

FOUNDATIONS OF THE FAITH

“THE DOCTRINE OF BAPTISMS”

Part 1

WATER BAPTISM



“Therefore, leaving the discussion of the elementary principles of Christ, let us go on to perfection, not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works and of faith toward God, of [the doctrine of baptisms](#), of laying on of hands, of resurrection of the dead, and of eternal judgment...”

(Hebrews 6:1-3)

*Now when they heard this, they were cut to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, "Men and brethren, what shall we do?" Then Peter said to them, "Repent, and **let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ** for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. For the promise is to you and to your children, and to all who are afar off, as many as the Lord our God will call."
(Acts 2:37-39)*

The word "baptism" is derived from the Greek *baptizen*, *baptisma* or the verb *baptizo* which literally means to "dip, plunge, cover with or immerse." Ancient Hebrews baptized or ceremoniously washed those who became proselytes to Judaism. In the New Testament, John the Baptist came preaching a doctrine of repentance and water baptism for the remission of sin (Ref. Mark 1:4). John's ministry pointed toward Israel's coming Messiah. John the Baptizer spoke of the One following him who would pour out the baptism of the Spirit.

In this study, we will examine our need for salvation, figures of water baptism in the Old Testament, the necessity of biblical water baptism, the scriptural administration of water baptism and a brief synopsis of water baptism in church history.

THE HUMAN NEED FOR SALVATION

- ✓ All are sinners and every human being is in need of salvation (Ref. Proverbs 14:12; 20:9; 1 Kings 8:46; Romans 3:9, 23; 5:12; James 2:10; 1 John 1:10; 1 Timothy 2:3-4; John 3:17; 2 Peter 3:9; 1 Peter 1:9; James 1:21; Hebrews 10:39).
- ✓ Salvation can only come *through* faith in Jesus Christ (Ref. John 8:24).
- ✓ Being saved from the power and effects of sin is sometimes referred to as being "born again." Jesus told the Jewish religious leader Nicodemus that this new birth experience was a prerequisite to seeing and entering the kingdom of God (Ref. John 3:1-8).

SYMBOLS AND TYPES OF WATER BAPTISM IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

Although the gospel message of the new covenant is clearly presented in the New Testament, the Old Testament contains types, shadows and figures of our salvation (Ref. Hebrews 10:1; Colossians 2:17). Galatians 3:24 tells us that "*the law was our tutor to bring us to Christ...*" Its foreshadowings are worthy of study in reference to New Testament salvation.

- ✓ The Israelites deliverance from Egyptian bondage (Ref. Exodus 12-14) is a type of our deliverance from the bondage of sin.
 - The blood of the Passover lamb typifies the blood that Jesus, the Lamb of God, shed for us on the cross. God used the blood to save His people from the plague, just as the blood of Christ saves us.
 - The water of the Red Sea is likened unto deliverance from sin through water. God used water to deliver the Israelites while destroying Pharaoh's army. He now uses water baptism to deliver us, destroying the power of sin (Ref. 1 Corinthians 10:1-2).
 - The cloud of the Lord's presence, which guided them, foreshadows the baptism and guidance of the Holy Spirit which would fill New Testament believers. Paul taught this typology in 1 Corinthians 10:1-2.
- ✓ Prior to the giving of the Ten Commandments, God required Israel to set themselves apart (sanctification) and wash their clothing with water (Ref. Exodus 19:10-11). After the law was given, Moses sprinkled the people with blood and water (Ref. Hebrews 9:18-20). The inauguration of the old covenant was characterized by separation, blood, water, and the manifestation of the presence of God.
- ✓ Hebrews 9:8-9 tells us that the Tabernacle in the Wilderness is symbolic as well.
 - The altar was a place of death, foreshadowing the death of Jesus Christ.
 - The laver of brass containing water was a place of self-examination and washing. Here the priest washed himself clean of all impurities. At water baptism, our sins are washed away (Ref. Acts 22:16). Titus 3:5 speaks of "*the washing of regeneration*" or the "*laver of regeneration.*"

- ✓ People who were ceremonially unclean were to be purified with blood, water and at times oil or fire (Ref. Leviticus 14; Numbers 19). The blood of Jesus and water baptism purifies us today. The oil and fire are symbolic of the work of the Holy Spirit.
- ✓ 1 Peter 3:20-21 teaches us that the waters which destroyed wickedness in the earth and delivered Noah's family in Noah's day, is a figure of the baptism that now saves us.

