that speak of being baptized “in the name of” Jesus Christ. Only one of them uses *en*, or “in” (Acts 10:48), and one uses *epi*, literally “upon” (Acts 2:38). The other three (Acts 8:16; 19:4,5) use the Greek word *eis*. This word is variously translated “into,” “to,” or “unto” in the New Testament. Considering the variety of prepositions used, a case based only on the use of Greek words is difficult to establish.

In the earliest proclamation by the Church baptism was administered ‘in the name of Jesus the Messiah’ (Acts 2:38) or ‘in the name of the Lord Jesus’ (Acts 8:16). A great deal of patient research has gone into elucidating the meaning of the phrase ‘in the name of’. We now know that it was a common formula. Strangely enough, it was current not only in Greek, but also in the language spoken by Jesus and his disciples (Aramaic) and in the language of the Old Testament (Hebrew). On the basis of contemporary Greek usage W. Heitmüller rendered the phrase ‘in dedication to...with the use of the name’; that is, by the naming of the Lord Jesus over the baptized the believer is made over as the possession of the Lord Jesus. The Rabbinic scholars H. L. Strack and P. Billerbeck came to a similar

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<sup>61</sup> “Baptism Doth Now Save Us,” p. 5.

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 6.

result after examining the use of the phrase in Rabbinic literature; its basic meaning in Hebrew is ‘with respect to’, and it is capable of considerable elasticity. From the Jewish viewpoint baptism in the name of the Lord Jesus would be baptism for the sake of the Lord Jesus, and to make the baptized over to Him. Whether, therefore, we come to the phrase from the Greek or Semitic backgrounds, the significance of baptism in the name of the Lord Jesus is virtually the same: the baptized is consecrated to the service and glory of the Lord Jesus.<sup>63</sup>

Besides “baptized in the name of,” another English phrase that might seem as if it could be taken to mean “immersed in Jesus” is “baptized into.” We are baptized into Christ (Galatians 3:27), into one body (I Corinthians 12:13), and into Jesus Christ and his death (Romans 6:3). However, none of these verses teach that baptism is “in” those things and not in water. The preposition used in all three cases is *eis*, and is used in the sense of “unto.” From the context, they refer to the goal or end result of baptism, not the “substance into which we are immersed.”

The description of the Israelites being baptized into Moses in I Corinthians 10:2 also presents a clear example. Paul says that they were “under the cloud, and all passed through the sea; And were all baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea.” Does being baptized into Moses mean they were “baptized **into** Moses and everything that he represents”? It makes more sense to say simply that they were baptized “unto” or “with respect to” Moses.

In Acts 19, the word *eis* is used several times and is translated “unto” and “on.” This passage illustrates that baptism “unto” or “in the name of” is in the sense of “with respect to”

Acts 19:

- 1 And it came to pass, that, while Apollos was at Corinth, Paul having passed through the upper coasts came to Ephesus: and finding certain disciples,
- 2 He said unto them, Have ye received the Holy Ghost since ye believed? And they said unto him, We have not so much as heard whether there be any Holy Ghost.
- 3 And he said unto them, Unto [*eis*] what then were ye baptized? And they said, Unto [*eis*] John’s baptism.
- 4 Then said Paul, John verily baptized with the baptism of repentance, saying unto the people, that they should believe on [*eis*] him which should come after him, that is, on [*eis*] Christ Jesus.
- 5 When they heard this, they were baptized in [*eis*] the name of the Lord Jesus.

The disciples here were baptized unto John’s baptism, but they were told that they should believe unto Jesus who came after John. Therefore they were baptized in the name of, or with respect to, Jesus. They were not immersed into Jesus any more than they had been immersed into John previously.

Furthermore, if the baptism that is now required is a figurative baptism that means to be fully immersed in the name of Jesus, then the whole argument based on the words of John and Jesus falls short. John did not say, “I baptize with water but you will be baptized in the name of Jesus.” The contrast was not between water and a figurative “baptism into the name of Jesus,” it was a contrast between water and spirit, as the substance being immersed in (spirit being a figurative usage). The phrase “baptized in the name of Jesus” could only be substituted if it were shown to be equal to

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<sup>63</sup> *Baptism Today and Tomorrow*, p. 42-3.



“baptized in the holy spirit,” but we have seen that they are not equal. The phrase “baptized in the name of Jesus” is used to refer to Christian baptism in water, while the figurative term, “baptize in the spirit” was used to show the comparison with literal baptism, while contrasting spirit with water.

This theory of a spiritual baptism describes it as an ongoing process.

This baptism in the spirit or baptism into Christ is more than a moment’s infusion with God’s spirit – His power. It is the process of becoming immersed in the truth of Christ to the end that one remains steadfast in the faith for a lifetime.

The various places where this baptism is mentioned may refer to the specific time of the inception of this process – when one first believes and God begins to impart his spirit, or it may refer to the entire process itself.<sup>64</sup>

The term “baptism” which implies an immersion by dipping into, remains a figurative term for what it is describing. It speaks of the saturation of the mind and heart of the believer in the truth of Christ and his Gospel, made possible by the power of God shed forth by Christ through the outpouring of the holy spirit. This baptism *is* necessary for salvation.<sup>65</sup>

While it is true that baptism is sometimes used as a figurative term, this figurative usage is employed when speaking of baptism in the holy spirit. We saw in an earlier chapter that the use of the words “baptize” and “baptism” in the New Testament is most often literal, and its literal meaning implies water. When it is used figuratively, it is clearly indicated as such, and one of those figurative uses is the likening of the holy spirit to water. But not every reference to baptism is the figurative baptism in the spirit. That phrase only occurs six times. Most often, the term baptism is used literally.

There is also a problem with describing baptism as an ongoing relationship. A continuing state of being “in Christ” is certainly how we are to live, according to the Scriptures. And to become fully immersed in the knowledge of Christ, to the point where one’s mind and heart are saturated in the truth of Christ and his Gospel, is certainly a desirable state in which to be. But to achieve that takes time and growth. Yet the records in Acts describe baptism as something that happened immediately, in a moment in time. It is an act of faith in response to receiving the Gospel. They believed and were baptized.

To say that baptism “may refer to the specific time of the inception of this process... or it may refer to the entire process itself,” is to miss the normal Biblical usage of the word “baptize.” Reading through the New Testament, one can see that the word “baptize” is always used in the sense of dipping, that is, a momentary experience, and not a continued, permanent submersion. When baptism in water was administered, they did not stay in the water; they were dipped, and then they emerged. Truly we are to be “in Christ” which is an ongoing state. But baptism is always presented as the event in which we enter **into** that state, not the ongoing state itself. Like the pickling solution in chapter 1 which illustrated the difference between *bapto* and *baptizo*, the **result** of the baptism is a “permanent change” or ongoing state, but the immersion itself is a one-time event. It occurs in a moment of time, and **brings us into** Christ. But the state of **being** in Christ, which is the **result** of that event, is not what the word baptism refers to in the New Testament.

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<sup>64</sup> “Baptism Doth Now Save Us,” p. 9.

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 10.

The reference to the Israelites' baptism into Moses mentioned before also provides an example in this regard. They all "passed through the sea" and were baptized with respect to Moses, "in the cloud and in the sea." The sea which they crossed formed a line of demarcation that separated them from their past in Egypt. The cloud continued to separate them from the enemy that pursued them. However, it must be remembered that the point of the reference in I Corinthians 10 is that although they were separated in that way, they still could (and did) turn from God to idolatry. We are twice warned to beware of this. Verse 6, "Now these things were our examples, to the intent we should not lust after evil things, as they also lusted," and verses 11 and 12, "Now all these things happened unto them for ensamples: and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come. Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall." In a similar way, our baptism represents a separation from our past, and the beginning of a new life in Christ. Yet while it is a "permanent change" rather than just a one-time dipping that has no effect, the change is not indelible or irreversible.

It has been pointed out that anyone could go through the motions of baptism without genuine faith and not truly be changed. Likewise one could be baptized and later decide to turn away from God.

Galatians 3:27 – "For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ."

How untrue this would be if the baptism it was speaking of was a water baptism. Just as circumcision was no guarantee of godly thinking or behavior, so water baptism is no guarantee of Christ-like behavior.<sup>66</sup>

While it is true that water baptism doesn't guarantee Christ-like behavior, neither does baptism of the spirit. That is not the point of baptism. It is to be a dividing line that separates the new life from the old, which helps us to live accordingly when we look back on it and contemplate its meaning.

The notion of a figurative, prophetic reference to a future new birth, coupled with that of a figurative baptism into the name of Jesus and all it represents, misses the great significance of baptism and its relationship to the new birth, as described in the New Testament. It is to be the beginning of a regeneration process that continues until the resurrection at the return of Christ, when it will be finally complete and the new age of a regenerated earth will begin.

### **Rebirth and Regeneration**

So, at one point I was taught that being born again was a permanent seed that I couldn't lose no matter what I did, and at another point I was taught that I would not be born again until the resurrection when Christ returns. It turns out the Bible portrays a truth that is somewhere between the two.

The English phrase "born again" is only used in two passages in the New Testament, but there are other related words that are used, and all the testimony of Scripture must be considered to get the full picture. We saw that Peter wrote in his epistle about being "born again" of incorruptible seed (I Peter 1:23); he also wrote that God had "begotten us again" unto a lively hope by Christ's resurrection (I Peter 1:3). In both cases the Greek word used is *anagennao*, which literally means to beget again. The other passage where "born again" occurs is John 3 (used twice), but there it is the root word *gennao* followed by the word *anothen*, meaning "from above."

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<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 9.

The word *gennao* is used literally of procreation and figuratively of regeneration. When used literally it can mean either to be conceived (as in Matthew 1:20) or to be born (as in Matthew 2:1). The two are not differentiated. The word is used to describe Jesus having been begotten by God (such as Acts 13:33 and Hebrews 1:5). It is also used of Paul begetting by the Gospel (such as in I Corinthians 4:15 and Philemon verse 10). John's epistles refer in several places to being born of God, also using this word.

Another related Greek word is *apokueo*, which means to breed forth or generate, and it only occurs twice in the New Testament, both in James chapter one. The first occurrence is in verse 15, where he says that sin, when it is finished, "brings forth" death. The second is in verse 18, referring to God begetting us. "Of his own will begat He us with the word of truth, that we should be a kind of firstfruits of his creatures."

God begat us with the Word of truth, James said, the end result being that we should be firstfruits of his creatures. Peter had likewise stated that we were born again of incorruptible seed, by the Word of God, which he said is the Word which by the Gospel is preached unto you. He also said we were begotten again "unto a lively hope," which is "...to an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you." The Word by which we are begotten has to do with the hope of that incorruptible inheritance in the future, which is elsewhere called the Gospel of the Kingdom of God.

Too often the words of Jesus are interpreted in light of the later New Testament writers instead of the other way around. It is important that we understand the words of James, John, Peter, and Paul in light of the Master. Jesus Christ's words, "You must be born again" are well known, but his other references to the new birth are often forgotten. He said the new birth was so vitally important that one could not see the Kingdom of God without it (John 3:1). But of the four Gospels, John's is the only one that uses the phrase "born again." How could something so important not be mentioned in the other Gospels? The fact is, Jesus did speak of it, but he used other terms.

Jesus identified the new birth as being essential for entering the Kingdom of God in John 3. In the key parable of the sower and the seed, Jesus likewise states that salvation is dependent on receiving the word.

Mark 4:

11 And he said unto them, Unto you it is given to know the mystery of the kingdom of God: but unto them that are without, all these things are done in parables:

12 That seeing they may see, and not perceive; and hearing they may hear, and not understand; lest at any time they should be converted, and their sins should be forgiven them.

Luke 8:

11 Now the parable is this: The seed is the word of God.

12 Those by the way side are they that hear; then cometh the devil, and taketh away the word out of their hearts, lest they should believe and be saved.

Mark and Luke point out that if one does not receive the seed, they don't get "converted" or "saved." Matthew even more specifically defines what the seed is.

Matthew 13:

18 Hear ye therefore the parable of the sower.

19 When any one heareth the word of the kingdom, and understandeth it not, then cometh the wicked one, and catcheth away that which was sown in his heart. This is he which received seed by the way side.

The seed that the sower sows is the Word of God, which is the Word of the Kingdom. The devil steals it away from those who do not receive it. Others receive the seed and retain it for a short time, but fall away when tribulation or persecution arises, like the seed on stony ground with no roots. Some others receive the seed but are distracted by cares and riches of this world, like the seed on the thorny ground. The last category is those who receive the seed on good ground and bear fruit. This parable is considered by Jesus to be the foundation of all the other parables (“Know ye not this parable? and how then will ye know all parables?” – Mark 4:13). It presents the foundational truth of how to be saved, or have eternal life, which begins with the intelligent reception of the Gospel of the Kingdom of God.

Part of the hope of the Gospel is that one day the world will be restored to its original state, when Christ rules in God’s Kingdom. Jesus refers to this in Matthew and uses another word from the root *gennao*.

Matthew 19:

28 And Jesus said unto them, Verily I say unto you, That ye which have followed me, in the regeneration [*paliggenesia*] when the Son of man shall sit in the throne of his glory, ye also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel.

This word *paliggenesia* is only used twice in the Bible. Once in this reference to the regenerated world to come, and one other place in Titus.

Titus 3:

3 For we ourselves also were sometimes foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving divers lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful, and hating one another.

4 But after that the kindness and love of God our Saviour toward man appeared,

5 Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration [*paliggenesia*], and renewing of the Holy Ghost;

6 Which he shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Saviour;

7 That being justified by his grace, we should be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life.

This passage is talking about the regeneration process that changes us from the way we once were. It began at a certain point in our past, and has been working in us, with a view to being heirs according to the hope of eternal life. It is a process that is ongoing in our present lives and will be complete when Christ returns and we put on immortality. It is a foretaste of the regeneration that will happen to the whole world when Christ sits on his throne. (The holy spirit is also referred to as a foretaste, or “earnest” of what is to come in II Corinthians 1:22; 5:5; Ephesians 1:14; 4:30.)

The regeneration associated with the holy spirit is also compared with washing, which ties it back to John 3. Jesus said, “Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the Kingdom of God” (verse 5). In speaking to Nicodemus about being born from above, or born of the spirit, Jesus implied that what he was saying was not unknown. “Art thou a master of Israel, and

knowest not these things?” he said in verse 10. The Old Testament Prophets spoke of a rebirth of Israel that was to come. Isaiah 66:8 asks, “Shall the earth be made to bring forth in one day? or shall a nation be born at once? for as soon as Zion travailed, she brought forth her children.” Ezekiel describes a vision in chapter 37:9ff about the dry bones coming to life again, which is specifically identified as the “whole house of Israel.” It says that God would bring them up out of their graves and would put His spirit in them, and they shall live. This giving of the spirit is also described in chapter 36.

Ezekiel 36:

25 Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean: from all your filthiness, and from all your idols, will I cleanse you.

26 A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh.

27 And I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments, and do them.

Joel 2:

28 And it shall come to pass afterward, that I will pour out my spirit upon all flesh; and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions:

29 And also upon the servants and upon the handmaids in those days will I pour out my spirit.

The promise of God to pour out His Spirit on all flesh is a foretelling of a new covenant that God would make with His people.

Jeremiah 31:

33 But this shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel; After those days, saith the LORD, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people.

34 And they shall teach no more every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the LORD: for they shall all know me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith the LORD: for I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more.

The new covenant is discussed in detail in the book of Hebrews (where this passage from Jeremiah is quoted in chapter 8:10-12). Jesus is the mediator of that new covenant, which he ratified with his blood (Luke 22:20,29,30). God’s promise to pour out His spirit and to raise his people from the dead has been partially fulfilled in this day and age. The ultimate fulfillment will be when we are literally resurrected and His spirit is poured out on all flesh, which will be when Christ returns to sit on his throne. In the meantime Jesus sheds the holy spirit in our hearts, and we are raised with him (which baptism symbolizes).

As mentioned in the previous chapter, Covenantal, or Reformed Theology holds that the promise of the Kingdom of God is spiritually fulfilled in the Church. On the other hand, Dispensationalism says that a literal Kingdom will be inaugurated on earth in the future, in fulfillment of the promises to Israel, but the current administration includes a whole new plan and a whole new Gospel. The balance between the two extremes is that while the complete, literal fulfillment will be in the future, there is a partial fulfillment now. It is obvious that the promises are not completely fulfilled, when

one reads the many details of the prophecies. But rather than being “spiritually” fulfilled, the fulfillment is seen as literal, but in the future. Yet until that day comes, we are blessed to have a foretaste of Kingdom power, enabling us to walk in His ways. Rather than being a whole new gospel of salvation that replaces the Kingdom Gospel Jesus preached, the Kingdom continues to be preached until the end (Matthew 24:14).

In Matthew 13, Mark 4, and Luke 13, Jesus describes in parables the seed-form of the Kingdom of God coexisting with the worldly system for a time until the end. In Luke 17:20,21, he told the Pharisees that the Kingdom of God was in their midst.<sup>67</sup> Colossians 1:13 says that God “...hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son.” We do not yet see the Kingdom of God manifested on earth, but we are translated into it in the same temporary sense that Jesus spoke of in his parables, as well as in Matthew 12:28; Luke 10:9,11; 11:20.

In his epistles, Paul speaks of a change that has taken place. “Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new” (II Corinthians 5:17). We are renewed every day, as we look toward that hope.

II Corinthians 4:

14 Knowing that he which raised up the Lord Jesus shall raise up us also by Jesus, and shall present us with you.

15 For all things are for your sakes, that the abundant grace might through the thanksgiving of many redound to the glory of God.

16 For which cause we faint not; but though our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day.

Colossians 3:10 And have put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him:

In the above verses, the word for renewed is *anakainoo* (to cause to grow up, to make new). It only occurs in these two verses. The noun form, *anakainosis* (a renewal, renovation, complete change for the better) is used in Romans:

Romans 12:2 And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing [*anakainosis*] of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.

This verse speaks of the renewing of the mind as something that happens and which transforms you. The only other place *anakainosis* occurs is Titus 3:5, which we looked at earlier. There it is translated “renewing” and is linked with regeneration. The “washing of regeneration [*paliggenesia*] and renewing [*anakainosis*] of the Holy Ghost” speak of the present ongoing process that begins when we first receive the Word in our hearts, and continues as we grow and live for God. This is

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<sup>67</sup> The KJV rendering, “The Kingdom of God is within you” is often quoted as proof that the Kingdom is only an inner spiritual one, and not a literal kingdom on earth. This would contradict the many Scriptures that clearly depict it as a real world government in the future over which Christ will reign, including the verses immediately following this, in Luke 17. For this reason the translation “in your midst” or “among you,” as found in several other versions of the Bible, is to be preferred.

why Paul says we are a new creation (II Corinthians 5:17). It reaches its ultimate completion at the return of Christ when we put on immortality.

This process began at a definite point of time, according to the Epistles. It is a distinct point in time at which a change took place. In I Corinthians 6:9,10 Paul describes the type of people that will not inherit the Kingdom of God (fornicators, idolaters, adulterers, effeminate, abusers of themselves with mankind, thieves, covetous, drunkards, revilers, extortioners). He then points out that “such were some of you: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God.” Paul himself was encouraged to be baptized and wash away his sins, in Acts 22:16. These and other Scriptures present conversion or new birth as happening at a specific moment in time.

Hebrews 10 refers to the new covenant that was prophesied in the Old Testament. We have access to God by the blood of Jesus. We no longer need to offer animal sacrifices now, because “where remission of these is, there is no more offering for sin” (verse 18). For this reason, it says, “Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water.” Christ gave himself for the church “that he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word,” according to Ephesians 5:25-27.

The new birth is a regeneration by the holy spirit, which is described figuratively as washing. The connection of this rebirth with washing and water strongly implies that baptism in water is meant to be a symbol of that rebirth and regeneration. In the next chapter we will further examine the close connection between the new birth and baptism.

## 6. Why Be Baptized?

Biblically speaking, the new birth is the regeneration produced by the holy spirit, which results from receiving and believing the Gospel. How then does this tie in with water baptism? Couldn't one believe the Word and receive the Spirit without partaking of the rite of baptism?

In the chapter on Historical Considerations, we saw that the Roman Catholic view of sacramentalism has held that baptism is a "channel" through which God administers grace. We also saw that from the middle of the seventeenth century until the twentieth, the dominant view in Protestantism was that water baptism is merely an outward sign. The logical conclusion drawn from the two sides of the argument is this: if baptism is truly the means through which God gives grace, it is therefore necessary for salvation; but if it is merely a sign, it is of little or no importance, and merely an "optional extra." The Scriptural view, like that of the new birth, is somewhere between the two extremes, as has been demonstrated by more recent theologians in the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

### Is Baptism "Just" a Sign?

The idea that water takes on supernatural powers in the context of baptism, and thus performs the miracle of salvation on the recipient, is nowhere to be found in Scripture, and was repudiated by the Protestant Reformers. But is it Biblical to say that baptism is only a symbol and nothing more, when the reality of the new birth and regeneration of the holy spirit is so closely attached to it?

Many who hold that baptism is unnecessary would say, how can the physical immersion in water have any real effect? The problem with this reasoning is that it assumes that baptism is only an outward ordinance, and does not take into account the significance of what it represents. What makes baptism efficacious is not some magic formula, but the fact that it is the public declaration of the faith which the Bible clearly tells us is the key to our salvation. The close connection between this declaration and the results of faith itself can be seen by comparing what the Bible identifies as the results of both faith and baptism. This comparison is discussed at length in different ways, in both of G. R. Beasley-Murray's books on baptism.<sup>68</sup> The following is an overview.

When the Jews asked Peter on the day of Pentecost what they should do, he replied in Acts 2:38 that they should repent and be baptized for the forgiveness of sins. Ananias told Paul to be baptized and wash away his sins, calling upon the name of the Lord, in Acts 22:16. Both forgiveness and cleansing of sin are said to be the result of believing confession of sins in I John 1:9 - "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." And Romans of course presents the doctrine of justification by grace through faith. Forgiveness and cleansing of sin are attributed to both faith and baptism.

As Christians, we are united with Christ. Galatians 3:26,27 says that we are baptized into Christ, and we share in his sonship by faith. Romans 6 and Colossians 2 describe in detail how in baptism we share in Christ's death, burial, and resurrection. We are crucified with him, according to Galatians 2:20, but it is Christ which lives in us, and we live this new life by the faith of the son of God. Ephesians 3:17 says that Christ dwells in our hearts by faith, and it is "through the faith of the

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<sup>68</sup> *Baptism in the New Testament*, p. 272, and *Baptism Today and Tomorrow*, pp. 27-36.



operation of God” (Colossians 2:12) that we are buried with him in baptism, and risen with him to a new life. Union with Christ is attributed to both faith and baptism.

Peter’s declaration in Acts 2:38 put the receiving of the holy spirit in conjunction with baptism, as do many of the references in Acts, and I Corinthians 12:13 connects the baptism into one body with receiving the holy spirit. Paul writes in Galatians 3:2 that they received the spirit by the hearing of faith and not by the works of the Law. Later in verse 14 he states that the purpose of Christ’s redemptive work resulting in the Gentiles receiving the blessing of Abraham was “that we might receive the promise of the spirit through faith.” Receiving the holy spirit is connected with both faith and baptism.

We are said to be baptized into Christ in Galatians 3:26 and into one body in I Corinthians 12:13. Baptism was the rite of initiation into the Church, and is still recognized as being such. Members of his body are called believers, and believing is what characterizes the Church, which is called the “household of faith” in Galatians 6:10. The “multitude of them that believed were of one heart and of one soul” (Acts 4:32), believers were added to the Lord (Acts 5:14), and many other verses characterize the Church as those that have faith in Christ. Membership into the Church, the Body of Christ, is identified with both faith and baptism.

In John 3, Jesus declared that “Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God” (verse 3), and later he clarified this by saying, “Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God” (verse 5). He goes on to describe the rebirth from above, and contrasts it with being born of the flesh. We saw in the previous chapter that the association of water with the pouring out of the holy spirit in Old Testament prophecy was behind this saying.<sup>69</sup> The description of the new birth as being “of water and the spirit” ties it together with baptism, since at the time it was spoken John the Baptist’s baptism was being preached with a view toward the coming baptism with spirit, and by the time the Gospels were written, it was understood that baptism in water and baptism in the spirit were experienced in close conjunction, if not simultaneously. Later in the same chapter of John (verses 14-17) it is declared that believing in Jesus Christ is the criterion for having eternal life. “Eternal” in verse 15 and “everlasting” in verse 16 are both translations of the same Greek word, *aionios*, which literally means “pertaining to the age to come.” Life in the coming Kingdom Age is dependent on believing in Jesus and his Gospel, and being baptized as a confession of that faith.

To summarize, forgiveness and cleansing of sin, union with Christ, receiving the holy spirit, membership in the Church, and inheritance in the Kingdom of God, are all attributed to both faith and baptism. It is not because there is anything special about the water or the action of baptism. It is the demonstration of faith in the Gospel, and symbolically participating in the resurrection, that makes it accomplish something. So while it is not an *opus operatum* which accomplishes salvation in anyone as long as they go through the motions, it is equally incorrect to say that is **only** a symbol and nothing more. It is the outward declaration of faith, and must be preceded by an intelligent reception of the Gospel message, and accompanied by an attitude of repentance. It is only in that condition that baptism accomplishes anything (which by its very nature rules out the idea of infant baptism). Yet it indeed does accomplish something, as do faith and repentance.