THE NECESSITY OF WATER BAPTISM

Water baptism is the believer's faith response to God.

Just as repentance is the initial act of faith, faith will also lead to water baptism. Belief leads to faith. Faith responds with repentance. True repentance will cause one to seek the full working of God in their life. Water baptism is an act of faith. Faith in God's Word will cause the believer to desire to submit to the scriptural teaching of water baptism. Water baptism, then, is a faith response to God.

Biblical examples of new believers accepting the gospel and acting upon the command to be water baptized are as follows:

- ✓ On the Day of Pentecost, those who gladly received the word were baptized (Ref. Acts 2:41).
- ✓ The Samaritans believed the preaching of Philip and the power of the name of Jesus and were baptized (Ref. Acts 8:12).
- ✓ The Philippian jailer believed and was baptized that same hour (Ref. Acts 16:31-34).
- ✓ Many Corinthians believed and were baptized when Paul preached there (Ref. Acts 18:8).
- ✓ The Bible records several other instances of people being baptized when they heard and believed the gospel (Ref. Acts 8:36-38; 9:18; 10:47-48; 16:14-15; 19:5).

Water baptism is necessary to salvation.

Many modern Christians fail to understand the absolute necessity of water baptism in the process of spiritual rebirth. Water baptism is more than an optional faith response for the new believer; it is an imperative step to take in coming to God and allowing His full work in your life.

- ✓ Like repentance, water baptism is a command (Ref. Acts 2:38).
- ✓ Jesus commanded His disciples to make disciples of all nations, baptizing and teaching them (Ref. Matthew 28:19).
- ✓ Water baptism is an expression of faith in God, by obedience to His Word (Ref. Acts 2:41). We should obey His Word (Ref. Hebrews 5:9; Romans 2:5-11; 6:16).
- ✓ Water baptism is a part of our "spiritual circumcision" that separates from sins, cuts away the sinful affections of our heart and results in forgiven sins. (Ref. Romans 2:28-29; Colossians 2:11-13).
- ✓ Water baptism identifies us with the burial of Jesus (Ref. Colossians 2:12; Romans 6:4).
- ✓ Water baptism places us "into" Christ" (Ref. Romans 6:3-4; Galatians 3:27).
- ✓ As a result of our sin, we all require a spiritual cleansing (Ref. Hebrews 9:13-14; James 4:8; 2 Corinthians 7:1). The blood He shed for us on the cross is applied to us throughout the salvation process, allowing for us to seek God, repent effectively, receive the remission of sins and receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. Our sins are spiritually removed from us at water baptism (Ref. Acts 2:38; 22:16).
- ✓ Water baptism is part of the biblical New Birth. Without experiencing this spiritual rebirth, we cannot enter the kingdom of God (Ref. John 3:5; Titus 3:4-6).
- ✓ Water baptism is part of the salvation process (Ref. 1 Peter 3:20-21).
- ✓ Jesus said, "He who believes and is baptized will be saved..." (Ref. Mark 16:16).

THE ADMINISTRATION OF WATER BAPTISM

We have established that water baptism is both important and necessary. Let us now examine proper administration of water baptism. If water baptism is important enough to practice, we should seek to practice it in light of the way Jesus and the apostles performed it.

Water baptism is for the believer.

- ✓ Scripture indicates that we must believe prior to water baptism (Ref. Acts 8:36-38; Mark 16:16).
- ✓ Scripture seems to indicate that repentance should precede baptism (Ref. Mark 1:5; Matthew 3:6-8; Luke 3:8; Acts 2:38, etc). Baptism is a burial of past sins. For sins to be removed at baptism there must be repentance (a dying out) to those sins.
- ✓ There is absolutely no biblical precedent for infants being baptized. Infants cannot exercise faith, express belief or experience repentance.