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<sup>69</sup> The idea held by some, that water represents human birth, while spirit represents the new birth, cannot be valid, since the entire expression, “of water and of the Spirit,” refers to the way in which one is born again (“from above”), and John 1:13 says that the power to be born of God is “not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.” (*Baptism in the New Testament*, p. 228)

## **An Outward Ordinance**

While most Christians would not dispute the notion that faith is essential and accomplishes something in our hearts and lives, some still have a problem with the idea of an outward sign, such as immersion in water. They reason that if you truly repent in your heart, and believe the Gospel, and receive the holy spirit, then what purpose or need is there of an outward ordinance? The purpose is that when we are presented with the Gospel, and decide that we believe, there must be some response to demonstrate that we believe. James in his epistle speaks of how faith without works is dead. It's not that we are saved by the works of the law, or any other works, including baptism. Rather, true faith is demonstrated by some outward action, otherwise it is not truly faith.

James 2:

14 What doth it profit, my brethren, though a man say he hath faith, and have not works? can faith save him?

15 If a brother or sister be naked, and destitute of daily food,

16 And one of you say unto them, Depart in peace, be ye warmed and filled; notwithstanding ye give them not those things which are needful to the body; what doth it profit?

17 Even so faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone.

18 Yea, a man may say, Thou hast faith, and I have works: shew me thy faith without thy works, and I will shew thee my faith by my works.

Anyone can say they believe in God, and anyone can say they believe in Jesus. True faith must be demonstrated by action. James goes on to say:

19 Thou believest that there is one God; thou doest well: the devils also believe, and tremble.

20 But wilt thou know, O vain man, that faith without works is dead?

21 Was not Abraham our father justified by works, when he had offered Isaac his son upon the altar?

22 Seest thou how faith wrought with his works, and by works was faith made perfect?

23 And the scripture was fulfilled which saith, Abraham believed God, and it was imputed unto him for righteousness: and he was called the Friend of God.

24 Ye see then how that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only.

25 Likewise also was not Rahab the harlot justified by works, when she had received the messengers, and had sent them out another way?

26 For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also.

Again, I am not suggesting that the one-time action of baptism is sufficient to save a person if they don't continue in the faith. Demonstration of faith by way of works is an ongoing pattern. But this particular "work" is demonstrating not just a general "faith in Jesus," but belief in the specific Gospel of the Kingdom that Jesus preached. The Gospel of Jesus Christ proclaimed that the Kingdom of God was at hand. But there was still the problem of sin to be dealt with before anyone could enter it. Jesus dealt with it, and that aspect of the Gospel was added when the disciples preached it in Acts. Everywhere it was preached, baptism was the expected response.

The preaching in Acts, as well as the Epistles, includes not only the proclamation of the coming Kingdom, but also the understanding that by believing and accepting this Gospel message, we are entering into a covenant relationship with Jesus. We saw in the previous chapter how the new birth is a partial fulfillment of God's promised new covenant. When Jesus instituted Communion in Luke

22:20, he said, “This cup is the new testament in my blood, which is shed for you.” The word for “testament” is *diatheke*, which means “covenant.”<sup>70</sup> He has ratified the New Covenant with his blood, and in order to partake of this covenant, we must share in his death and resurrection as payment for our sins.

Water baptism is an outward symbol of that sharing (Romans 6:3,4; Colossians 2:12). Being immersed is a symbol of dying to our old life and our sin, and coming up out of the water represents our sharing in his resurrection. It is our way of “finalizing the deal” so to speak. When people enter covenants today, they generally sign a contract. One may have every intention of keeping it, but it is ratified when the contract is signed. Water baptism is meant to be a “sign” of our commitment in the New Covenant, by symbolically participating in the sacrifice by which Jesus ratified that covenant.

The receiving of the holy spirit begins the work of regeneration in us, but receiving the spirit by itself does not carry with it the image which the symbol of baptism conveys. Receiving spirit does not work as a symbol of repentance, identification with Christ’s death and resurrection, or sharing in his blood for the forgiveness of sins. On the other hand, the image of being immersed in water and then emerging from it provides an illustration of its intended meaning. This is why both elements are needed, and why we see them both in the book of Acts.

One has to wonder why there is such an objection to “outward symbols” in the first place. We must keep in mind that there was no such distinction between what was inward and what was visible in the Hebrew mindset. What was held true in the heart manifested itself outwardly. The idea of a division between the physical and the spiritual stems from gnosticism, not from the Scriptures.

Another point to consider is that there are other “outward symbols” referred to in the New Testament. There is the rite of Communion, which the Lord told us to do “as often as we eat and drink it” until he comes. It is intended as a reminder of his broken body and shed blood, as well as a looking forward to the great banquet in the coming Kingdom (Luke 22:30). Does anyone suggest that it is only “spiritual bread and wine” and not physical that we are supposed to partake of?

There is also the wedding ceremony. It is entering into a covenant with another person. Would any Christian suggest that it is God’s will to be married only “in the heart” and that there was no need for an official public ceremony marking the beginning of their life together? Such an idea has become the norm for the world, but it is certainly not God’s will, since cohabitation outside of marriage is defined as sin.

Certainly there is nothing “magic” about being immersed in water. It is not salvation by works, but faith *demonstrated by* works. Anthony Buzzard, in his article on baptism, writes:

Baptism without a persistent continuation in the Christian life cannot save a person, any more than a one-time decision which is not followed by commitment. Salvation is by grace and faith, which means also (in Paul’s words) “obedience from the heart to that form of teaching to which you were committed” (Rom. 6:17). That teaching included baptism. This way of inviting converts to become Christians is a part of what salvation by

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<sup>70</sup> The full understanding of what that covenant entails is seen a few verses later, in Luke 22:29, where the word for “appoint” in the KJV is *diatithemai*, the root word of *diatheke*. Literally Jesus said, “I covenant to give you, as my Father has covenanted to give me, a Kingdom.” It is translated this way in the Weymouth translation.

faith meant to the Apostles. They taught the “obedience of faith” everywhere (Rom. 1:5; 16:26).<sup>71</sup>

In the same article, he quotes R. T. France’s writing on “Conversion in the Bible.”

Our tendency to see baptism as a symbolic optional extra, or to be embarrassed by the inclusion of a physical act as part of the spiritual process of conversion, contrasts with the strongly “realist” language of the New Testament about the saving significance of baptism (e.g., John 3:5; Rom. 6:3-4; Gal. 3:27; Col. 2:12; Tit. 3:5; 1 Pet. 3:20-21). While there are no New Testament grounds for believing that baptism *by itself* makes a person a Christian, the idea of an unbaptized Christian is equally foreign to its thought. “Without it [baptism] a believer did not enter the primitive community of faith” (S. S. Smalley)<sup>72</sup>

Another reason that an external sign is important is that as humans we need one. When a change such as the new birth takes place in one’s life, it is helpful to be able to look back to the point when that change took place and visualize the break from the past. It also enables the believer to visualize exactly what it was that brought about that change. The death and resurrection of Jesus made this new life available to all, and it is received by the individual through faith in the Gospel, expressed in the action of baptism. It is the moment when God’s saving work in Christ meets one’s decision to accept His grace in faith, and one enters into the New Covenant relationship. Communion, or the Lord’s Supper, is meant to be a repeated reminder of Christ’s redeeming work, but baptism is meant to be a one-time event that the believer can look back on as a representation of the moment when one died to his old life of sin and began a new life in Christ. And just as Communion also looks forward to the great banquet in the coming Kingdom, baptism also looks forward to the literal resurrection that is to come.

### **Can One Be Saved Without Baptism?**

The question of the necessity of baptism is one that is frequently brought up. Even those who accept that an outward symbol like baptism has value as a demonstration of faith, still sometimes contend that it is not strictly necessary for salvation. Their thinking is that they were saved at one point by confessing Jesus as Lord and believing God raised him from the dead, in response to the Gospel. Then, **because** they are saved, they obey the Lord’s commandments, including baptism, out of love for him. The reasoning in many cases is that there are passages of Scripture which present exceptions to the normal pattern of salvation and baptism. Mention is made of the thief on the cross, the 120 on the day of Pentecost, and the household of Cornelius in Acts 10.

On the other hand there are those who contend that baptism is the only means by which the holy spirit is given, even though they recognize that faith is required. Beasley-Murray quotes a Lutheran scholar, H. Cremer, as saying, “One receives nothing from his baptism without his faith, and one receives nothing from his faith without baptism.” Beasley-Murray considers this to be an overstatement of the case, and a difficult view to maintain.<sup>73</sup>

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<sup>71</sup> Anthony Buzzard, “What Is So Difficult About Water Baptism?” reprinted as “Baptism” in *The Coming Kingdom of the Messiah*, 3<sup>rd</sup> edition (Atlanta: Restoration Fellowship, 2002), p. 96

<sup>72</sup> *Evangelical Quarterly*, 65:4, 1992, p. 306, quoted in Buzzard, *The Coming Kingdom of the Messiah*, p. 97.

<sup>73</sup> *Baptism Today and Tomorrow*, p. 39.

As important and vital as baptism is, it must be recognized that the Bible indeed presents certain exceptional cases. The thief on the cross could obviously not have the opportunity to be baptized.<sup>74</sup> The 120 disciples on the day of Pentecost may have undergone baptism in water under John or Jesus, but there is no definite proof of it from the Scriptures. And the Gentiles in the house of Cornelius received the holy spirit and manifested it before they were baptized in water.

It must be borne in mind, though, that the instances referred to are by no means the rule, but rather the exception. Especially in the case of Cornelius' household, the exception was for a particular purpose, since their receiving of the holy spirit was necessary to prove to Peter and the others that Gentiles could be saved.

There are also many possible exceptions in life. What of a person who intends to be baptized but dies before he has the opportunity? And what of someone in an outlying area who accepts the Gospel when reading about it, but has no one near him to administer baptism? Is the grace of God to be frustrated by such limitations?

While God is able to give grace in the context of baptism, it would be incorrect to say that He is not able to give grace outside of that context, or in any other context. That would contradict the nature of His grace. Life is more complex than doctrinal formulas, and God is gracious enough and wise enough to take care of the exceptions. Jesus did not start a new religion that adheres to strict rules and regulations, like the Law of Moses. That was the Law's shortcoming, because no set of rules could ever cover every possibility. Neither could the Law change the heart of a man on the inside. God is a God of grace, mercy, and compassion. So many times in Jesus' teachings, he pointed out what the Law had said, and then in contrast showed the true heart behind it, in ways that often seemed to go against the letter of the Law. He did not condemn the woman caught in adultery in accordance with the Mosaic Law, but said, "Go and sin no more." He did not condemn the woman at the well who'd had five husbands, but concentrated on her need. He healed people on the Sabbath day, and fellowshiped with sinners and befriended the outcasts of society. He demonstrated God's compassion and mercy, which goes beyond strict formulas.

Another objection that has been made is that if the Lord meant us to perform outward rites such as baptism and communion, why are there no specific instructions on how to do them? There was not meant to be a set of ritualistic actions that could not be varied. God's desire is for us to be guided by His spirit, and not by legalistic rules and regulations. As it is, many legalistic instructions about how to perform baptism were added by man in the years following the Apostolic era, beginning with *The Didache*. This was not God's intent, however.

In fact the more specific rules there are, the more the tendency there is to become "rote" and just go through the motions. Consider the Lord's prayer. Read in context, it is apparent that the Lord meant it to be a guideline for **how** we pray. He even said, "Don't be a repeater of vain words, like the heathens." But what does most of the Christian Church do? They recite word for word, "Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name..." God gives us basic guidelines for life, but rather than spelling out every minute detail, He leaves room for His holy spirit to work in us.

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<sup>74</sup> It could be said that while the thief was promised a place in Paradise, it was before Jesus died and thus the atoning sacrifice with which baptism identifies had not yet been completed. Therefore the promise may have been on the same basis as Old Testament believers who believed in the coming Messiah.

Nevertheless, while it is true that individuals can be, and have been, saved without baptism, it is the exception and not the rule. Most people under ordinary circumstances are expected to be baptized in response to the Gospel. God is **able** to give the holy spirit without water baptism, but by His mercy and grace He has given us this way of reaching out and accepting His wonderful gift, because we need it. This is why Jesus commanded it.

The question is logically raised, will someone still be in the Kingdom of God if he has believed the Gospel, confessed Jesus as Lord, repented and dedicated his life to God, but has not been baptized in water? God is the judge and no one has the right to make such a determination. He looks on the heart, and the relevant question is, why was the person not baptized in water? If it was because he did not have the opportunity or never knew it was God's will, that's one thing. But after seeing the plain testimony of the Scriptures, why would one refuse to be baptized?

Because of these observations, I would not categorically state that baptism is "necessary for salvation," especially considering the confusion that exists about exactly what that term means. Nevertheless, God has given us instruction as to the proper procedure for initiation into the Church, and into the covenant relationship with Him. Rather than split hairs about whether or not it is necessary, God's will is that we take advantage of what He has provided for us. Beasley-Murray writes,

It behoves us accordingly to make much of baptism. It is given as the trysting place of the sinner with his Savior; he who has met Him there will not despise it. But in the last resort it is only a place: the Lord Himself is its glory, as He is its grace. Let the glory then be given to whom it belongs.<sup>75</sup>

### **A Commandment of the Lord**

While we saw that the exceptions to the rule indicate that God is **able** to save without baptism, the exceptions do not negate the rule. When all is said and done, it comes down to a matter of obedience. If we are to call Jesus Lord, why would we not do what he commands? He himself said, in Luke 6:46, "Why call ye me Lord, and do not do the things that I have commanded you?" God provided baptism for us, and Jesus was baptized as our example (Matthew 3:15 - "Thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness"). Jesus also commanded baptism.

Matthew 28:

19 Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost:

20 Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen

Some Biblical scholars believe that the words "baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost" were not in the original of Matthew 28:19 and were probably not actually spoken by Jesus. However, the words do appear in every extant manuscript of this passage. I will deal with this more in the next chapter. Nevertheless, verse 20, which is universally accepted, clearly states that the disciples were commanded to teach people "all things whatsoever I have commanded you." Among the things Jesus commanded them was baptism in water (John 4:1,2) in connection with repentance and remission of sins (Luke 24:47). In light of the disciples' actions

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<sup>75</sup> *Baptism in the New Testament*, p. 305

throughout Acts in obedience to their Lord, it can be readily seen that baptism was a command of Jesus.

Mark 16:

15 And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature.

16 He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned.

The last twelve verses of Mark 16 are not found in some manuscripts, but they do appear in the vast majority of them, although some scholars consider them to be a later addition (this is also handled in the next chapter). The question then arises, did Jesus actually speak these words? Even if they were added, the doctrine contained in them fits with other passages of Scripture. There is greater textual evidence for Matthew 28:19 than for Mark 16:16, and these two passages both indicate that baptism was a command of Our Lord. There might be reason to consider a passage invalid if, in addition to textual evidence, it contradicted other parts of the Scriptures. But, as we have seen, the New Testament consistently shows the disciples as being obedient to the commandment to preach, teach, and baptize.

It is unwise to try to base a doctrine on one or a handful of “proof texts.” If the command of Jesus to baptize were only based on these two verses, there might be cause to question it. But the article on Baptism (by C. A. Scott) in *Hastings’ Dictionary of the Bible*, points out that while the authenticity of Matthew 28:19 has been challenged, “...it is better to infer the authority of Christ for the practice [of baptism] from the prompt and universal adoption of it by the Apostles and the infant Church, to which the opening chapters of Acts bear witness; and from the significance attached to the rite in the Epistles, and especially in those of St. Paul.”<sup>76</sup>

According to Luke 24:47, “repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations.” Remission of sins is received through repentance, including the outward symbol of baptism, according to Acts 2:38. If the disciples of Jesus were preaching the Gospel of the Kingdom, and then commanding the proper response to believing that Gospel, namely, to repent and be baptized, surely they must have been following the instructions of their Lord. If Jesus had taught them that water was to be replaced by spirit, or by a figurative baptism, they completely missed that instruction, which would imply that Jesus failed as a teacher. It’s been suggested that water was phased out sometime after the water baptism that Jesus authorized early in his ministry (although there is no clear indication of this). But if that were the case, why were the disciples still baptizing in water in Acts, so long after the supposed phasing out?

A number of reasons are given to explain why the disciples continued to practice water baptism in Acts. One theory is that they did not fully understand the change from water to spirit. Another is that they got “carried away with excitement” and forgot that they shouldn’t be preaching baptism in water (as discussed in the section on Acts 10). How could either of these ideas be plausible, if water was phased out after John the Baptist, early in Jesus’ ministry?<sup>77</sup>

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<sup>76</sup> *Hastings Dictionary of the Bible*, s.v. “Baptism.”

<sup>77</sup> Others contend that water was gradually phased out during Acts, but there is no evidence of this in the Scriptures or in subsequent Church history.

It is also implied that the disciples still had a problem keeping straight the difference between water baptism and spirit baptism, in the same way that they had difficulty accepting salvation by grace without the works of the Law. Peter still acted like he thought he should keep the Law, and had to be reproved by Paul, according to Galatians 1. But nowhere are the disciples reproved for baptizing in water, the way Peter was reproved for still holding onto the Law. As noted earlier, water baptism was not part of the Old Covenant, and is nowhere described as obsolete or unnecessary. Therefore there is no basis for comparison.

Another explanation is that the disciples “allowed” water baptism if the person being baptized really wanted it, or felt it was necessary. The record of Philip and the eunuch is used as an example, but we saw that what Philip believed was that Jesus is the Son of God, not that water baptism was necessary despite a change in administration. Another example that is used is Crispus, whom Paul baptized, but there is not even a hint that he requested water baptism anywhere in the Scriptures.

Comparison is also made with Paul “allowing” circumcision of Timothy even though it was done away with. But the fact that circumcision is part of the Old Covenant and no longer necessary is dealt with specifically in Paul’s epistles. As previously noted, though, there is no such teaching regarding water baptism being obsolete. Any reference to “allowing” it even though it isn’t necessary is simply reading into the Scriptures things that they do not say.

As we saw from the chapter on Historical Considerations, the idea that water baptism became obsolete and was replaced by baptism of the holy spirit is largely a product of the Ultra-Dispensational view of the Scriptures. But there is no sound basis for assuming that the Book of Acts is “transitional” and does not represent the correct or fully developed understanding of doctrinal issues. There is one Gospel from beginning to end, and Jesus said that we are to teach all things that he commanded us, and that he is with us unto the end of the age.

If the apostles were baptizing converts, and Paul spoke of the significance of baptism, it stands to reason that they would be doing so in obedience to the commandment of their Lord. That alone indicates that baptism was commanded by him. And yet there is even greater proof when you examine the supposedly spurious verses which both contain the Great Commission, which we will do in the next chapter.



## 7. Textual Evidence and the Great Commission

The “Great Commission” for the Church, the “marching orders” from our Lord, is summed up in two passages of Scripture. Both contain commands for baptism.

Matthew 28:

18 And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth.

19 Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost:

20 Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen.

Mark 16:

15 And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature.

16 He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned.

There is some question among Biblical scholars concerning the validity of these verses, which I would like to examine in detail.

### **Matthew 28:19**

The words in question in this passage are, “...baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.” They appear in EVERY Greek manuscript that is known to be in existence. However, some scholars question their validity based on two factors: they are not quoted by some early Church Fathers (notably Eusebius), and they seem to contradict other sections of Scripture, when not properly understood. This argument was first put forth by the nineteenth century Biblical scholar, F. C. Conybeare (1856-1924). There is a well known and often-quoted writing dealing with this subject, written in 1962 by Pastor A. Ploughman of Birmingham, England. In it, Pastor Ploughman quotes extensively from Conybeare’s writings. For example:

“In the course of my reading I have been able to substantiate these doubts of the authenticity of the text of Matthew 28:19 by adducing patristic evidence against it, so weighty that in the future the most conservative of divines will shrink from resting on it any dogmatic fabric at all, while the more enlightened will discard it as completely as they have its fellow-text of the ‘Three Witnesses’.” (F. C. Conybeare in *Hibbert Journal*)<sup>78</sup>

Despite the fact that all extant manuscripts contain the words in question, Conybeare pointed out that Eusebius quotes the command as “Go ye therefore, and make disciples of all nations in my name.” This is considered to be evidence that he quoted from an earlier manuscript than what is in existence

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<sup>78</sup> Quoted in A. Ploughman, *A Collection of the Evidence For and Against the Traditional Wording of the Baptismal Phrase in Matthew 28:19*, Copyright assigned to Apostolic Theological Bible College, posted by permission on Jesus Messiah Fellowship site, <http://www.jesus-messiah.com/apologetics/catholic/matthew2819.html>.

today. Pastor Ploughman admits that the evidence of the manuscripts supports the traditional reading.

For the threefold name:

The two earliest MSS. extant (Sinaiticus and Vaticanus), written in the 4th century, both include the end of Matthew also contain the threefold name. "In all extant MSS, ...the text is found in the traditional form (Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics)."

Against the threefold name:

There is no evidence in the MSS discovered to date.

BUT--

It must be remembered that we have no manuscript that was written in the first, second, or third centuries. There is a gap of the three whole centuries between the writing of Matthew and the MSS that contain the threefold name.<sup>79</sup>

The absence of any manuscript that contains the wording that Eusebius quoted is explained by the fact that the emperor Diocletian in his persecution of the Christian Church ordered all sacred books to be burned, in 303 AD. The only surviving manuscripts were those that had been altered to what is now the traditional reading.

In the case just examined (Matthew 28:19), it is to be noticed that not a single manuscript or ancient version has preserved to us the true reading. But that is not surprising for as Dr. C. R. Gregory, one of the greatest of our textual critics, reminds us, 'the Greek MSS of the text of the New Testament were often altered by scribes, who put into them the readings which were familiar to them,' and which they held to be the right readings. *Canon and Text of the N T*, 1907, page 424.<sup>80</sup>

While this is undoubtedly true in some cases, it only proves that the text in question **could** have been corrupted, not that it **was**. And it seems improbable that **every single manuscript** in the known world prior to 303 AD was destroyed under Diocletian. Jules Lebreton in his history of the Trinity, states, "That a reading which appeared in all manuscripts of Caesarea at the beginning of the fourth century was the only one known to Eusebius, and disappeared without a single trace in any manuscript or version, is an impossible suggestion."<sup>81</sup> Although he concludes that the verse supports the Trinity, his point about the disappearance of so many manuscripts is nevertheless well taken.

There was claimed to be a document in which Eusebius specifically identified Matthew 28:19 as a spurious addition, but there is no evidence of this. Pastor Ploughman wrote,

According to the editor of the *Christadelphian Monatshefte*, Eusebius among his many other writings compiled a collection of the corrupted texts of the Holy Scriptures, and "the most serious of all the falsifications denounced by him, is without doubt the traditional reading of Matthew 28:19."

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<sup>79</sup> *A Collection of the Evidence*.

<sup>80</sup> Conybeare, quoted in *A Collection of the Evidence*.

<sup>81</sup> Jules Lebreton, *History and Dogma of the Trinity from its Origins to the Council of Nicea* (London: Burns, Oates & Washburne, Ltd., 1939), p. 437.

Persistent inquiry has failed to trace the compilation referred to, and Knupfer, the Editor, has left his last Canadian address without a trace. But various authorities mention “a work entitled DISCREPANCIES IN THE GOSPELS or QUESTIONS AND SOLUTIONS ON SOME POINTS IN THE GOSPEL HISTORY” and another work on THE CONCLUDING SECTIONS OF THE GOSPELS.<sup>82</sup>

Another proponent of the theory that the text was corrupted, Pastor G. Reckart, writes on his web page, “We now have absolute proof the Catholic Church fathers perverted the text in Matthew 28:19. We now have the Hebrew Matthew Gospel, a manuscript that was preserved by the Jews from the first century. In this Shem Tov MS, the text at Matthew 28:19 does not contain the Trinitarian statement.”<sup>83</sup> However, Shem Tov’s Hebrew Gospel of Matthew is in no way proof that the original had the shorter reading of 28:19 quoted by Eusebius. According to George Howard, who translated and edited the manuscript, it is from the 14<sup>th</sup> or 15<sup>th</sup> century, and was contained in the twelfth (in some manuscripts, the thirteenth) book of the *Even Bohan (The Touchstone)*, a Jewish polemical treatise directed against Christians.<sup>84</sup> There are a number of variant readings in this text which differ from all Greek manuscripts in extant. The Great Commission of 28:19 reads, “Go and teach them to carry out all the things which I have commanded you forever.” While it does not contain the baptismal reference, it also makes no mention at all of “making disciples of all nations,” nor does it include Jesus’ promise, “I am with you always, even unto the end of the world.”

Such a late document that has as many variant readings as Shem Tov’s Hebrew Matthew can in no way support any claim to be more accurate than the older Greek manuscripts in existence. So there is actually no textual evidence to prove that the traditional reading of 28:19 was a later addition and not in the original. Nevertheless, some scholars consider it to be a later addition, based on the quotations from early Church writers, and from internal proof.

Regarding Eusebius, it must be pointed out that he quotes this verse in several places, and actually uses **three** different forms. The first, “Go and make disciples of all the nations,” appears three times in *Demonstratio Evangelica (The Proof of the Gospel)*, as well as twice in his *Commentary on Psalms*, and once each in *The Theophania* and *The Theology of the Church*. The following is from Book I, chapter 3, of *The Proof of the Gospel*. (This form also occurs in chapters 4 and 6 of Book I of that work.)

Hence, of course, our Lord and Saviour, Jesus the Son of God, said to His disciples after His Resurrection: “**Go and make disciples of all the nations**” and added: “Teaching them to observe all things, whatsoever I have commanded you.”<sup>85</sup>

The second form, which occurs five times in the same writing (Book III, chapters 6 & 7; Book 9, chapter 11), has the words, “Make disciples of all the nations **in my Name**...” In one of those, he notes that the one phrase, “In My Name” is what defined the charge to make disciples. He did not, however, say that no other phrase was in any of the manuscripts of Matthew 28:19 that he had, as some have claimed. The passage is as follows:

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<sup>82</sup> *A Collection of the Evidence*.