The method of baptism by immersion in water is scripturally significant and should not be compromised.

Consider the following:

- ✓ Since water baptism is a command, we should earnestly seek to perform it according to the scriptural formula.
- ✓ The biblical locations of people being baptized in the New Testament imply water baptism by immersion.
- ✓ Every record we have describing the process and method of water baptism, describes the baptismal candidate being immersed in water (Ref. Matthew 3:13-16; Mark 1:10; Acts 8:38-39). They went into the water. There is no New Testament scriptural precedent for water baptism by sprinkling or pouring. The sole advantage of performing baptism by sprinkling or pouring is for convenience. Convenience is a poor excuse not to follow scriptural teaching and example.
- ✓ *Baptizo* literally means to “immerse.” Figuratively, it includes the idea of being buried. Only by immersion are we able to retain the spiritual significance of baptism as a burial with Christ (Ref. Romans 6:4; Colossians 2:12).
- ✓ Jesus was immersed or “*baptizo-ed*” as an example for us to follow (Ref. Matthew 3:13-16). If Jesus, who did not need baptism for the remission of sin, submitted to immersion, how much more should we?

Water baptism in Jesus name is the only biblical formula for water baptism.

Scripturally, the name of Jesus should be invoked orally at water baptism. Baptism should be administered “*in the name of Jesus.*” Let us investigate the biblical record. The Book of Acts describes five examples of baptism in the name of Jesus. No accounts mention any other name or formula in connection with an actual baptism.

- ✓ After the outpouring of the Holy Ghost at Pentecost and the first sermon of the New Testament church, Peter commanded baptism, “*in the name of Jesus Christ*” (Ref. Acts 2:38). Those who accepted this message were baptized in the name of Jesus (Ref. Acts 2:41).
- ✓ The Samaritans, having believed Philip’s preaching concerning “*the name of Jesus Christ,*” were baptized “*in the name of the Lord Jesus*” (Ref. Acts 8:12, 16).
- ✓ After Cornelius and the other Gentiles gathered in his home received the infilling of the Holy Spirit, Peter “*commanded them to be baptized in the name of the Lord*” (Ref. Acts 10:48). The NIV reads “*So he ordered that they be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ.*” The oldest Greek manuscripts also include the name of Jesus in this text.
- ✓ Meeting disciples of John the Baptist at Ephesus, he asked them about their baptism. Upon discovering that they had only received John’s baptism, he re-baptized them. This time, they were baptized “*in the name of the Lord Jesus.*” They then received the gift of the Holy Ghost (Ref. Acts 19:5).
- ✓ Acts 22:16 seems to indicate that Paul was baptized in the name of Jesus, for Ananias told him, “*Arise and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord.*”
- ✓ Additionally, 1 Corinthians indicates that the Gentile believers in Corinth were baptized in Jesus’ name (Ref. 1 Corinthians 1:13).

It seems that the apostolic church always baptized in Jesus’ name. All believers, regardless of their nationalities or heritage, received water baptism in the name of Jesus. According to Hasting’s *Dictionary of the Bible*, one can draw the following conclusion from historical evidence:

“The original form of words was ‘into the name of Jesus Christ’ or ‘the Lord Jesus.’ Baptism into the name of the trinity was a later development. After the one mention of it, Matthew 28:19, we do not find it again until Justin Martyr, and his formula is not identical to that in the Gospel.”

What about Matthew 28:19?

In Matthew 28:19, Jesus commands His disciples to go and make disciples of all nations, "...baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit." It seems that this command is often misunderstood by many in modern Christian circles as being a command to use a specific spoken formula. The apostles obviously understood it to be otherwise, for they consistently administered water baptism in the Name of Jesus. Jesus intended for His present and future audience to understand that His name is God's New Testament name that all nations are to be baptized into. Jesus' command in Matthew 28:19 can be understood in several different ways.