<sup>83</sup> G. Reckart, “Matthew 28:29”, Jesus Messiah Fellowship, <http://jesus-messiah.com/apologetics/catholic/mat2819.html>

<sup>84</sup> George Howard, *Hebrew Gospel of Matthew* (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 1995).

<sup>85</sup> Eusebius of Caesarea, “*Demonstratio Evangelica*,” Book I, Chapter 3, Early Church Fathers, [http://www.ccel.org/p/pearse/morefathers/eusebius\\_de\\_03\\_book1.htm](http://www.ccel.org/p/pearse/morefathers/eusebius_de_03_book1.htm) (accessed May 4, 2006)

Whereas He, who conceived nothing human or mortal, see how truly he speaks with the voice of God, saying in these very words to those disciples of His, the poorest of the poor: **‘Go forth, and make disciples of all the nations.’** ‘But how,’ the disciples might reasonably have answered the Master, ‘can we do it?’... But while the disciples of Jesus were most likely either saying thus, or thinking thus, the Master solved their difficulties, by the addition of one phrase, saying they should triumph **‘IN MY NAME.’** For He did not bid them simply and indefinitely **‘make disciples of all nations,’** but with the necessary addition **‘In My Name.’** And the power of His Name being so great, that the Apostle says: ‘God has given him a name which is above every name, that in the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth.’ He shewed the virtue of the power in His Name concealed from the crowd, when He said to His Disciples: **‘Go, and make disciples of all nations in my name.’**<sup>86</sup>

One can see by the wording that it does not necessarily prove that the MSS from which he quoted had the words “in my name” **rather than** the traditional wording, especially when the same work quotes the verse in two different forms. The second form, with the words “in my name” occurs four times in *The Theophania*, and four times in *Commentary on Psalms*, both of which also contain references using the first form. (The second form also occurs twice in his *Commentary on Isaiah*, and once each in *History of the Church*, and *In Praise of Constantine*.)

Besides those two forms, there are also instances in which he quotes the verse in the traditional form, including a passage in the previously mentioned *Theophania*.

He drew near to them, spoke with them, and said: “All power (both) in heaven and earth, is given to me of my Father. **Go ye and make Disciples of all nations, and baptize them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.** And teach them to observe all that I have commanded you. And, behold! I am with you always even to the end of the world.” [...] He commanded his Disciples,--not from ancient times--but now, that they should make the circuit, and make Disciples, of all nations. And He necessarily added the mystery of cleansing.<sup>87</sup>

Eusebius also quotes the verse in the traditional form in *The Theology of the Church*, in *The Letter To Caesaria*, and twice in *Contra Marcellum*. So throughout his writings, Eusebius quoted the verse in three different forms (with all three occurring in *The Theophania*). Thus his quotations cannot be proof that the “original text” read one way or the other. Those that he wrote in the latter part of his life, at and after the Council of Nicea, are sometimes said to have been written under pressure because of the council, but there is no proof or basis for that conclusion, and is merely conjecture.

It should also be noted that there are other early Church writings that quote Matthew 28:19 and use the words found in the traditional rendering.

The Letter from Dionysius of Alexandria to Xystus (257-8 AD), chief bishop of Rome includes the following:

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<sup>86</sup> Eusebius of Caesarea, “Demonstratio Evangelica,” Book III, Chapter 7, Early Church Fathers, [http://www.ccel.org/p/pearse/morefathers/eusebius\\_de\\_05\\_book3.htm](http://www.ccel.org/p/pearse/morefathers/eusebius_de_05_book3.htm) (accessed May 3, 2006)

<sup>87</sup> Eusebius of Caesarea, “Theophania,” Book IV, Paragraph 8, Early Church Fathers, [http://www.ccel.org/p/pearse/morefathers/eusebius\\_theophania\\_05book4.htm](http://www.ccel.org/p/pearse/morefathers/eusebius_theophania_05book4.htm) (accessed May 3, 2006)

Inasmuch as you have written thus, setting forth the pious legislation, which we continually read and now have in remembrance—namely that it shall suffice only to lay hands on those who shall have made profession in baptism, whether in pretence or in truth, of God Almighty and of Christ and of the Holy Spirit; but those over whom there has not been invoked the name either of Father or of Son or of the Holy Spirit, these we must baptise, but not rebaptise. This is the sure and immovable teaching and tradition, begun by our Lord after his resurrection from the dead, when he gave his apostles the command: **Go ye, make disciples of all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.** This then was preserved and fulfilled by his successors, the blessed apostles, and by all the bishops prior to ourselves who have died in the holy church and shared in its life; and it has lasted down to us, because it is firmer than the whole world. For, he said, heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away.<sup>88</sup>

Gregory Thaumaturgus (205-265 AD) in *A Sectional Confession of Faith, XIII* wrote, “...the Lord sends forth His disciples **to baptize in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit...**”<sup>89</sup>

Cyprian (200-258 AD) in *The Seventh Council of Carthage Under Cyprian* quoted the words of “eighty-seven bishops on the baptism of heretics.” Three of them, namely Lucius of Castra Galbae, Euchratius of Thenae, and Vincentius of Thibaris, all quoted Matthew 28:19, with the words, “**Go and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.**”<sup>90</sup>

Tertullian, c. 200 AD, wrote in *On Baptism*, “For the law of baptizing has been imposed, and the formula prescribed: ‘Go,’ He saith, ‘teach the nations, **baptizing them into the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.**’”<sup>91</sup> Tertullian also wrote in *Against Praxeas*, chapter 26, “After His resurrection ... He commands them to **baptize into the Father and the Son and the Holy Ghost.**”<sup>92</sup>

Hippolytus (170-236 AD) wrote in *Against the Heresy of One Noetus*, “...gave this charge to the disciples after He rose from the dead: **Go ye and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.**”<sup>93</sup>

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<sup>88</sup> Dionysius of Alexandria, “First Letter to Xystus, Chief Bishop of Rome,” Newly discovered letters to the Popes Stephen and Xystus, Early Church Fathers,

[http://www.ccel.org/p/pearse/morefathers/dionysius\\_alexandria\\_letters.htm](http://www.ccel.org/p/pearse/morefathers/dionysius_alexandria_letters.htm) (accessed May 3, 2006)

<sup>89</sup> Gregory Thaumaturgus, “A Sectional Confession of Faith,” XIII, Ante-Nicene Fathers, Vol. VI,

<http://www.ccel.org/fathers2/ANF-06/anf06-14.htm> (accessed February 25, 2005)

<sup>90</sup> Cyprian, “The Seventh Council of Carthage Under Cyprian,” Ante-Nicene Fathers, Vol. V,

<http://www.ccel.org/fathers2/ANF-05/anf05-124.htm> (accessed February 25, 2005)

<sup>91</sup> Tertullian, “On Baptism,” Chapter XIII, Ante-Nicene Fathers, Vol. III,

<http://www.ccel.org/fathers2/ANF-03/anf03-49.htm> (accessed February 25, 2005)

<sup>92</sup> Tertullian, “Against Praxeas,” Chapter XXVI, Ante-Nicene Fathers, Vol. III,

[http://www.ccel.org/fathers2/ANF-03/anf03-43.htm#P10374\\_2906966](http://www.ccel.org/fathers2/ANF-03/anf03-43.htm#P10374_2906966) (accessed May 3, 2006)

<sup>93</sup> Hippolytus, “Against the Heresy of One Noetus,” Paragraph 14, Ante-Nicene Fathers, Vol. V,

[http://www.ccel.org/fathers2/ANF-05/anf05-18.htm#P3712\\_1172813](http://www.ccel.org/fathers2/ANF-05/anf05-18.htm#P3712_1172813)

Tatian the Syrian wrote in *The Diatesseron* (170 AD), “Then said Jesus unto them, ‘I have been given all authority in heaven and earth; and as my Father has sent me, so I also send you. Go now into all the world, and preach my gospel in all the creation; and teach all the peoples, and baptize **them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit**; and teach them to keep all whatsoever I commanded you: and lo, I am with you all the days, unto the end of the world’”<sup>94</sup>

And of course, *The Didache*, one of the earliest Christian documents after the New Testament, which some scholars date as early as 70 AD, includes the words, “After the foregoing instructions, **baptize in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit**, in living [running] water...”<sup>95</sup> Granted, this document shows the beginnings of the use of this phrase as a formula (“...pour water three times on the head, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit”) and there is no question that it became such. But the misuse of the words notwithstanding, the writer of *The Didache* knew of the traditional wording of Matthew 28:19.

While many of these early writers are cited in order to “prove” the Trinity from Matthew 28:19 (which this verse doesn’t do) nevertheless it proves that they knew of the wording which Conybeare suggested was a later addition, and which appears in every manuscript. The fact that Eusebius quotes the verse in three different ways makes it doubtful that he was quoting from an earlier manuscript no longer in existence. It is more likely he was simply paraphrasing, and using different wording at different times. G. R. Beasley-Murray wrote,

The real difficulty is to determine whether we have any right to speak of a ‘Eusebian reading’. E. Riegenbach, in a lengthy reply to Conybeare’s article, showed that Eusebius exercised considerable freedom in quoting the Matthaean text, as is evidenced in the fact that the text appears in various forms, even in one and the same work; after Nicea Eusebius cites the commission in both longer and shorter forms; while (in Riegenbach’s view) in the letter written by Eusebius in 325, during the Council at Nicea, the manner in which he cites the common form of the text suggests that he had been familiar with it for long. This exposition of the facts received widespread support.<sup>96</sup>

The citation of the common form in the letter referred to above is as follows:

We believe in the being and continual existence of each of these; that the Father is in truth the Father; the Son in truth the Son; the Holy Ghost in truth the Holy Ghost; as our Lord, when sending out His disciples to preach the Gospel, said, “**Go forth and teach all nations, baptizing them into the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.**” We positively affirm that we hold this faith, that we have always held it, and that we adhere to it even unto death, condemning all ungodly heresy. We testify, as before God the Almighty and our Lord Jesus Christ, that we have thought thus from the heart, and from the soul, ever since we have known ourselves; and we have the means of

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<sup>94</sup> Tatian the Syrian, *Diatesseron* 55, quoted on “Trinitarian Baptism,” Catholic Answers, [http://www.catholic.com/library/Trinitarian\\_Baptism.asp](http://www.catholic.com/library/Trinitarian_Baptism.asp) (accessed May 3, 2006)

<sup>95</sup> *Didache* 7:1, quoted on “Trinitarian Baptism,” Catholic Answers, [http://www.catholic.com/library/Trinitarian\\_Baptism.asp](http://www.catholic.com/library/Trinitarian_Baptism.asp) (accessed May 3, 2006)

<sup>96</sup> *Baptism in the New Testament*, p. 81-82

showing, and, indeed, of convincing you, that we have always during the past thus believed and preached.<sup>97</sup>

Beasley-Murray continues:

Lindblom...scrutinized afresh the citations of Mt. 28.19 in Eusebius and examined the context in each case. He came to two conclusions: first, that Eusebius draws on various passages in the New Testament when citing the missionary commission, combining with Mt. 28.19 items from Mt. 10.8, 24.14, Jn. 20.22, and that his ‘in my name’ is due to the example of Lk. 24.47 along with Mk. 16.17; secondly, the form of the citation is made to suit the purpose in view at the moment of writing; the full text is employed when Eusebius is concerned about some aspect of the teaching on baptism or the Trinity, the shorter is used when the interest is centred on the mission to the nations. A just estimate of these contentions requires a following of Lindblom’s presentation of the evidence, but it appears to me more plausible than the alternative suggestions that have been made. The great majority of critics and commentators have felt themselves unable to forsake the unbroken testimony of the texts and versions for the very uncertain witness of Eusebius; indeed, Lagrange characterized adherence to ‘Conybear’s whim’, as he described it, as ‘a real defiance of textual criticism’. The objection to the authenticity of Mt. 28.19 on the basis of sound principles of textual criticism therefore can scarcely be said to have maintained itself.<sup>98</sup>

So the witness of Eusebius is at best inconclusive, and virtually nonexistent in comparison to the evidence of the manuscripts themselves. However the factor that is considered to be the most convincing argument against the validity of Matthew 28:19 is that it seems to contradict other parts of Scripture. Nowhere in the rest of the New Testament is baptism performed in the name of the Father, the Son and the holy spirit.<sup>99</sup> Baptism was always done in the name of Jesus Christ.

Also, Biblical scholars recognize that the doctrine of the Trinity was not fully developed until some three hundred years after Christ, and so a reference to it in the words of Christ would be an anachronism, and a clear indication that it was a later spurious addition to the text. But the fact is, this verse does not mention the Trinity. It refers to the Father, the Son, and the holy spirit, as three separate entities, but nowhere does it say that they are coequal, coeternal, or three persons in one God. Even scholars who believe in the Trinity caution other Trinitarians against using this verse as a “proof text” for this reason. There are in fact other verses that mention the Father, the Son and the holy spirit together, but do not identify them as members of the Trinity.

II Corinthians 13:

14 The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost, be with you all. Amen.

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<sup>97</sup> Eusebius, “Letter to the Church at Caesarea,” *Patristics in English (P.I.E.) Project*, [http://www.seanmultimedia.com/Pie\\_Eusebius\\_Letters\\_Fragmented.html](http://www.seanmultimedia.com/Pie_Eusebius_Letters_Fragmented.html)

<sup>98</sup> *Baptism in the New Testament*, p. 82

<sup>99</sup> Some critics claim that “Father,” “Son,” and “holy spirit” are **not** names but titles. However, we saw in a previous chapter that “in the name of” means “with respect to,” and thus does not require a literal name.

I Peter 1:

2 Elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ: Grace unto you, and peace, be multiplied.

I Corinthians 12:

3 Wherefore I give you to understand, that no man speaking by the Spirit of God calleth Jesus accursed: and that no man can say that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Ghost.

4 Now there are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit.

5 And there are differences of administrations, but the same Lord.

6 And there are diversities of operations, but it is the same God which worketh all in all.

Now while Matthew 28:19 does not “prove” the Trinity, it still appears to contradict the rest of the New Testament, because it is thought to be a “formula” for baptism, and therefore contradictory to the “formula” of baptizing in the name of Jesus Christ as seen throughout the rest of the New Testament. But were these words intended as a formula? C. A. Scott, in his article on Baptism in *Hastings’ Dictionary of the Bible*, presents the two most common explanations for the perceived contradiction.

It must be acknowledged that the formula of the threefold name...does not appear to have been employed by the primitive Church, which, so far as our information goes, baptized ‘in’ or ‘into the name of Jesus’ (or ‘Jesus Christ’ or ‘the Lord Jesus’: Acts 2:38; 8:16; 10:48; 19:5; cf. I Co. 1:13, 15), without reference to the Father or the Spirit. The difficulty hence arising may be met by assuming (a) that Baptism in the name of Jesus was equivalent to Baptism in the name of the Trinity, or (b) that the shorter phrase does not represent the formula used by the baptizer (which may have been the fuller one), but the profession made by the baptized, and the essential fact that he became a Christian—one of Christ’s acknowledged followers. But it is better to infer the authority of Christ for the practice [of baptism] from the prompt and universal adoption of it by the Apostles and the infant Church, to which the opening chapters of Acts bear witness; and from the significance attached to the rite in the Epistles, and especially in those of St. Paul.<sup>100</sup>

So the fact that the disciples carried out baptism in the name of Jesus Christ does not automatically prove that the command in Matthew 28:19 was a spurious addition and not the words of Jesus. Nevertheless, there is a third, very simple explanation for the apparent difficulty, as described by Beasley-Murray.

We must first make up our mind whether Mt. 28.19 reflects a baptismal formula in current use in the Church, or whether it is intended to describe the nature of Christian baptism. Several notable exegetes have supported the latter alternative. Schniewind considered that a baptismal formula is as little intended here as in the evangelic traditions of the Beatitudes, the Lord’s Prayer and the Last Supper. F. C. Grant more recently has expounded a similar view: the baptismal statement combines the disciples’ inherited Jewish faith in God (‘the name of the Father’), their new faith in the Son (i.e. Son of Man) and their experience of the holy spirit, the earnest of the New Age.<sup>101</sup>

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<sup>100</sup> *Hastings Dictionary of the Bible*, s.v. “Baptism.”

<sup>101</sup> *Baptism in the New Testament*, p. 83



So the problems, which seem to demand a forsaking of all known manuscripts in favor of loosely paraphrased references in Eusebius, all disappear when one realizes that Matthew 28:19 was not meant to be a formula, but simply a description of what the new disciples would be baptized into. The Jews knew of the Father, and were aware of the workings of the holy spirit, but the identification of Jesus as the Son of God was now crucial to their baptism. Gentiles, on the other hand, may or may not have known God as a Father, or His holy spirit working in the world, and would need to be introduced into that knowledge as well as that of Christ. This would be a reasonable description of the Commission to preach and teach to “all nations.” All three, God, Jesus, and the holy spirit (which is also called the spirit of Christ) are instrumental in the entire plan of salvation. Thus being baptized as a response to the Gospel can certainly be described as being baptized “in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the holy spirit,” since there is no reference in that verse to the Trinitarian concepts of coequality, coexistence, or triune persons. The words of the Great Commission were in fact turned into a Trinitarian baptismal formula in later years, but there is nothing to indicate that this was the original meaning or intent of the phrase.

When one considers the verse in this way, there is no contradiction. Combined with the evidence of several Church Fathers (including Eusebius in some cases), and with the evidence of EVERY extant manuscript, this leaves us with a clear understanding of our Lord’s command, “Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.”

### **Mark 16:16**

Another verse that expresses the Lord’s command is in the midst of an entire section of Scripture the validity of which has been questioned. While no texts support the omission of words in Matthew 28:19, a number of manuscripts do in fact omit Mark 16:9-20. They simply end (albeit abruptly) with verse 8. These manuscripts include, among others, the Codex Sinaiticus and the Codex Vaticanus, the two oldest Greek manuscripts in extant. Verses 9-20 are also omitted in the Old Latin codex Bobiensis, the Sinaitic Syriac manuscript, about one hundred Armenian manuscripts, and the two oldest Georgian manuscripts (written 897 AD and 913 AD).<sup>102</sup>

There are some manuscripts that include a passage after verse 8, followed by the traditionally accepted verses 9-20. These include four uncial Greek manuscripts of the seventh, eighth, and ninth centuries, as well as Old Latin k, the margin of the Harelean Syriac, several Sahidic and Bohairic manuscripts, and not a few Ethiopic manuscripts.<sup>103</sup> The added passage is as follows:

But they reported briefly to Peter and those with him all that they had been told. And after this Jesus himself sent out by means of them, from east to west, the sacred and imperishable proclamation of eternal salvation.<sup>104</sup>

There is one manuscript (Codex Washingtonianus) which has the following passage inserted after verse 14:

And they excused themselves, saying, ‘This age of lawlessness and unbelief is under Satan, who does not allow the truth and power of God to prevail over the unclean things

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<sup>102</sup> Bruce Metzger, *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament* (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 1971), pp. 122-126.

<sup>103</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>104</sup> *The Westminster Study Edition of the Holy Bible* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1948).

of the spirits [*or*, does not allow what lies under the unclean spirits to understand the truth and power of God]. Therefore reveal thy righteousness now -- thus they spoke to Christ. And Christ replied to them, 'The term of years of Satan's power has been fulfilled, but other terrible things draw near. And for those who have sinned I was delivered over to death, that they may return to the truth and sin no more, in order that they may inherit the spiritual and incorruptible glory of righteousness which is in heaven.'<sup>105</sup>

Most scholars agree that these two shorter additions are spurious. As for the longer ending (verses 9-20), it appears in the **vast majority** of Greek manuscripts<sup>106</sup>. Still, most textual critics (including scholars such as Bruce Metzger and A. T. Robinson) consider it to be a later addition, and notes to that fact are often included even in modern Bible versions. Some of the scholars who consider the section to be a later addition (such as John D. Grassmick<sup>107</sup>) believe that it nevertheless represents the inspired teaching of Jesus. On the other hand, a number of scholars defend outright the genuineness of the passage, including Scrivener<sup>108</sup>, Burgon<sup>109</sup>, McGarvey<sup>110</sup>, and Lenski<sup>111</sup>.

Even if the verses were added, they were added very early on, and were widely accepted as an integral part of the Gospel. Justin Martyr (d. 165 AD) in his *First Apology* wrote that the apostles "...going forth from Jerusalem, preached everywhere." The Greek words for 'going,' 'preached,' and 'everywhere' are identical to those used in Mark 16:20 (though in a different order), and are very likely an allusion to that verse. Irenaeus has a direct quote of Mark 16:19 in *Against Heresies* (about 185 AD), and Tatian the Assyrian included the ending verses of Mark in his *Diatesseron* (about 175 AD).

Some commentaries mention the writings of Clement of Alexandria and Origen as being proof that the long ending was not in manuscripts which they had. However, the fact that they didn't mention it does not prove it was unknown to them. Jerome is also included among witnesses against the long ending, although he included it when he produced his Vulgate Gospels, in 383/384.

The primary source of doubt is based on the writings of Eusebius, who declared that the verses were omitted by almost all copies of Mark that he knew of. But in *Ad Marinum*, he presented two possibilities by which one may harmonize Mark 16 with Matthew 28, one of which was his comment that the last 12 verses of Mark are lacking in "the most accurate copies" and "almost all the Greek copies."<sup>112</sup> This implies that he was aware that there were some copies which did include these verses.

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<sup>105</sup> Metzger, *A Textual Commentary*, pp. 122-126.

<sup>106</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>107</sup> John D Grassmick, "Mark," *The Bible Knowledge Commentary*, John Walvoord & Roy Zuck, Eds. (Wheaton, IL: Victor, 1983).

<sup>108</sup> F. H. A. Scrivener, *A Plain Introduction to the Criticism of the New Testament* (Cambridge: Deighton, Bell & Co., 1883).

<sup>109</sup> J. W. Burgon, *The Last Twelve Verses of Mark* (Ann Arbor: Sovereign Grace, 1959)

<sup>110</sup> McGarvey, *Commentary on Matthew & Mark* (Des Moines: Eugene Smith, n.d.)

<sup>111</sup> R. C. H. Lenski, *The Interpretation of St. Mark's Gospel* (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1961).

<sup>112</sup> Eusebius, *Quaestiones Ad Marinum*, 1, quoted in Timothy W. Dunkin, "Why Mark 16:19 Belongs In the Bible," Study To Answer.Net, <http://www.studytoanswer.net/bibleversions/markend.html> (accessed February 5, 2005)

Although missing from some manuscripts, they were included in the great majority, and very early in the Christian era, as witnessed by the allusions to them by the Church Fathers. J. R. Dummelow, in his commentary, writes:

On the other hand, the section is no casual or unauthorized addition to the Gospel. From the second century onwards, in nearly all manuscripts, versions, and other authorities, it forms an integral part of the Gospel, and it can be shown to have existed, if not in the apostolic, at least in the sub-apostolic age. A certain amount of evidence against it there is (though very little can be shown to be independent of Eusebius the Church historian, 265-340 AD), but certainly not enough to justify its rejection, were it not that internal evidence clearly demonstrates that it cannot have proceeded from the hand of St. Mark.<sup>113</sup>

If verses 9-20 were added, Mark's original writing ended with verse 8, "And they went out quickly, and fled from the sepulchre; for they trembled and were amazed: neither said they any thing to any man; for they were afraid." There are several theories as to how such an abrupt ending came about. One is that Mark intended to end it that way. (Some claim that a sentence in Greek would not end with the word *gar*, as verse 8 does, but this occurs in other Greek compositions, including the Septuagint at Genesis 45:3.) Another possibility is that the writer or a copyist was interrupted, perhaps by death, before he finished it. Yet another suggests that it was originally longer, but the ending was lost. Some theologians have even suggested that the original ending was deliberately destroyed because it supposedly conflicted with Matthew or Luke.

As for the origins of the longer ending, a number of theories exist also. One is that while Mark 16 originally ended with verse 8 (whether intentionally or due to interruption) someone at a later time added verses 9-20, considering the ending to be too abrupt. Another theory suggests that the current long ending was written to replace the lost original ending. Some have even suggested that it was written by Mark himself, after the original ending was lost.

Whatever the case, two questions must be considered: Was the passage written by Mark? And, does it represent an accurate account of the events, and of the words of Jesus Christ? No conclusive external evidence supports its omission, yet many scholars consider it to have been written by someone other than Mark. It is the witness of internal evidence that is the basis of this conclusion. The style and vocabulary are said to be different from the rest of the Gospel. There are 17 words in the longer ending which appear nowhere else in Mark. The transition from verse 8 to verse 9 is considered awkward and unnatural. The subject of verse 8 is the women, but the subject of verse 9 is a pronoun apparently referring to Jesus. Also, Mary is introduced as if she had not been mentioned in verse 1. Scholars such as Bruce Terry<sup>114</sup> and T. Holland<sup>115</sup> have addressed these issues at length, however. The following is a summary of their analysis.

As for the change in subject from verse 8 to verse 9, the use of the pronoun referring to Jesus is not that unusual, when you consider how the pronouns are used throughout chapter 16. Verse 1 starts off by mentioning the women. Then in verses 2-5, they are referred to with third person plural pronouns ('they' and 'them'). This pattern continues until the angel speaks in verses 6 and 7. "And he [the angel] saith unto them [again refers to the women], Be not afrighted: Ye seek Jesus of Nazareth,

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<sup>113</sup> J. R. Dummelow, ed. *A Commentary on the Holy Bible* (New York: MacMillan, 1927) p. 732-33.