- ✓ In the aforementioned scripture, the word "name" is used in the singular rather than in the plural. There is absolutely a singular name to be understood from this passage. This name would incorporate the titles of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost. Had He intended to describe three separate persons, he would have used the plural form, "names."
- ✓ When we compare the language of Matthew 28:19 to that of other passages containing similar terminology, a consistent interpretation emerges. When an entity is said to be "of" or owned by more than one subject, that entity remains one, shared by the various subjects. Example: "*the house of Paul, and of Silas, and of Barnabas*" means that Paul, Silas and Barnabas all share the same house. Matthew 28:19 points to a single name shared or owned by the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Other examples of this type of usage include: Exodus 3:16; Mark 6:3; 15:40; Ephesians 5:5; Colossians 2:2; 2 Timothy 1:7; James 1:1; 1 Peter 4:14 and Revelation 22:1,3.
- ✓ Matthew 28:19 should be viewed in its immediate context. In verse 18 and 19 Jesus said, "...All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore, and teach all nations..." (KJV). Jesus' command to go, to teach and to baptize in the singular name was based on His authority. Jesus was basically saying, "Because all power has been given to me, go and teach and baptize in the one name that has all power, the name that belongs to the father, the Son and Holy Ghost." It would be rather ridiculous to reason that Jesus was saying, "Because all power has been given to me, go and teach and baptize in three separate names." Jesus has all power and based the command on the power He possesses. The name which represents the One who has all power was the name in which He intended us to administer water baptism. Verses 18 through 20 record Jesus using the singular pronouns "I" and "me" three times along with the singular word "name." The immediate context of Matthew 28:19 demands that Jesus is the one name that contains all power. There is no other name that saves (Ref. Acts 4:12).
- ✓ All four gospels refer to the great commission. By referencing the writings of the other gospel writers, we are able to see a consistent theme emerging. Jesus is the one name to be used in preaching, believing, repenting, remitting sins, baptizing, and casting out devils (Ref. Mark 16:15-17; Luke 24:47; John 20:31).
- ✓ We can gain a basic understanding of Matthew 28:19 by looking to see how this command was carried out in the early church. Peter, who was present during the command of Jesus in Matthew 28:19, commanded baptism to be done in Jesus name (Ref. Acts 2:38; 10:48). Acts 8:16 and 19:5 are actual fulfillments of Matthew 28:19. Both passages say that they were baptized in Jesus' name. Matthew 28:19 is fulfilled by water baptism in the name of the Lord Jesus. In fact, prayer healing, casting out devils, preaching, teaching, and even suffering were all done in the name of Jesus (Ref. Acts 3:6,16; 4:10; 5:28, 40-42; 16:18).
- ✓ "*And whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus...*" Colossians 3:17

Does it really matter how we are baptized?

Consider the following:

- ✓ Like every baptism in the New Testament where a formula is given, we should be baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus (Ref. Acts 2:38; 8:16; 10:48; 19:5; 22:16; Romans 6:3; Galatians 3:27).
- ✓ Believers who had been baptized in a different manner were re-baptized in Jesus' name (Ref. Acts 19:1-5).
- ✓ Salvation is found only through the name of Jesus. It is the only saving name (Ref. Acts 4:12).
- ✓ All we do in word and deed should be done in the name of Jesus (Ref. Colossians 3:17).
- ✓ Baptism is a burial with Christ (Ref. Romans 6:4; Colossians 2:12). Only Jesus died and was buried on our behalf, so baptism is administered in His name.
- ✓ Baptism is a personal identification with Jesus Christ. We are baptized *into* Christ (Ref. Romans 6:3; Galatians 3:27). In baptism we officially identify with Him as we take on His name. The name stands for the person, authority and power of a man. To be baptized into the name of Jesus means to be baptized into His body, His life and membership into His kingdom.
- ✓ God makes all His power and authority available to us when we invoke His name in faith (Ref. Acts 3:6,16).