<sup>114</sup> Bruce Terry, "Another Look at the Ending of Mark," *Firm Foundation* 93 (Sept. 14), 1976.

<sup>115</sup> Thomas Holland, *Crowned With Glory: The Bible From Ancient Text to Authorized Version* (Writers Club Press, 2000) pp. 231-234

which was crucified: **he** is risen; **he** is not here: behold the place where they laid **him**. But go your way, tell **his** disciples and Peter that **he** goeth before you into Galilee: there shall ye see **him**, as **he** said unto you.” Notice there are no less than seven singular pronouns referring to Jesus in these two verses. Then verse 8 uses plural pronouns again, referring to the women, even though the subject of the immediately preceding verses was Jesus. “And they went out...they trembled... neither said they any thing... they were afraid.” When we then come to verse 9, we again have a masculine singular pronoun (“he”), referring to Jesus. Verse 10 has a feminine singular pronoun (“she”), referring to Mary, and also identifies “them that were with him.” Verses 11-13 have a mix of pronouns, but from the flow of the context it is obvious who is referred to by each one. “He” and “him” refer to Jesus, “she” and “her” refer to Mary, “they” and “them” refer to the disciples. Not until “the Lord” in verse 19 is Jesus referred to by anything but pronouns.

Mark seems to have a tendency to use pronouns in this way. There are in fact five other places in the Gospel of Mark where a new section begins, and Jesus is referred to as only “he” without being mentioned in the previous verse, while the subject of the previous verse (someone other than Jesus) is then not mentioned in the new section. This particular combination of conditions is found in Mark 2:13; 6:45; 7:31; 8:1 (‘he’ is in Greek, although the KJV reads Jesus, and not in italics); and 14:3.

Another objection is that verse 9 refers to “Mary Magdalene, out of whom he had cast seven devils” as if she had never been introduced before, even though she had just been mentioned in verse 1. However, Mark also “introduces” Judas as “one of the twelve” (as if he hadn’t been mentioned before) in two different verses in chapter 14, namely 10 and 43. It is not unusual to add descriptive phrases following a name, not merely for introduction, but as a kind of flashback giving additional information. This is also seen elsewhere in Mark. It is seen in 3:16,17 which says that Simon was surnamed Peter (which had actually happened when Jesus first met him, according to John 1:42), and James and John were surnamed Boanerges, “sons of thunder,” even though they had been mentioned before. And in 7:26, the woman just mentioned in verse 25 is then identified as a Greek, a Syrophenician by nation.

Another reason the transition from verse 8 to verse 9 is considered awkward is that the use of *anastas de* (“now rising”) and the position of *proton* (“first”) in verse 9 are not well-suited to a continuation of the previous section, but are more appropriate for the beginning of a comprehensive narrative. This problem begins with the assumption that verses 9 and following are intended to be a continuation, when in fact they are not. As previously noted, the fact that the previous verse ends with *gar* is not indicative of a missing passage after that, but can in fact be the end of a section. Verses 1-8 record the women finding the empty tomb, while 9 and following tell of the resurrection appearances. They are two separate but important aspects of the witness of the resurrection of Jesus. Neither one without the other is complete. Beginning a section with a participle (“rising”) is somewhat rare, but does occur one other place in Mark, namely 14:66.

Perhaps the biggest problem scholars have with the last 12 verses of Mark, is that of vocabulary. It contains sixteen words that are not used anywhere else in Mark, three of which are used more than once in this section. It also does not include some of Mark’s most often used words, *eutheos* and *euthus* (both meaning “immediately”) and *palin* (“again”).

It should be noted that eight of the sixteen unique words have other forms of the same root word elsewhere in Mark. Also, three of the unique words are words which in the whole New Testament are only found in the post-resurrection accounts (in the Gospels and Acts) so it is not unusual to find them only in the last section in Mark.

Still, while the mere presence of unique words may not be cause to question the authorship of a passage, the large number of such words could be an indication of the writing style of someone else. However, when you look at another similar length passage (of 12 verses), namely Mark 15:40 – 16:4, you find not just sixteen but between twenty and twenty-two words (depending on textual variances) which appear nowhere else in the Gospel of Mark.

Besides words, there are phrases that are unique to the last twelve verses of Mark, which are supposed to be indicative of a different style, but these are relatively minor and have easily been dealt with by the above-mentioned authors. Bruce Terry gives a good summary of the matter.

In conclusion, we see that all the objections to Mark's authorship of this section based on style fall into one of two classes: (1) either the stylistic feature in question is found elsewhere in Mark, or (2) there is a reasonable explanation for its presence. By far the largest number of objections fall in the first category. This indicates that it is not correct to state that this long ending is not in Mark's style.

It is possible that someone might object that it is not that these stylistic features are not found elsewhere in Mark, but that they are rare in Mark, being used infrequently by him. Thus it is the cumulative factor of using so many rare stylistic features in one place that makes this section non-Markan. This objection is well-taken and must be given consideration.

With the recent discovery of the concept of peak, however, this frequent use of rare features in an important part of the story is exactly what should be expected. Peak is an area of grammatical turbulence. Little used features become prominent in peak sections and often used features are abandoned. Background devices become foreground and vice versa. In languages around the world, peak has been shown to occur in sections of climax and denouement, and sometimes inciting incident, in narratives told by good storytellers. If the crucifixion is the climax, the resurrection is the denouement. One would expect this to be a peak area in which the use of expected stylistic features is abandoned in favor of less frequently used ones. This is exactly what is found in the increased use of words used only once in Mark in the last five chapters. Rather than revealing that Mark is not the author of these last twelve verses, this different cumulative style may show that he was a good storyteller.<sup>116</sup>

So comparing both internal and external evidence, there is nothing conclusive to warrant the omission of Mark 16:9-20. Even if it were added, however, a more important question is, does this section represent the actual events, as well as the words of Our Lord? As mentioned before, this section of Scripture has been widely accepted since very early in the Christian era. This would not have been the case had it been known to contradict anything in the non-disputed sections of Scripture. The fact is, there is nothing in this section that contradicts any other Scripture. Specifically the commandment to baptize is in harmony with Matthew 28:19 (for which there is much greater textual evidence) as well as the rest of the New Testament's teaching on baptism. In light of this, it can be safely stated that even if Mark were not the author of verses 9-20, the words in verse 16 represent the words of the Lord.

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<sup>116</sup> Bruce Terry, "The Style of the Long Ending of Mark," BTerry.com, <http://bible.ovc.edu/terry/articles/mkendsty.htm> (accessed Nov. 22, 2005)

### **Jesus Commanded Baptism**

Chances are, we will never see all Biblical scholars agree about the long ending of Mark, or about the command to baptize in Matthew 28:19. However, the various evidence that has been used to try to disprove the validity of these passages is not indisputable or definitive. And while there may be reason to doubt the validity of a passage if it contradicted other clear Scriptures, the words of Our Lord in these verses are in harmony with the rest of Scripture.

As discussed previously, the disciples carried out the command to preach, teach, and baptize. They preached the Gospel of the Kingdom of God, with the added information about what Jesus Christ's sacrifice accomplished, and how to receive forgiveness of sins. They called on people to repent, just as John the Baptist and Jesus himself had done previously. And that repentance was to include the outward sign of baptism. The disciples must have been following the Lord's command, which we find in Matthew 28:19 and Mark 16:16.

While it would be unwise, as previously noted, to base doctrines on one or two "proof texts," it can be seen that the words in Mark 16:16 and Matthew 28:19 are the commands of Jesus Christ, because they fit with the what the apostles carried out in obedience to him. The Great Commission includes the commands to preach the Gospel, make disciples, and baptize. All the evidence points to the fact that baptism is a command of the Lord. Therefore being baptized comes down to a simple matter of obedience.

## 8. Summary and Conclusion

John the Baptist proclaimed that the Kingdom of God was near, and called on his listeners to repent and be baptized. At the same time he declared that the one coming after him was greater than he, and would baptize with the holy spirit, and not just water. John's baptism was something new and different from anything in the Mosaic Law, and was therefore rejected by the Pharisees. It foreshadowed Christian baptism, and has since been done away with. John's baptism was replaced by water baptism in the name of Jesus Christ, which the disciples performed in obedience to the command of Jesus Christ. This new baptism was accompanied by the baptism in the holy spirit, which only Jesus does, and it is this baptism in the holy spirit that John foretold.

The receiving of the holy spirit is spoken of in a number of different ways in the New Testament, only one of which is "baptism in the holy spirit." This particular phrase occurs only six times and is used to compare receiving holy spirit with baptism in water, while showing the contrast between water and spirit. Elsewhere the holy spirit is said to fill people, fall on them, anoint them, be poured out on them, or simply be received by them.

There are a few other figurative uses of the term "baptized" and they are clearly indicated as being figurative. However, when the term "baptized" is used without qualification in Acts and the Epistles, it is a shorthand way of referring to being baptized in the name of Jesus Christ. This baptism is distinguished from baptism in the holy spirit in the Scriptures, and is a baptism in water administered to those who repent and believe the Gospel. It is an outward demonstration that the believer has repented and entered into a covenant relationship with Jesus, partaking in his death and resurrection, for the forgiveness of sins.

The outward baptism in water in the name of Jesus Christ, and the inward baptism or receiving of the holy spirit, are both important. The holy spirit is the power of God which energizes and regenerates us. Nothing else can cause a change on the inside the way God's spirit does. But a public demonstration of faith and repentance is also important, for as James wrote in his epistle, faith without works is dead. What good is it to say you believe if you don't act on it?

Paul elaborated on the significance of baptism in his epistles. By it we are baptized into Christ's death, and are raised with him. We have a new life and are members of his body, the Church. Jesus died for all men, thus ratifying the New Covenant with his blood. An individual enters that covenant and receives the benefits thereof when he accepts it by being baptized. The ultimate goal of that covenant is entrance into the Kingdom of God when Christ returns to rule the earth.

Paul also wrote at length about the Law of Moses being fulfilled and done away with, but baptism in water was not among those "shadows of things to come." Baptism is a command of the Lord that we are to follow even now, and is supposed to be the proper response to the Gospel that is to be preached until the end of this age. When we believe the Gospel, we are born again, and the seed, which is the Word of the Kingdom, is planted in us as it was for the first century believers.

Many controversies and disputes about baptism have come up since then, but only in relatively recent times has the idea that spirit replaced water been widely propounded. The Church has for the most part recognized that baptism is meant to include water.

Some who have a difficult time accepting it may suggest that there is no reason for outward physical rites if we have the spirit, but this separation between physical and spiritual stems largely from gnosticism, not from the Hebrew thought of the Scriptures. What a person believes, he demonstrates outwardly. There are certain things the Lord expects us to do during this period between his first coming and the end of the age when the Kingdom of God will finally be established on earth. Among them is being baptized to enter into the New Covenant, for the forgiveness of sins.

As humans we tend to need a reference point to mark the point of change from our old lives to the new. God has given us this wonderful way of declaring the end of our past and the beginning of our new life in Christ. Our faith in the Gospel meets with His redemptive work through His Son at that point. The sacrifice of Jesus Christ then becomes personal.

But it is not merely a gift. It is a commandment of the Lord. If we call him Lord, should we not do as he commands? All the questioning about “is it necessary for salvation?” is missing the point. The exceptions that God allows for when necessary do not change the rule. It comes down to a matter of obedience. The various textual “evidence” trying to show that Jesus’ command to baptize was not in the original is to no avail. And it is proved out by the actions of the disciples, as well as Paul’s expounding on the significance of it. God provided it, Jesus commanded it, and it is for our good. Let us not stubbornly close our eyes to what is really a simple truth once all the wrong teaching is swept away. If we believe the Gospel of Our Lord Jesus and his coming Kingdom, let us repent and be baptized as he commanded.



## Appendix: Occurrences of Baptize/Baptism

The New Testament refers to three baptisms: John's baptism, baptism in the name of Jesus Christ, and baptism in the holy spirit. The following is a list of the occurrences of the relevant terms, for closer examination.

### I. Categorized:

#### A. The baptism of John:

##### 1. Called "the baptism of John" (8x)

Matthew 21:25 "The baptism of John"

Mark 11:30 "The baptism of John"

Luke 7:29 "being baptized with the baptism of John."

Luke 20:4 "The baptism of John"

Acts 1:22 "Beginning from the baptism of John"

Acts 10:37 "the baptism which John preached"

Acts 18:25 "knowing only the baptism of John."

Acts 19:3 "Unto [eis] what then were ye baptized...Unto [eis] John's baptism."

##### 2. Called "the baptism of repentance" (4x)

Mark 1:4 "John did baptize...the baptism of repentance"

Luke 3:3 "the baptism of repentance"

Acts 13:24 "John...preached...the baptism of repentance"

Acts 19:4 "John verily baptized with the baptism of repentance"

##### 3. Baptize/baptized/baptizing with water; context identifies it as John's baptism (8x)

Matthew 3:11 "I indeed baptize you with [en] water"

Mark 1:8 "I indeed have baptized you with [en] water"

Luke 3:16 "I indeed baptize you with water [hudore]"

John 1:26 "I baptize with [en] water"

John 1:31 "I come baptizing with [en] water."

John 1:33 "to baptize with [en] water"

Acts 1:5 "John truly baptized with water [hudore]"

Acts 11:16 "John indeed baptized with water [hudore]"

##### 4. Baptize/baptized/baptizing/baptism used by itself; context identifies it as John's baptism (16x)

Matthew 3:6 "were baptized"

Matthew 3:7 "his baptism"

Matthew 3:13 "to be baptized of him"

Matthew 3:14 "to be baptized of thee"

Matthew 3:16 "when he was baptized"

Mark 1:5 "were all baptized"

Mark 1:9 "was baptized"

Luke 3:7 "to be baptized of him"

Luke 3:12 "to be baptized"

Luke 3:21 "were baptized"; "also being baptized"

Luke 7:30 "being not baptized of him."

John 1:28 "John was baptizing."

John 3:23 "John also was baptizing"; "were baptized."

John 10:40 "John at first baptized"

## B. Baptism in the name of Jesus Christ

### 1. Water baptism authorized by Jesus (4x)

John 3:22 “he...baptized.”

John 3:26 “the same baptizeth, and all men come to him.”

John 4:1 “Jesus made and baptized more disciples than John”

John 4:2 “Jesus himself baptized not”

### 2. The long form: baptizing/baptized in the name of Jesus/Lord (7x)

Matthew 28:19 “baptizing them in [*eis*] the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost”

Acts 2:38, “baptized in [*epi*] the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins”

Acts 8:16, “baptized in [*eis*] the name of the Lord Jesus”

Acts 10:48, “baptized in [*en*] the name of the Lord”

Acts 19:5, “baptized in [*eis*] the name of the Lord Jesus”

Romans 6:3, “baptized into [*eis*] Jesus Christ”

Galatians 3:27 “baptized into [*eis*] Christ”

### 3. Verb baptize/baptized used by itself, as short way of referring to the above (20x)

Mark 16:16 “He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved”

Acts 2:41 “they...were baptized”

Acts 8:12 “they were baptized”

Acts 8:13 “he was baptized”

Acts 8:36 “what doth hinder me to be baptized”

Acts 8:38 “he baptized him”

Acts 9:18 “he... was baptized”

Acts 10:47 “that these should not be baptized”

Acts 16:15 “she was baptized”

Acts 16:33 “he... was baptized”

Acts 18:8 “many...were baptized”

Acts 22:16 “arise, and be baptized”

Romans 6:3 “baptized into his death”

I Corinthians 1:13 “were ye baptized in the name of Paul?”

I Corinthians 1:14 “I baptized”

I Corinthians 1:15 “I had baptized”

I Corinthians 1:16 “I baptized”

I Corinthians 1:16 “I baptized”

I Corinthians 1:17 “sent me not to baptize”

I Corinthians 12:13 “by [*en*] one Spirit are we all baptized into [*eis*] one body”

### 4. Noun baptism used by itself, as short way of referring to the above (4x)

Romans 6:4, “buried with him by baptism”

Ephesians 4:5, “one baptism”

Colossians 2:12, “Buried with him in baptism”

I Peter 3:21, “baptism doth also now save us”

## C. Baptized with the holy ghost/spirit (6x)

Matthew 3:11 “shall baptize you with [*en*] the Holy Ghost and *with* fire”

Mark 1:8 “shall baptize you with [*en*] the Holy Ghost”

Luke 3:16 “shall baptize you with [*en*] the Holy Ghost and *with* fire”

John 1:33 “he which baptizeth with [*en*] the Holy Ghost.

Acts 1:5 “ye shall be baptized with [*en*] Holy Ghost”

Acts 11:16 “ye shall be baptized with [*en*] the Holy Ghost”

## D. Other Figurative uses of baptism

Matthew 20:22 “be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with”

Matthew 20:23 “be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with”

Mark 10:38 “be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with”  
Mark 10:39 “with the baptism that I am baptized withal shall ye be baptized”  
Luke 12:50 “I have a baptism to be baptized with”  
I Corinthians 10:2 “And were all baptized unto [eis] Moses in the cloud and in the sea”

### E. Other uses

I Corinthians 15:29 Else what shall they do which are baptized for the dead, if the dead rise not at all? why are they then baptized for the dead?  
Heb 6:2 Of the doctrine of baptisms...

## **II. By appearance in the Scripture:**

Matthew 3:6 And were baptized of him in Jordan, confessing their sins.  
Matthew 3:7 But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees come to his baptism, he said unto them, O generation of vipers, who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come?  
Matthew 3:11 I indeed baptize you with [en] water unto repentance: but he that cometh after me is mightier than I, whose shoes I am not worthy to bear: he shall baptize you with [en] the Holy Ghost, and *with* fire:  
Matthew 3:13 Then cometh Jesus from Galilee to Jordan unto John, to be baptized of him.  
Matthew 3:14 But John forbad him, saying, I have need to be baptized of thee, and comest thou to me?  
Matthew 3:16 And Jesus, when he was baptized, went up straightway out of the water: and, lo, the heavens were opened unto him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove, and lighting upon him:  
Matthew 20:22 But Jesus answered and said, Ye know not what ye ask. Are ye able to drink of the cup that I shall drink of, and to be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with? They say unto him, We are able.  
Matthew 20:23 And he saith unto them, Ye shall drink indeed of 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 shall be given to them for whom it is prepared of my Father.  
Matthew 21:25 The baptism of John, whence was it? from heaven, or of men? And they reasoned with themselves, saying, If we shall say, From heaven; he will say unto us, Why did ye not then believe him?  
Matthew 28:19 Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in [eis] the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost:

Mark 1:4 John did baptize in the wilderness, and preach the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins.  
Mark 1:5 And there went out unto him all the land of Judaea, and they of Jerusalem, and were all baptized of him in the river of Jordan, confessing their sins.  
Mark 1:8 I indeed have baptized you with [en] water: but he shall baptize you with [en] the Holy Ghost.  
Mark 1:9 And it came to pass in those days, that Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee, and was baptized of John in Jordan.  
Mark 10:38 But Jesus said unto them, Ye know not what ye ask: can ye drink of the cup that I drink of? and be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with?  
Mark 10:39 And they said unto him, We can. And Jesus said unto them, Ye shall indeed drink of the cup that I drink of; and with the baptism that I am baptized withal shall ye be baptized:  
Mark 11:30 The baptism of John, was it from heaven, or of men? answer me.  
Mark 16:16 He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned.

Luke 3:3 And he came into all the country about Jordan, preaching the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins;  
Luke 3:7 Then said he to the multitude that came forth to be baptized of him, O generation of vipers, who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come?  
Luke 3:12 Then came also publicans to be baptized, and said unto him, Master, what shall we do?  
Luke 3:16 John answered, saying unto them all, I indeed baptize you with water [hudore]; but one mightier than I cometh, the latchet of whose shoes I am not worthy to unloose: he shall baptize you with [en] the Holy Ghost and with fire:  
Luke 3:21 Now when all the people were baptized, it came to pass, that Jesus also being baptized, and praying, the heaven was opened,  
Luke 7:29 And all the people that heard him, and the publicans, justified God, being baptized with the baptism of John.  
Luke 7:30 But the Pharisees and lawyers rejected the counsel of God against themselves, being not baptized of him.

Luke 12:50 But I have a baptism to be baptized with; and how am I straitened till it be accomplished!

Luke 20:4 The baptism of John, was it from heaven, or of men?

John 1:26 John answered them, saying, I baptize with [en] water: but there standeth one among you, whom ye know not;

John 1:28 These things were done in Bethabara beyond Jordan, where John was baptizing.

John 1:31 And I knew him not: but that he should be made manifest to Israel, therefore am I come baptizing with [en] water.

John 1:33 And I knew him not: but he that sent me to baptize with [en] water, the same said unto me, Upon whom thou shalt see the Spirit descending, and remaining on him, the same is he which baptizeth with [en] the Holy Ghost.

John 3:22 After these things came Jesus and his disciples into the land of Judaea; and there he tarried with them, and baptized.

John 3:23 And John also was baptizing in Aenon near to Salim, because there was much water there: and they came, and were baptized.

John 3:26 And they came unto John, and said unto him, Rabbi, he that was with thee beyond Jordan, to whom thou barest witness, behold, the same baptizeth, and all men come to him.

John 4:1 When therefore the Lord knew how the Pharisees had heard that Jesus made and baptized more disciples than John,

John 4:2 (Though Jesus himself baptized not, but his disciples.)

John 10:40 And went away again beyond Jordan into the place where John at first baptized; and there he abode.

Acts 1:5 For John truly baptized with water [hudore]; but ye shall be baptized with [en] the Holy Ghost not many days hence.

Acts 1:22 Beginning from the baptism of John, unto that same day that he was taken up from us, must one be ordained to be a witness with us of his resurrection.

Acts 2:38 Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in [epi] the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.

Acts 2:41 Then they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls.

Acts 8:12 But when they believed Philip preaching the things concerning the kingdom of God, and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women.

Acts 8:13 Then Simon himself believed also: and when he was baptized, he continued with Philip, and wondered, beholding the miracles and signs which were done.

Acts 8:16 (For as yet he was fallen upon none of them: only they were baptized in [eis] the name of the Lord Jesus.)

Acts 8:36 And as they went on their way, they came unto a certain water: and the eunuch said, See, here is water; what doth hinder me to be baptized?

Acts 8:38 And he commanded the chariot to stand still: and they went down both into the water, both Philip and the eunuch; and he baptized him.

Acts 9:18 And immediately there fell from his eyes as it had been scales: and he received sight forthwith, and arose, and was baptized.

Acts 10:37 That word, I say, ye know, which was published throughout all Judaea, and began from Galilee, after the baptism which John preached;

Acts 10:47 Can any man forbid water, that these should not be baptized, which have received the Holy Ghost as well as we?

Acts 10:48 And he commanded them to be baptized in [en] the name of the Lord. Then prayed they him to tarry certain days.

Acts 11:16 Then remembered I the word of the Lord, how that he said, John indeed baptized with water [hudore]; but ye shall be baptized with [en] the Holy Ghost.

Acts 13:24 When John had first preached before his coming the baptism of repentance to all the people of Israel.

Acts 16:15 And when she was baptized, and her household, she besought us, saying, If ye have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come into my house, and abide there. And she constrained us.

Acts 16:33 And he took them the same hour of the night, and washed their stripes; and was baptized, he and all his, straightway.

Acts 18:8 And Crispus, the chief ruler of the synagogue, believed on the Lord with all his house; and many of the Corinthians hearing believed, and were baptized.

Acts 18:25 This man was instructed in the way of the Lord; and being fervent in the spirit, he spake and taught diligently the things of the Lord, knowing only the baptism of John.

Acts 19:3 And he said unto them, Unto [eis] what then were ye baptized? And they said, Unto [eis] John's baptism.

Acts 19:4 Then said Paul, John verily baptized with the baptism of repentance, saying unto the people, that they should believe on [*eis*] him which should come after him, that is, on [*eis*] Christ Jesus.

Acts 19:5 When they heard this, they were baptized in [*eis*] the name of the Lord Jesus.

Acts 22:16 And now why tarriest thou? arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord.

Romans 6:3 Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into [*eis*] Jesus Christ were baptized into [*eis*] his death?

Romans 6:4 Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into [*eis*] death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.

I Corinthians 1:13 Is Christ divided? was Paul crucified for you? or were ye baptized in [*eis*] the name of Paul?

I Corinthians 1:14 I thank God that I baptized none of you, but Crispus and Gaius;

I Corinthians 1:15 Lest any should say that I had baptized in mine own name.

I Corinthians 1:16 And I baptized also the household of Stephanas: besides, I know not whether I baptized any other.

I Corinthians 1:17 For Christ sent me not to baptize, but to preach the gospel: not with wisdom of words, lest the cross of Christ should be made of none effect.

I Corinthians 10:2 And were all baptized unto [*eis*] Moses in the cloud and in the sea;

I Corinthians 12:13 For by [*en*] one Spirit are we all baptized into [*eis*] one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into [*eis*] one Spirit.

I Corinthians 15:29 Else what shall they do which are baptized for the dead, if the dead rise not at all? why are they then baptized for the dead?

Galatians 3:27 For as many of you as have been baptized into [*eis*] Christ have put on Christ.

Ephesians 4:5 One Lord, one faith, one baptism,

Colossians 2:12 Buried with him in baptism, wherein also ye are risen with him through the faith of the operation of God, who hath raised him from the dead.

Heb 6:2 Of the doctrine of baptisms, and of laying on of hands, and of resurrection of the dead, and of eternal judgment.

I Peter 3:21 The like figure whereunto even baptism doth also now save us (not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God,) by the resurrection of Jesus Christ: