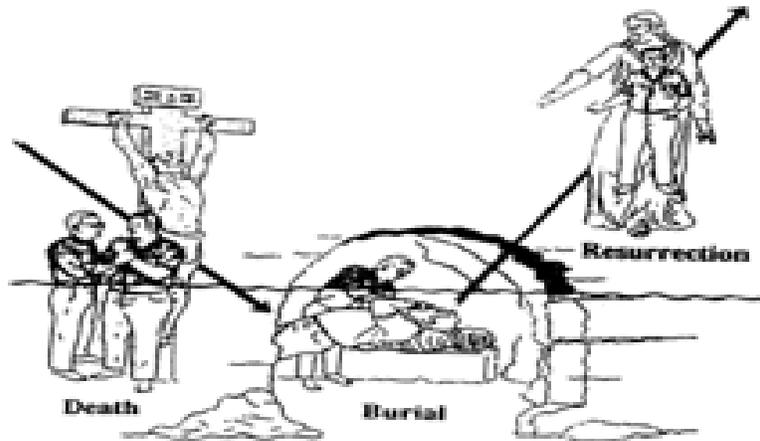


Baptism

Christ



The Bible Way

Introduction

The subject of baptism is very important, highly debated and potentially divisive. The aim of this study is to be conciliatory, clear and, above all, true to the Scriptures. In the Bible and in our present religious world, there are many different "baptisms. The following lessons intend to present the baptism that the Bible refers to as "baptism into Christ".

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All quotations are from the NASB unless otherwise noted. Statements in **Bold** are for emphasis.

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The BibleWay Online

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WHAT BLESSINGS DOES A PERSON RECEIVE WHEN HE IS BAPTIZED BIBLICALLY?

A person is saved when he is scripturally baptized. There are several aspects or ways of expressing this gift of salvation in the New Testament:

1. Salvation — Mark 16:15-16

“And He said to them, “Go into all the world and preach the gospel to all creation. He who has believed and has been baptized shall be **saved**; but he who has disbelieved shall be condemned.”

2. Forgiveness of sins — Acts 2:38

“And Peter said to them, “Repent, and let each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the **forgiveness of your sins**; and you shall **receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.**”

3. Receive the gift of the Holy Spirit — Acts 2:38 above

4. Sins washed away — Acts 22:16

“And now why do you delay? Arise and be baptized, and **wash away your sins**, calling on His name.”

5. Cleansing – Eph. 5:25-27

“... Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her, that He might **sanctify her**, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, that He might present to Himself the church in all her glory, having no spot or wrinkle or any such thing; but that she should be holy and blameless.”

6. Sanctification — Eph. 5:26 above

7. A good conscience — 1 Peter 3:21

“And corresponding to that, baptism now saves you—not the removal of dirt from the flesh, but **an appeal to God for a good conscience**—through the resurrection of Jesus Christ.”

8. Puts off the body of sin — Col. 2:11, 12

“In Him you were also circumcised with a circumcision made without hands, in **the removal of the body of the flesh** by the circumcision of Christ; having been buried with Him in baptism in which you were also **raised up with Him** through faith in the working of God, who raised Him from the dead.”

9. Raised with Christ — Col. 2:12 above

10. Born again — John 3:3-5

“Jesus answered and said to him, ‘Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is **born again**, he cannot see the kingdom of God.’ Nicodemus said to Him, ‘How can a man be born when he is old? He cannot enter a second time into his mother’s womb and be born, can he?’ Jesus answered, ‘Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is **born of water and the Spirit**, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.’”

11. Baptized into the death of Christ - Romans 6:3-6

“Or do you not know that all of us who have been **baptized into Christ Jesus** have been **baptized into his death**? Therefore, we have been buried with Him through baptism into death, in order that as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life. For if we have become united with *Him* in the likeness of His death, certainly we shall be also *in the likeness* of His resurrection, knowing this, that our old self was crucified with *Him*, that our body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves to sin.”

12. Become a child of God — Gal. 3:26, 27

“For you are **all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus. For all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ.**”

13. Be clothed with Christ — Gal. 3:27 above

14. Enter into Christ — Gal. 3:27 and Romans 6:3 above

NOTE 1 - The phrase “**in Christ**” or “**into Christ**” is very significant! When we enter into Christ, we then are found “**in Christ**” and it is “**in Christ**” that all spiritual blessings are given to us (Eph. 1:3, “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places **in Christ**”).

Rom. 3:24 — “being justified as a gift by His grace through the redemption which **is in Christ Jesus.**”

Rom. 6:11— “Even so consider yourselves to be dead to sin, but alive to God **in Christ Jesus.**”

Rom. 6:23 — “For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life **in Christ Jesus our Lord.**”

Rom. 8:1 — “There is therefore now **no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.**”

Rom. 12:5 — “So we, who are many, are one body **in Christ**, and individually members one of one another.”

2 Cor. 5:17 — “...Therefore if any man is **in Christ, he is a new creature**; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come.”

2 Cor. 5:21 — “He made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, that we might become the righteousness of God **in Him.**”

Gal. 3:28 — “There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free man, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one **in Christ Jesus.**”

Eph. 1:7 — “**In Him** we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of His grace.”

Eph. 1:11 — “**In Him** also we have obtained an inheritance.”

Eph. 2:6 — “and raised us up with Him, and seated us with Him in the heavenly places **in Christ Jesus.**”

Eph. 2:7 — “in order that in the ages to come He might show the surpassing riches of His grace in kindness toward us **in Christ Jesus.**”

Eph. 2:13 — “but now **in Christ Jesus** you who formerly were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ.”

Eph. 3:6 — “that the Gentiles are fellow heirs and fellow members of the body, and fellow partakers of the promise **in Christ Jesus** through the gospel.”

Eph. 3:12 — “**in whom** we have boldness and confident **access** through faith in Him.”

Phil. 3:9 — “and may be found **in Him**, not having a righteousness of my own derived from the Law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which comes from God on the basis of faith.”

Col. 2:10 — “and **in Him** you have been made complete, and He is the head over all rule and authority.”

1 Thess. 4:16 — “...For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God; and the dead **in Christ** will rise first.”

2 Tim. 1:1 — “Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, according to the promise of life **in Christ Jesus.**”

2 Tim 1:9 — “who has saved us and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace which was given us **in Christ Jesus** from all eternity.”

2 Tim 2:10 — “For this reason I endure all things for the sake of those who are chosen, that they also may obtain the salvation which is **in Christ Jesus and with it eternal glory.**”

1 John 3:5 — “And you know that He appeared in order to take away sins; and **in Him** there is no sin.”

1 John 5:11 — “And the witness is this, that God has given us eternal life, and this life is **in His Son.**”

NOTE 2. This question is often asked: “Do I have to be baptized in order to be saved?” It might be easier to reply if we asked:

“Do I have to be born of the water and the Spirit in order to be saved?”

“Do I have to have my sins washed away in order to be saved?”

“Do I have to be a child of God in order to be saved?”

“Do I have to be ‘**in Christ**’ to be saved?”

The answer to all these questions is the same – (“**yes!**”) - Since it is **in Christ** that all these blessings are bestowed and we are “baptized into Christ”; that is, we come into Christ in the act of being baptized. Baptism is obviously necessary for a sinner to be saved! It is good to remember that the act of baptism is not a work man does whereby he earns salvation. Instead it is, as we will see in the next section of this study, “an appeal to God for a good conscience – through the resurrection of Jesus Christ.”

SHOULD A PERSON UNDERSTAND THAT HIS SINS ARE BEING FORGIVEN WHEN HE IS BAPTIZED?

I believe the answer is yes, he does. These are the reasons why:

1. IN BAPTISM A SINNER CRIES OUT TO GOD TO SAVE HIM

- a. **Acts 22: 16** — “**And now why do you delay? Arise and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on His name.**” This passage shows that we are baptized to have our sins washed away and in that action of being baptized, we are calling on the name of the Lord. To call on the name of the Lord means to invoke Him to action. (**See Appendix I: Call on the name of the Lord.**)

Question: In baptism, what are we calling on the name of the Lord to do?

Answer: To save us! To wash away our sins!

But what if we don’t feel the need to be saved, because we don’t think Jesus saves or we don’t think we are lost or we don’t really know what we’re doing or because we think we are already saved?

In this case, how could we be calling on the Lord to save us in baptism? If we didn’t feel the need to be saved, we couldn’t be calling on the Lord to save us! True, scriptural, baptism is an act in which we are asking the Lord to save us from our sins!

This is not to say that for a person’s baptism to be valid, he must say aloud words like: “Lord save me from my sins”. Rather, it means that we are being baptized for that purpose.

- b. **1 Peter 3: 21** — “**Corresponding to that (eight souls saved by water in Noah’s ark), baptism now saves you — not the removal of dirt from the flesh, but an appeal to god for a good conscience — through the resurrection of Jesus Christ.**”

Baptism, according to Peter, is not an outer cleansing of dirt from the physical body. Rather, the baptism that saves us is an “appeal to God for a good conscience.” It is a prayer (an appeal, a petition, a request) to God for Him to cleanse our guilty soul of the guilt of sin. This is the very same thought expressed in Acts 22:16 above.

Notice how various translators render this phrase in 1 Peter 3:21: “**Baptism is...**

- an **appeal** to God for a good conscience” – NASB
- an **appeal** to God for a good conscience” – RSV, NRSV
- an **appeal** to God for a good conscience” – ESV
- **making you free** from the sense of sin before God” – Basic English
- **the prayer** for a clean conscience before God” – Moffatt (1935)
- an **appeal** to God from [or for] a clean conscience” – New Living Translation
- [the] **demand as before** God of a good conscience” – Darby
- the **craving** of a good conscience after God” – Weymouth
- the **asking** of a good conscience in God” – Wycliffe New Testament
- the **question** of a good conscience in regard to God” – Young’s Literal
- the **interrogation** of a good conscience toward God” – ASV
- **[providing you with] the answer of** a good and clear conscience (inward cleanness and peace) before God” – Amplified Bible
- **asking God for** a pure heart” – Easy To Read Version
- **making you free from** the sense of sin before God” – Bible in Basic English
- the **request** unto God for a good conscience” – Rotherham (1897)
- the **prayer** for a good conscience toward God” – Montgomery (1924)
- **the craving for** a conscience right with God” – Goodspeed (1935)

Some other translations or paraphrases render this phrase differently:

- the **answer** of a good conscience toward God. NKJV, KJV
- the **pledge** (or response) of a good conscience toward God. NIV
- It **means turning** to God with a clear conscience. Contemporary English Version
- It **means we are saved** from the punishment of sin and go to God in prayer with a heart that says we are right. New Life Version

In the New International Version it is “the pledge of a good conscience toward God,” as if it were because we are already saved and having a good conscience, instead of being “for” or “unto” remission of sins in order to have a good conscience.

But it is rendered by most other translations as an appeal to God for “cleansing” in order to “have ... no more consciousness of sins” (Hebrews 10:2), in accord with Acts 2:38, which speaks of it as “for the remission of sins.” This would make baptism an overt prayer for pardon, without which surely baptism itself would be of no avail.

This seems to not be the easiest phrase to translate. Beasley-Murray makes this comment: “...the disputed phrase can be rendered either as a ‘prayer to God for a good conscience’ or a ‘pledge to God to maintain a good conscience.’”

On the first interpretation baptism is declared to be an appeal to God on the part of the baptized, which appeal is answered through the saving act of the risen Christ; this personal dealing between the believer and His Lord makes [baptism] what it is.”

THEOLOGICAL DICTIONARY OF THE NEW TESTAMENT (edited by Kittel in Germany, 1935; translated by Bromily in America, 1964): “Prayer to God for a good conscience” (Vol. II, p.688), with the following comment:

“In view of v.21 we should expect *alla* to be followed by a cleansing in the spiritual sense. Thus the request for a good conscience is to be construed as a prayer for the remission of sins. ... Remission of sins is closely related to baptism from the very outset (Mk.1:4 and par.; Acts 2:38.) This makes a number of other passages fall beautifully into place. For one thing, a “good conscience” (Acts 23:1) is a “conscience void of offence toward God and men” (Acts 24:16). For another thing, it harmonizes with what Ananias, sent by the Lord to the believing and penitent Saul of Tarsus, told him yet to do: “arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord” (Acts 22:16, King James Version; or “calling on his name,” American Standard Version).”

It is said: “For there is no distinction between the Jew and the Greek: for the same Lord is Lord of all, **and is rich unto all that call upon him: for, whosoever shall call upon the name** of the Lord shall be saved” (Romans 10:12-13). “Calling upon the name of the Lord” or “calling upon him” or praying to him as Stephen did while being stoned, was “calling upon the Lord, saying, “Lord Jesus, receive my spirit” (Acts 7:59).

Saul of Tarsus was to “be baptized,” “calling upon the name of the Lord,” in order to have his “sins washed away” and thus have a “good conscience toward God.” His baptism itself, being “for” or “unto the remission of sins,” was an overt request for pardon in order to have a “good conscience.”

The Greek word under consideration in 1 Peter 3:21 is the noun *eperotema*, the verb form of which is *eperotao*, meaning to ask; also, according to Thayer, “by a usage foreign to the Greeks, to address one with a request or demand; to ask of or demand of one”, citing Matthew 16:1. Arndt & Gingrich likewise cite Matthew 16:1 as an example of meaning to ask someone for something.” Kittel-Bromily trace the change of the word’s meaning to include (in koine Greek of New Testament times) the last mentioned sense, which was taking place at the time of the LXX (about 250 B.C.) Accordingly, Arndt & Gingrich define *eperotema* as: “1. question; 2. request, appeal, and cite as an example ‘an appeal to God for a clear conscience 1 Peter 2:21’, in harmony with the goodly number of versions cited above, and Kittel.”

Even many scholars who do not wish to concede baptism as being “for,” or “unto remission of sins,” acknowledge that “answer” is not a satisfactory rendering the Greek verb. But, if not, then the above must be its most likely meaning. It is to me the most satisfactory from every significant angle.

The word “appeal” as used by the NASB, RSV, and others seems to make more sense, meaning that we ask God for a good conscience in the act of baptism. This appears obvious when we read “baptism now saves us.” There is no way for sinners to have a good conscience before being saved. That is what it really means to be saved – to be forgiven of our sins. We are not saved when we “pledge to God to maintain a good conscience.” That would more closely define repentance. On the other hand, when we, in baptism, appeal to God to cleanse our conscience, he does just that - He saves us!

It is not the sinner saying “I promise to never sin again!” that saves him. Rather it is the sinner crying out in the act of baptism “Lord, please, save me!” that saves him. That is the meaning of baptism.

That “appeal” is the better translation and is re-enforced by comparing Hebrews 9:13, 14; Romans 6:3-6; Acts 22:16 and 1 Peter 3:21.

Hebrews 9:13, 14 “For if the blood of goats and bulls and the ashes of a heifer sprinkling those who have been defiled, sanctify for the cleansing of the flesh, how much more will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without blemish to God, **cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?**”

Romans 6:3 “Or do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus have been **baptized into his death?**”

Acts 22:16 “Arise and be baptized, and wash away your sins, **calling on His name.**”

1 Peter 3: 21 “... baptism now saves you — not the removal of dirt from the flesh, but an appeal to God for a good conscience — through the resurrection of Jesus Christ.”

From these we see that our conscience is cleansed by the blood of Christ, in baptism we contact his blood (death) and in baptism we call on the Lord to save us. These three statements fit together perfectly. Salvation is given to us in baptism because it is in baptism that we are appealing (imploring, asking) God to cleanse our conscience by the blood of Christ.

If the person being baptized is unaware of or unbelieving in the truth that God is forgiving his sins (washing away his sins, remitting his sins, cleansing his conscience) in his baptism, then certainly he could not be asking for or appealing for forgiveness of his sins. Such lack of understanding makes his baptism not the baptism referred to in **1 Peter 3:21**, which baptism “saves” him.

The conclusion is: Salvation (forgiveness of sins), which comes from being united with God in Christ, is given when our trusting hearts appeal to God for a good conscience. We do this when we are baptized. Baptism is faith crying out to God to save, based on the death of Christ on the cross. Baptism is the biblical “sinner’s prayer”, not necessarily spoken but understood and acted out.

c. Colossians 2:12 — “buried with Him in baptism, in which you were also raised up with Him through faith in the working of God, who raised Him from the dead.”

The raising to a new life happens in, through or by means of (Greek *dia*) our faith in God’s operation or working. We, in effect, are trusting in God to save us in that act of baptism. Note that in baptism it is faith in God’s working. Baptism is God’s work, not ours.

When we are baptized, we believe (trust) that God is working. It is through our faith in His working that He works! For our baptism to be effective we must believe that God is working to raise us to a new life (save us).

Again, that's what baptism is: crying out to God to save us and trusting that He will, based on the cleansing power of Christ's blood.

WORD STUDY: TO CALL ON THE NAME OF THE LORD

To call on the name of the lord means to invoke Him to action. Read each verse in its own context and you will notice how calling on the name of the Lord means to call out to God to save, help, bless, protect, act, etc.

1 Kings 18:24 — “Then you call on the name of your gods, and I will call on the name of the LORD; and the God who answers by fire, He is God.” And all the people answered and said, “That is a good idea.”

2 Kings 5:11 But Naaman went away angry and said, “I thought that he would surely come out to me and stand and call on the name of the LORD his God, wave his hand over the spot and cure me of my leprosy.

Psalms 105:1 — “Oh, give thanks to the LORD! Call upon His name; Make known His deeds among the peoples.”

Psalms 116:3-4 — “The cords of death entangled me, the anguish of the grave came over me; I was overcome by distress and sorrow. Then I called upon the name of the LORD: ‘O LORD, I beseech Thee, save my life!’”

Psalms 116:13 — (NKJV) “I will take up the cup of salvation, And call upon the name of the LORD.”

Psalms 116:17 — (NKJV) “I will offer to You the sacrifice of thanksgiving, And will call upon the name of the LORD.”

Isaiah 12:4 — “And in that day you will say, ‘give thanks to the Lord, call on His name. Make known His deeds among the peoples; Make them remember that His name is exalted.’”

Isaiah 64:7 — “And there is no one who calls on Thy name, who arouses himself to take hold of Thee; for thou hast hidden Thy face from us, and hast delivered us into the power of our iniquities.”

Lamentations 3:55 — “I called on Thy name, O Lord, out of the lowest pit.”

Joel 2:32 — “And it will come about that whoever calls on the name of the LORD will be delivered; For on Mount Zion and in Jerusalem there will be those who escape.”

Zephaniah 3:9 — “For then I will give to the peoples purified lips, that all of them may call on the name of the LORD, to serve Him shoulder to shoulder.”

Zechariah 13:9 — “And I will bring the third part through the fire, refine them as silver is refined, and test them as gold is tested. They will call on My name, and I will answer them. I will say, ‘They are My people,’ And they will say, ‘The LORD is my God.’”

Acts 2:21 — “And it shall come to pass that whoever calls on the name of the LORD shall be saved.”

Acts 9:14 — “And here he has authority from the chief priests to bind all who call on Thy name.”

Acts 9:21 — “...Is this not he who in Jerusalem destroyed those who called on this name, and who had come here for the purpose of bringing them bound before the chief priests?”

Acts 22:16 — “And now why do you delay? Arise, and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on His name.”

Romans 10:13 — “for, Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.”

1 Corinthians 1:2 — “to the church of God which is at Corinth, to those who have been sanctified in Christ Jesus, saints by calling, with all who in every place call upon the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, their *Lord* and ours.”

2. JUSTIFICATION

The doctrine of justification by faith demands that a person understand and believe that his sins are being forgiven when he is baptized. It is important, therefore, for us to know what justification means.

To help us understand this word, think about the super-religious, do-gooder, self-righteous hypocrite, pillar of the church and the dirty, rotten, no-good, traitorous, wicked, extortioner, sinner at his side.

“And He also told this parable to certain ones who **trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and viewed others with contempt**: ‘Two men went up into the temple to pray, one a Pharisee, and the other a tax-gatherer. The Pharisee stood and was praying thus to himself, ‘God, I thank Thee that I am not like other people; swindlers, unjust, adulterers, or even like this tax-gatherer. I fast twice a week; I pay tithes of all that I get.’ But the tax-gatherer, standing some distance away, was even unwilling to lift up his eyes to heaven, but was beating his breast, saying, ‘God, be merciful to me, the sinner!’ ‘I tell you, **this man went down to his house justified rather than the other**; for everyone who exalts himself shall be humbled, but he who humbles himself shall be exalted.’” (Luke 18:9-14)

a. What does it mean to be justified? What is justification?

Justification is a legal term. Justification, defined in Young's Analytical Concordance, means “A judicial sentence, declaration of right, to make or declare right.” Vine's Dictionary of New

Testament Words says that justify “denotes the act of pronouncing righteous, justification, acquittal.”

The person who is justified is declared or pronounced to be righteous. (The same Greek word translated “just” 33 times in the New Testament is translated “righteous” 41 times). Declaring a person justified is the same thing as pronouncing a man righteous.

Perhaps knowing that “just” and “righteous” are two ways to translate the very same Greek word will help us understand that to be justified does not mean to be made “just-as-if-I” had never sinned. Just having no sin does not make us acceptable in God’s eyes. We must have our sins “subtracted” and also Christ’s righteousness “added”. Justification is when the criminal is not only declared innocent of the crimes he committed but also declared to be a righteous person.

There is a difference between “being righteous” and “being declared righteous”. We are declared to be righteous the moment we are saved. We spend our lives becoming righteous as we grow spiritually into the image of Christ. Justification is exclusively a work of God in which He imputes to us the righteousness of Christ.

There are two kinds of righteousness: imputed (attributed, ascribed or reckoned) righteousness and earned righteousness. Consider Philippians 3:3-9: “for we are the true circumcision, who worship in the Spirit of God and glory in Christ Jesus and put no confidence in the flesh, although I myself might have confidence even in the flesh. If anyone else has a mind to put confidence in the flesh, I far more: circumcised the eighth day, of the nation of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews; as to the Law, a Pharisee; as to zeal, a persecutor of the church; as to the righteousness which is in the Law, found blameless. But whatever things were gain to me, those things I have counted as loss for the sake of Christ. More than that, I count all things to be loss in view of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them but rubbish so that I may gain Christ, and may be found in Him, **not having a righteousness of my own derived from the Law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which comes from God on the basis of faith, (This is imputed righteousness).**”

b. We are justified (saved, counted as righteous) by faith.

“For we maintain that **a man is justified by faith apart from works of the Law.**” (Romans 3:28)

“knowing that **a man is not justified by the works of Law but through faith in Christ Jesus,** even we have believed in Christ Jesus, that we may be justified by faith in Christ, and not by the works of the Law; since by the works of the Law shall no flesh be justified.” (Galatians 2:16)

“Now that **no one is justified by the Law before God** is evident for, ‘**THE RIGHTEOUS MAN SHALL LIVE BY FAITH.**’” (Galatians 3:11)

“For we also once were foolish ourselves, disobedient, deceived, enslaved to various lusts and pleasures, spending our life in malice and envy, hateful, hating one another. But when the kindness of God our Savior and *His* love for mankind appeared, He saved us, **not on the basis of deeds which we have done in righteousness, but according to His mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewing by the Holy Spirit**, whom He poured out upon us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior, that being justified by His grace we might be made heirs according to *the* hope of eternal life.” (Titus 3:3-7)

“But God, being rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in our transgressions, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), and raised us up with Him, and seated us with Him in the heavenly places, in Christ Jesus, in order that in the ages to come He might show the surpassing riches of His grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. **For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not as a result of works, that no one should boast.** For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.” (Ephesians 2:4-10)

c. Some conclusions based on these passages:

- God’s motive for saving us is His mercy, kindness, love and grace
- Our actions did not move God to grace. God’s grace moved us to take a step toward Him.
- God saves sinners who do not deserve to be saved. Grace is **unmerited** and **unearned** favor.
- We are saved by grace through faith.
- Salvation is by Christ’s meritorious work, not ours.
- Wrath was owed but grace was bestowed.
- We do not save ourselves from our sins, rather God saves us.
- Salvation is a gift from God.
- Salvation is through faith.
- Living (obedient) faith is the means by which we receive God’s grace.
- Human response is required for salvation. To be saved we must trust in Jesus as our sin sacrifice.
- All our righteous deeds are excluded as the means to salvation.
- Christ's perfect obedience merited the salvation that is given to us.
- We are not saved because we are good enough but on the merits of Christ’s work.
- Saving faith trusts in and depends upon God’s saving work in Christ.

Baptism, which now saves us (1 Peter 3:21), to be effective, must be classified as faith. It must be an expression of our faith in Christ as our sin - sacrifice! Otherwise, being saved by baptism would mean that we are justified by works of law and not by faith.

3. BAPTISM AND JUSTIFICATION BY FAITH

“Baptized into Christ” must be considered as faith and not be understood as some arbitrary command of God to test our willingness to obey Him. Only when baptism is understood to be faith can it agree with Paul’s purpose of proving that justification is by faith in Christ. Specifically, baptism needs to be seen as having the meaning of trust in Christ as Savior.

a. Paul wrote Galatians to prove that we are sons of God through faith in Christ and not by law - contrary to the legalists who advocated justification by law keeping. Notice how he so strongly emphasized this truth.

2:16 — nevertheless knowing **that a man is not justified by the works of the Law but through faith in Christ Jesus**, even we have believed in Christ Jesus, that we may **be justified by faith in Christ and not by the works of the Law**; since by the works of the Law shall no flesh be justified.

2:21 — “I do not nullify the grace of God, **for if righteousness comes through law**, then Christ died needlessly.

3:6-9 — “Even so Abraham believed God and it was reckoned to him as righteousness. Therefore, be sure that it is **those who are of faith who are sons of Abraham**. The Scripture, foreseeing that **God would justify the Gentiles by faith**, preached the gospel beforehand to Abraham saying, “all nations shall be blessed in you. So, then **those who are of faith are blessed with Abraham**, the believer.”

3:26 — **For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus.**

3:27-9 — **For all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ.** There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free man, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus. And **if you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's offspring**, heirs according to promise.

b. Galatians 3:27 was not given as a treatise on baptism. He was discussing justification by faith. The only way we can understand his meaning in verse 27 is within the context in which it was written. Why did Paul mention baptism? How does it fit into his main theme (Gal. 2:16)? It is in the context of justification by faith in Christ that the apostle wrote: “**For all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ**” (3:27). But this statement is preceded by “**For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus**” (verse 26). If the meaning of baptism were not classified as faith in Christ, it would be irrelevant to Paul's argument. If verse 27 is not to be equated with verse 26 then Paul's reference to baptism is both irrelevant and confusing because then he would be introducing a condition of justification in addition to the principle of faith. But, the apostle in verse 27 is still teaching justification by faith in Christ as opposed to salvation by law keeping.

So what does baptism mean? It means more than simply immersion in water. It means faith in Christ. It is not just that baptism is to be preceded by belief that Jesus is the Son of God. Baptism is faith in Jesus who offered himself as the sacrifice for our sins.

If baptism were only a command of God chosen to test our willingness to obey, and not seen as trust in Christ as savior; if it were to be submitted to just because Jesus commanded it, that would be legalism (making baptism a work of righteousness we do). But, when we see baptism to be the

God ordained embodiment of faith by which we are united with Christ, then it becomes consistent with Galatians' theme of justification by faith.

If the so-called "plan of salvation" means a set of arbitrary commands given by one in authority, and the one who obeys it is rewarded with salvation, then those commands become pure legalism.

c. Baptism must not be separated from faith in Christ to save us. To make it a command or ordinance based solely upon the authority of Christ to test man's willingness to obey him is a return to legalism. Baptism considered as the embodiment of faith in Christ as our sin offering does not constitute a work of legalism. The only way to properly defend baptism as a prerequisite to salvation is to understand it as faith; that is, reliance upon Christ as sin offering.

One being baptized should have his eyes on the cross, not merely on the act of being immersed in water. We have to be very careful to not transmit the idea that faith leads to repentance and repentance leads to baptism and that baptism as an act of obedience is separate and apart from faith. That thinking would be legalism.

d. In baptism we are clothed with Christ. "In Christ" and "into Christ" signify union with Christ. To try to be justified by law (by merit or by doing righteous deeds) is to be "severed from Christ" (Galatians 5:4), but to be justified by faith (embodied in baptism) means union with Christ. This is the apostle's argument in Galatians 3:26, 27. Baptism can't be understood apart from faith in Christ as sin offering. Simply to quote Galatians 3:27 to prove the necessity of baptism is to fail to consider it in its proper context. Galatians 3:26, 27 shows baptism to be faith embodied, expressed or pictured. Through our faith in Christ as the sacrifice for our sins, baptism results in us coming into Christ and being clothed with Christ. Clothed with Christ, covered by Christ's righteousness and not our own, entering into Christ, coming into a saving relationship with Christ – all this happens by or through our faith in him when we are baptized.

e. Conclusion:

Being baptized just to obey some command of God and not for the purpose of receiving forgiveness and thus salvation through the meritorious death of Christ on the cross turns baptism into a work and therefore a form of legalism. We are not saved by any of our own works of righteousness but by faith in Christ.

The Lord gave many commands. For example, "give to him who asks you and do not turn away he who would borrow from you". This is a command. To think that by obeying this command one may unknowingly be saved, would negate **Eph. 2:8-9**: "For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not as a result of works, so that no one may boast." It would also negate **Titus 3:5**: "He saved us, not on the basis of deeds which we have done in righteousness, but according to His mercy by the washing of regeneration and renewing by the Holy Spirit." This would be obedience to a command but not directly connected to faith in Christ to save nor the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus from the dead. The latter is the baptism the N.T. writers said was necessary to be saved.

4. SOME OTHER BIBLE STUDENTS AND CHURCHES DO NOT AGREE WITH ALL OF THE CONCLUSIONS ABOVE

Following are excerpts of some quotations by various people or groups. As you read them, try to identify the statements that would disagree with the conclusions given above. (Note: What these sources teach may or may not reflect what the group they are associated with teaches.)

a. First Baptist Church - Needville, Texas <http://www.fbcneedville.org/baptismfaq.htm>

Why Should I Be Baptized? (a) To follow the example set by Christ. (b) Because Christ commanded it. (c) It demonstrates that I really am a Believer. 'We know that we have come to know Him, if we obey His commands.' (1 John 2:3)

What Is The Meaning Of Baptism? a. It illustrates Christ's death, burial, and resurrection. b. It illustrates my new life as a Christian.

"Baptism doesn't make you a Christian. Only your faith in Christ does that. Like a wedding ring - it's the outward sign of the commitment you have made in your heart (see Eph. 2:8-9)."

b. UMC.org "UMC.org is the official online ministry of The United Methodist Church
<http://www.umc.org/interior.asp?ptid=1&mid=1251>

"What does The United Methodist Church believe about baptism? "Baptism is a sacrament. In a sacrament, God uses common elements - in this case, water - as means or vehicles of divine grace. Baptism is administered by the church as the Body of Christ. It is the act of God through the grace of Jesus Christ and the work of the Holy Spirit."

"Does baptism mean that I am saved? No, salvation is a lifelong process during which we must continue to respond to God's grace. Baptism offers the promise that the Holy Spirit will always be working in our lives, but salvation requires our acceptance of that grace, trust in Christ, and ongoing growth in holiness as long as we live."

"Do I have to be baptized in order to be saved? No, but baptism is a gift of God's grace to be received as part of the journey of salvation. To refuse to accept baptism is to reject one of the means of grace that God offers us."

c. "DEFENDING THE BRIDE", A web site "dedicated to explaining and defending the truths that God has revealed through the Church that He founded, the Catholic Church, the Bride of Christ."
<http://members.aol.com/johnprh/baptism.html>

"How does a Catholic respond to the question, 'Are you born again'? By responding 'Yes, through Baptism!'"

"Baptism applies to the soul the saving grace that Christ won for us by His life, death and resurrection. We receive Jesus' gift of the Holy Spirit and are adopted into God's family through baptism."

"In John's Gospel from chapter 2: 23 through 3: 36 we read about Jesus' explanation as to how we can be saved. John 3:3 "Amen, Amen I say to you, no one can see the kingdom of God without being born *anōthen*. The Greek word *anōthen* can mean "again" or "from above." Jesus uses this word to test Nicodemus and to reveal on what level he is thinking. Nicodemus misunderstands *anōthen* to mean only "again." So, Jesus makes clear his statement by restating what He means in John 3:5 "Amen, Amen I say to you, no one can enter the

Kingdom of God without being born of water and spirit." Jesus is speaking of Baptism. Also, Jesus uses the Greek word *anōthen* a second time in John 3:31 which clearly means "from above." This shows the primary intended meaning that He had in John 3:3.

"Sacrament" comes from the Latin word *sacramentum* which means an oath. An oath is a promise that relies on God's strength and power. (That is why oaths taken in court would end with "So help me God.") When Jesus says "Amen, Amen..." in John 3:3, and 3:5, He is giving us His oath that baptism will give us saving grace and the indwelling of the Holy Spirit so that we might be made fit and ready for heaven. And so we read how it is that "...Baptism which saves you..." 1 Peter 3:21."

"Galatians 3:27 says we are "...baptized into Christ." You were "...washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and in the Spirit of our God." 1 Corinthians 6:11. This is what happens at baptism. Also, see Titus 3:5, Acts 2:38-39."

"It can be difficult to believe that God can save us through a simple ritual just as it was difficult for Naaman to believe that God desired to save him by a simple seven fold washing in the Jordan River (2 Kings 5:14). Fortunately, Naaman received and followed good advice. "My Father", they said, 'If the prophet had told you to do something extra-ordinary, would you not have done it? All the more now, since he said to you "Wash and be clean" should you do as he said.'" (2 Kings 5: 13) And so Naaman, a good example for us, had a change of heart. He believed that God would be true to His word which He spoke through His prophet Elisha. Naaman performed the ritual and was saved from leprosy."

d. Oak Hills Church of Christ, San Antonio, TX, "A Teaching Paper on Baptism"

<http://www.oakhillschurchofchrist.org/>

"Baptism: The Demonstration of Devotion"

"Christians participate in two God ordained sacraments that celebrate what God has done for us: communion and baptism. Communion is celebrated on a regular basis and baptism as a one - time declaration of a lifetime of devotion to God. As a stone has many facets, baptism has many sides: cleansing, burial, resurrection, the death of the old, and the birth of the new. Once a person admits his sin and turns to Christ for salvation, some step must be taken to proclaim to heaven and earth that he is a follower of Christ. Baptism is that step. Baptism is the initial and immediate step of obedience by one who has declared his faith to others. Any step taken is a response to salvation offered, not an effort at salvation earned."

"A helpful verse to understanding baptism is 1 Peter 3:21."And that water is like the baptism which now saves you not the washing of dirt from the body, but the promise made to God from a good conscience. And this is because Jesus Christ was raised from the dead," Jesus commanded all his followers to prove it, to make the pledge, by public demonstration in baptism. Baptism was, and is "a pledge made to God from a good conscience" (1 Peter 3:21, TJB)."

"Indeed, baptism is a vow, a sacred vow of the believer to follow Christ. Just as a wedding celebrates the fusion of two hearts, baptism celebrates the union of sinner with Savior. We

“became part of Christ when we were baptized” (Rom. 6:3). Please understand, it is not the act that saves us. But it is the act that symbolizes how we are saved! Baptism effectively seals our salvation, uniting us to him and his body. Christ's death becomes my death. Christ's resurrection becomes my resurrection. If your faith is in the sacrament and not the Savior, you are trusting a powerless ritual.”

“Baptism is the initial test of the believing heart. If one won't obey Christ in baptism, what will they do when he calls them to obey him in prayer? Or evangelism? Or service? The highest motive for doing anything is because God asks you to do it. The heart of the saved says, “If you want me to be baptized in a pile of leaves, I'll do it. I may not understand every reason, but neither do I understand how you could save a sinner like me.” If one is resistant on the first command, one might wonder if there has been a true conversion experience.”

“Apart from the cross it has no significance. If you are trusting a dunk in the water to save you, you have missed the message of grace. This is no optional command. This is no trivial issue. It is a willing plunge into the power and promise of Christ. Baptism is the first step of a believer. If it was important enough for Jesus to command, isn't it important enough for you to obey? And if it was important enough for Jesus to do, isn't it important enough for you to follow? In baptism God signs and seals our conversion to him.”

e. QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS, LIPSCOMB, DAVID, Gospel Advocate Publishing Co.

“The first design of baptism is to put a man into Christ. If it is necessary that the design, objects, results of baptism shall be known in order to the validity of baptism, the administrator, in asking the question, “Do you believe Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God?” ought to add, “and that baptism puts you into Christ,” “and that baptism is for the remission of sins,” and, as we are baptized for the dead, he ought also to add, “and that you are baptized for the dead?” The whole catalogue of results and fruits must be asked, because baptism is either acceptable to God or it is a sin in his sight.”

“If it is a sin to be baptized without understanding when one of the blessings promised is received, it is a sin to be baptized without knowing when any other of them is.”

“The father frequently has an end in view in requiring a child to perform a certain act that is not even told the child. The command tests the willingness to obey. God blesses because we are willing to obey, not because we see virtue in the act. Baptism was clearly required as a test of our willingness to obey God; but as our willingness to obey arises from our faith in God, baptism is a test to our faith in God.”

“God had the design of bringing men into Christ by baptism, and in Christ is found all the blessings that God bestows on his obedient children. The chief leading cause on man's part should be to obey God. When he submits to it in obedience to God, he has done all God requires. To repeat the act when it has been done in obedience to God is to mock God's appointments; to mock his appointments is to trifle with God. ... If he is baptized from any other motive than the desire to obey God, his baptism is worth nothing.”

“The purification of the heart, like most works of God, is progressive. ... Peter (Acts 15: 9) says that God purified the hearts of the Gentiles by faith as he had those of the Jews. But this does not declare the heart is made pure by the simple act of believing. Faith saves us in heaven, but only by leading us into the life that fits us for heaven, and so secures our salvation. Peter, writing to Christians, said: “Seeing ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth.” (1 Pet. 1: 22.) This would indicate that the obedience to the truth, which is the obedience to which faith leads, purifies the soul. “And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure.” (1 John 3: 3.) This was addressed to Christians.”

f. RE-BAPTISM, Allen, Jimmy, Howard Publishing Co., 3117 N 7th, West Monroe, LA 71291, 1991, pp. 39, 48

“It is my belief that the New Testament teaches when a penitent believer in the crucified and risen Savior is immersed in water to fulfill righteousness or obey God, the Lord forgives his past or alien sins (although he may not know that sins are remitted).”

“...although that person may have been ignorant of remission, his baptism must be regarded as scriptural. Hence, the concept that one must grasp the exact significance of “remission of sins at the time of baptism is incorrect.”

ARE THERE PREREQUISITES THAT MUST BE MET IN ORDER FOR SOMEONE TO BE BAPTIZED?

Yes, there are prerequisites for baptism. This is obvious from the account of Philip and the Ethiopian treasurer in Acts 8. After being taught Jesus, beginning from Isaiah 53, the eunuch asked, “Look, here is water, why can’t I be baptized?” Philip’s answer showed a prerequisite: “If you believe with all your heart, you may.” It is logical that if he did not believe, he could not be baptized.

The “great-commission” recorded in Matthew 28:19 also makes it obvious that there are prerequisites for baptism: “Go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit”. Who are we to baptize? We are to only baptize disciples – those people who decide to follow Jesus and learn from Him. Those who do not decide to follow Jesus (repent) are not to be baptized.

The simplest and most concise way to express the prerequisites for baptism might be simply that we must believe and repent in order to be baptized; that is, if we understand what these mean. However, in that simplicity, it may be easy to get the cart before the horse and in doing so we could ignore (or fail to emphasize) the centrality of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

There is an important, even essential, connection between the Cross of Christ, faith (as trust and belief), repentance, discipleship, the Lordship of Jesus, baptism and redemption. Consider the following:

1. IN ORDER TO BE BAPTIZED, ONE MUST RECOGNIZE THAT HE IS A SINNER WHO NEEDS A SAVIOR.

1 Timothy 1:15 "It is a trustworthy statement, deserving full acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, among whom I am foremost *of all*."

Many people do not feel the need for a savior because they do not feel lost. Whether it comes through hearing a moving sermon; maybe a friend who shares with you the truth; maybe by reading a tract; whichever, in some way one must come to understand that "*all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God*" (Romans 3:23). As the prophet Isaiah had said, long ago: our sins have hidden God's face from us so that He will not hear." (Isaiah 59:2). Our own sin separates us from God! "*The wages of sin is death*" we read in Romans 6:23. This is a spiritual death, which is a separation from God for those who are lost.

"But what about my good works?" someone may say. The answer returns: "*For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast*" (Ephesians 2:8, 9). "But my sins are small" others say, but "*For whoever shall keep the whole law, and yet stumble in one point, he is guilty of all*" (James 2:10).

Human pride and self-sufficiency are the greatest barriers against salvation. He who refuses to admit that he is a sinner in need of forgiveness is lost and cannot be baptized in order to be saved. Sinners need salvation.

2. IN ORDER TO BE BAPTIZED, ONE MUST RECOGNIZE THAT JESUS IS THE ONLY HOPE OF SALVATION.

There is no other way. By his death on the cross, Jesus is able to save, set free, and ransom sinners. In John 14:6, Jesus declared: says, "*I am the way, the truth, and the life: No man comes to the Father except through Me.*" The only way we can get to God is through Christ. We also read in Acts 4:12, "*Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.*" We cannot be saved by relying on Mohammed, Buddha, Judaism, Hindu gods or any other religion. Neither can we devise our own system of "Christianity" as is being done today and expect it to save us. Only Jesus Christ can specify the conditions for our salvation because He paid our price and is our only savior. There is no other way. What Jesus did for sinners was necessary to bring divine mercy to condemned sinners.

3. WHAT WAS IT, THEN, THAT JESUS DID TO SAVE SINNERS?

a. Jesus became a man. Before Jesus came, He was God (John 1:1) and was on equality with God (Phil. 2: 6). But man's Savior must be human as well as divine; otherwise he could not bear man's sins. He emptied himself ... coming in the likeness of men." (Phil. 2:7).

b. Christ became our sin bearer. "But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was upon him, and by his wounds we are healed ... and the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all" (Isaiah. 53:5, 6). "He made Him who knew no sin *to be* sin for us." (II Cor. 5:21). "Who Himself bore our sins in His own body on the tree" (1Pet. 2:24). None other could be man's sin bearer.

c. Christ became our sin offering. "God presented him as a sacrifice of atonement, through faith in his blood" (Rom. 3:25). "Christ died for our sins" (I Cor. 15:3). "Who gave himself for our sins" (Galatians. 1:4).

d. He was raised for us. "But now hath Christ been raised from the dead, the first fruits of them that sleep. For since by man came, death by man (Christ in the flesh) came also the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive." (I Cor. 15. 20-22). "He was "raised for our justification." (Rom. 4: 25)

e. He is at the right hand of God interceding for us. "Therefore he is able to save completely those who come to God through him, because he always lives to intercede for them" (Hebrews 7:25). "We have one who speaks to the Father in our defense—Jesus Christ, the Righteous One" (1 John 2:1). "Christ Jesus, who died—more than that, who was raised to life—is at the right hand of God and is also interceding for us (Romans 8:24).

f. Christ did many other things for the benefit of man, but it was by means of his death that he redeemed us. For example, he left us the incomparable Sermon on the Mount, but this teaching is not redemptive. The gospel that saves is the good news of Christ's death for our sins (I Cor. 15:3, 4). The source of our salvation is the blood of Christ.

g. What Jesus did for us is called "the gospel", meaning "good news!" In Mark 16:15, 16 Jesus said "go and preach the gospel to every creature. He who believes [this gospel] and is baptized will be saved but he who does not believe [this gospel] will be condemned" We must believe this gospel and be baptized to be saved. If we do not believe [this] gospel we will not want to nor can be baptized.

4. WHAT A LOST PERSON MUST DO TO BE SAVED RELATES TO WHAT JESUS DID TO SAVE HIM.

The conditions of salvation are not merely acts commanded by one in authority that become the ground of our redemption. "Christ crucified" is himself the Savior. "He offered himself." (Hebrews 7:27). "He gave himself" (Galatians 1:4). The idea that conditions have been arbitrarily chosen ignores the cross. Nothing nullifies the cross more than to preach the conditions of salvation without relating them to the atoning work of the Savior.

What Jesus did to save us determines, therefore, what we must do to be saved. Nothing that is required of sinners can possibly be for the remission of sins unless it relates to the blood of Christ. Faith, for example, possesses no redemptive power; but the blood of Christ is redemptive. So faith is a condition of salvation because it means trust in, or reliance upon the blood of Christ. (See John 3:16 and Romans 3:25.)

5. IT IS REQUIRED THAT ONE BELIEVE IN THE CRUCIFIED SON OF GOD.

John 3:16 teaches this. "God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son that whosoever believes on him shall be saved." It was his Son that God gave. But the Son must be lifted up on the cross. The Son died for our sins. Hence, it is not enough merely to believe that Jesus is the Son of God. The sinner must also believe in the Son crucified for his sins. The faith that saves must be in the Son who died to save. "Whom God set forth to be a propitiation, through faith in his blood" (Romans 3:25). Christ is our propitiation because he shed his blood

(His sacrifice) for us and we respond to him through faith. We must have faith in his blood (trust in his blood) or faith in him who shed his blood.

But what is it to believe in Christ crucified? It is the belief that he died for our sins and as well as trust or reliance upon him as our sin offering.

Jesus died to redeem man so one must depend upon or trust in his death for salvation. This dependence on Christ crucified is faith. This faith is more than confidence in the integrity of Jesus to fulfill his promise to save upon certain conditions. The conditions themselves mean trust in his death for salvation. Faith looks to the cross, to the blood. Jesus did not die merely to induce one to recognize him as Lord or king, that is, as one having the right to rule over us. He died to save sinners. Hence, faith that saves must mean dependence upon his blood. Without trust in the blood as an element of faith there is no satisfactory response to Christ as a sin offering. Faith that saves must have Jesus Christ and him crucified" as its object. This faith looks to the cross. Any other notion of faith removes Jesus from the cross and makes him no more than a teacher or lawgiver. Jesus is Savior. One does not rely, therefore, on the conditions, but upon Christ.

6. ONE MUST REPENT OF HIS SINS IN ORDER TO BE BAPTIZED AND, THUS, SAVED.

Jesus says in Luke 13:3, "... *unless you repent, you will all likewise perish.*" It is either repent or perish; the choice is ours. Acts 17:30 says, "*Truly these times of ignorance God overlooked, but now commands all men everywhere to repent.*" All people everywhere are commanded of God to repent. Repent of what? Repent of our sins. Repent of not fully serving and following all that God says. God is pleading with us to repent. He greatly desires that we turn to him. He tells us in 2 Peter 3:9, "*The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance.*" God wants us to repent so we can be saved.

Repentance is not just being sorry. 2 Corinthians 7:10 says, "*For Godly sorrow produces repentance leading to salvation, not to be regretted; but the sorrow of the world produces death.*" Repentance is a change of heart and a change of mind. We must make up our mind to stop living life our way and start living it God's way. It is making up our minds that we are going to serve God with all our might and do everything.

Romans 2:4 says, "*The goodness of God leads you to repentance.*" God has been so good to us, and this should cause us to want to please Him in every way. God, because of His love for us, has done so much for us, and because of this we read in I John 4:19, "*We love Him, because He first loved us.*" This should cause us to want to repent and do all the things that He has asked us to do, otherwise we do not love God. Jesus said in John 14:24, "*He who does not love Me does not keep my words.*"

7. TO REPENT IS BASICALLY SYNONYMOUS WITH BECOMING A DISCIPLE AS WELL AS CONFESSING JESUS CHRIST AS LORD.

We not only confess that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the Living God, as Peter did in Matthew 16:18; we also confess Him as our Lord. "... *if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved...*"

Romans 10:9. We name Him as our leader, owner, ruler, chief, boss, the one who has total authority over our lives. Someday everyone will make this confession ("*...that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.*" Philippians 2:10-11) but for some it will be too late.

Since baptism is the embodiment of faith and a sinner's appeal to God for forgiveness, it is obvious that without faith in Christ as one's sacrifice and without surrounding to Jesus as Lord. There can be no baptism, and thus no salvation.

8. SO WHAT MUST ONE DO TO BE SAVED?

Repentance is "in the name of Jesus Christ." Jesus as the Christ is man's sin offering. Hence, repentance must be "in the name of" the crucified Christ. The phrase "in the name of Jesus Christ" signifies not only the authority of Jesus, but reliance upon him as sin offering. Hence, repentance is not merely turning away from sin, but it is related to turning to Jesus as sin offering. Such repentance is inseparable from faith that means trust in Jesus Christ. Peter spent much time on Pentecost leading his hearers to repentance. But it was not a mere turning from sin that he sought, but such a turning from sin as would lead to a full acceptance of the Lord and Savior. The rejection of Christ through unbelief was also a sin that called for repentance. When one repents of the rejection of Jesus as Savior he accepts him as the Savior. Faith, therefore, must be accompanied by repentance, and repentance must be associated with trust before one has responded to Christ as his sin offering.

9. IT IS REQUIRED THAT PENITENT BELIEVERS BE BAPTIZED IN THE NAME OF JESUS CHRIST" (ACTS 2:38).

The relation of baptism to faith in the scriptures is easily revealed as the expression or the embodiment of faith. What is signified by trust in Christ crucified is outwardly expressed or embodied by baptism which is a burial in and a resurrection from the water "in the name of Jesus Christ." Baptism, therefore, signifies trust in Christ. It is not something different from faith added to faith and repentance, but an expression of both. Hence, Peter commanded his hearers to repent and be baptized.....in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins" (Acts 2:38). Baptism, like faith, looks to Calvary, to Christ as sin offering. It has, therefore, the meaning of faith. God has joined baptism to faith and repentance, and he expects every one of us "to be baptized in the name of the Lord" (Acts 10:48).

Conclusion:

The conditions of salvation are responses to Christ as sin offering. They are meaningless, therefore, apart from the cross. It is senseless and pointless to reach the conditions without first having reached Jesus as a sin offering. The conditions are not a few commands arbitrarily given by one in authority to test man's willingness to obey, but natural responses to one who is man's sin offering. He must make Christ crucified his plea before God and expect salvation because of Jesus' death on man's behalf. The sinner is being called, not merely to confess Jesus as his Lord but as Savior.

SHOULD BABIES BE BAPTIZED?

I believe that babies should not and cannot be baptized and here are the reasons why not.

1. INFANT BAPTISM IS UNBIBLICAL

a. Since baptism is the embodiment of faith and a sinner's appeal to God for forgiveness, it is obvious that without faith in Christ as one's sin sacrifice, there can be no baptism.

Acts 22:16 — An infant is incapable of calling on the name of the Lord.

1 Peter 3:21 — An infant is incapable of appealing to God for a good conscience.

Colossians 2:12 — An infant is incapable of having faith in the working of God.

b. The scriptures describe those who are to be baptized and the description excludes infants.

Matthew 28:19 — “make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them (Those who became disciples).”

Mark 16:16 — “He who has believed and has been baptized shall be saved.”

Acts 2:41 — “Then those who had received his word were baptized.”

Acts 8:12 — “...when they believed ... they were baptized, men and women alike.”

Acts 8:36-37 — “What prevents me from being baptized?” “...if you believe with all your heart, you may.”

c. Simply stated, it was not practiced in the New Testament. The earliest historical references to infant baptism came 150 years (Origen) to 200 years (Irenaeus) after Pentecost. This prolonged silence makes it obvious that infant baptism was an innovation to what the apostolic church practiced. Even those who defend the practice of infant baptism have to admit this is so. Consider, for example, L. Berkhof in his *Systematic Theology* under the heading, “the Scriptural basis for infant baptism.” He writes: “It may be said at the outset that there is no explicit command in the Bible to baptize children, and that there is not a single instance in which we are plainly told that children were baptized. But this does not necessarily make infant baptism unbiblical” (p. 632).

2. SOME ARGUMENTS GIVEN BY THOSE WHO BELIEVE IN INFANT BAPTISM

a. Martin Luther in his “Large Catechism Part Fourth:

i. “That the Baptism of infants is pleasing to Christ is sufficiently proved from His own work, namely, that God sanctifies many of them who have been thus baptized, and has given them the Holy Ghost; and that there are yet many even today in whom we perceive that they have the Holy Ghost both because of their doctrine and life ... This is indeed the best and strongest proof for the simple-minded and unlearned.”

ii. “Further, we say that we are not so much concerned to know whether the person baptized believes or not; for on that account Baptism does not become invalid; but everything depends upon the Word and command of God. When the Word is added to the water, Baptism is valid, even though faith be wanting... For even though a Jew should today come dishonestly and with evil purpose, and we should baptize him in all good faith, we must say that his baptism is nevertheless genuine. For here is the water together with the Word of God, even though he does not receive it as he should.”

iii. “Therefore they are presumptuous, clumsy minds that draw such inferences and conclusions as these: Where there is not the true faith, there also can be no true Baptism. Just as if I would infer: If I do not believe, then Christ is nothing; or thus: If I am not obedient, then father, mother, and government are nothing. Gold is none the less gold though a harlot wear it in sin and shame.”

b. Catholic:

i. “Some people mistakenly contend that the phrase “Repent and be baptized” and “Believe and be baptized” demonstrate that only those old enough to repent can be baptized. But, consider 2 Thessalonians 3:10, “If anyone was unwilling to work, neither should that one eat.” It says anyone. Does that mean that we should starve our babies since they don’t work? Of, course not. The verbs “to repent”, “to believe”, and “to work” apply only to the extent that a person is capable of doing so.”

ii. “Infants moved by God’s grace can receive His Gift of faith. When Mary brought Jesus to St. Elizabeth and St. John the Baptist. Elizabeth replied, “The infant in my womb leaped for joy.”

d. Calvin justified infant baptism on the grounds that there is a seed of faith which is implanted in the children of believing parents because of the covenant promise of God. Thus the Reformed evangelical position: 1) While there is no explicit command, infant baptism is based on the essential unity and continuity of the covenant of grace, 2) The covenant of grace is a single, spiritual covenant made initially with Abraham and fulfilled in Christ, 3) No faith is necessary, 4) Because of covenantal unity, the sign of the new covenant can be given to the children of believers in the NT, just as Abraham gave the sign of the covenant God made with him to his infant sons in the OT, and 5) The sign of the new covenant is baptism which replaces the old covenant sign of circumcision. This accounts for things like “household baptisms,” in which it is assumed that infants were baptized, “covenant children” instead of “privileged children” in 1 Corinthians 7:14, and the “inclusion” of little children in the kingdom of God as opposed to the “likeness” of little children to kingdom citizens in Mark 10:14-16.

A Rebuttal

Nowhere does the Bible mention a single, spiritual “covenant of grace” that somehow spans the ages and connects Abraham to Christ.

While their physical relationship to Abraham entitled them to temporal, physical blessings under the Abrahamic covenant, it did not entitle his descendants to any eternal, spiritual blessings unless they were spiritually like their father Abraham (i.e. they were looking in faith to God). God has never promised spiritual blessings to anyone, at any time, on any other basis than grace. And grace by its very definition not only excludes all human merit; it also excludes physical and natural descent. This is true in both the Old and New Testaments no matter what the covenant.

The children of believers are in a very privileged position. They are the subjects of their parents' prayers, they are exposed to the Word of God and to the testimonies of their parents and other Christians, and they are urged to seek the Lord while he may be found and call upon him while he is near. But nowhere in the NT are we told to baptize them until they give evidence that they come to personal faith in God through Christ Jesus the savior.

Just because they are children of believers does not mean they have been chosen by God, nor that they have any share in the new covenant. To baptize them as if they did, or in the hope that they will, is unbiblical. To baptize them as a sign that they are “covenant children” who need to respond to the gracious overtures of God, is to go back to the types and shadows of the OT, to the days of Abraham and Moses when God was preparing Israel and the world for the emergence of a new nation and people who would all know him, love him, and serve him.

That circumcision was a prophetic type of baptism is seen in Colossians 2:11, 12: “In Him you were also circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, by putting off the body of the sins of the flesh, by the circumcision of Christ, buried with Him in baptism, in which you also were raised with Him through faith in the working of God, who raised Him from the dead.” The language cannot apply to infants: an infant has no sins to be put off and an infant has no faith in the working of God.

Baptism of unknowing, unbelieving infants is as unbiblical and ineffective to accomplish the biblical purposes for baptism as it is for adults.

WHEN IS A CHILD OLD ENOUGH TO BE BAPTIZED?

This is an important question, especially for parents and grandparents. There is not really a clear, concise answer in the scriptures for this question. This may imply that it is the wrong question. If so, what should the question then be? A more useful question might be: “What must a child (or any person) know and understand in order to be baptized? Maturity and capacity for understanding spiritual matters does not always depend exactly on the age of the person.

The answer to this question (“What must a person know and understand in order to be baptized?) has answers in the scriptures. These answers can be put in the form of questions that you can ask the child to answer. Here are some questions that a person must be able to answer in order to be ready to be baptized:

1. Who is God?
2. What is sin?
3. What is the result when a person sins?
4. What does it mean to be lost?
5. What does it mean to be saved?
6. Who is Jesus?
7. Why was Jesus crucified or why did Jesus have to die?
8. What does God promise to do for a person in baptism?
9. What does it mean when we say that our sins are washed away by the blood of Jesus?
10. What does it mean to say that Jesus died for you?

In addition, these questions of a personal nature may be asked:

1. Are you lost?
2. Why do you feel guilty before God?
3. Why do you want to be baptized?
4. Have you repented of your sins? What does that mean?
5. Do you believe in Jesus? What does that mean? What does believing in Jesus have to do with his death on the cross?

6. Are you ready to commit yourself and your life to Jesus Christ and confess Him as your Lord? What does it mean for Jesus to be the Lord?

NOTES:

1. These questions are all to be answered, not with a simple yes or no, but with expressions of the child's own understanding.
2. A child (or adult) may not have to understand theological words like "justification, atonement, reconciliation, propitiation, redemption, regeneration, etc. but they can answer these questions in their own vocabulary in simple terms.
3. Be careful of children who are mainly motivated by a desire to please adults.
4. Regular participation in Bible reading and prayer, worship, listening to sermons and classes are important to gauge spiritual awareness.
5. The child must be able to make a commitment to the Lord in terms of obedience.

MUST BAPTISM BE DONE BY IMMERSING A PERSON IN WATER INSTEAD OF JUST SPRINKLING OR POURING WATER ON THEM?

I think the answer is yes and these are some reasons why.

1. The Greek word translated "baptize" means immerse.

Baptism is from the Greek *baptizo* which always means to "dip", "immerse", or "submerge". Modern English dictionaries may give other definitions but this only reflects modern usage. This does not necessarily show what the word means in the language of the Bible. Greek dictionaries of Bible words show "baptize" means to immerse:

Thayer's Lexicon on *baptizo* says: "to dip, immerge, submerge."

Strong's Concordance defines *baptizo*, "to make whelmed i.e.: fully wet."

Lydell and Scott define it as "To dip, dip under."

Exponents of sprinkling overlook an important factor. The original New Testament text and the spoken language of that day was Greek. The authors of the New Testament knew the Greek word *baptizo* meant to immerse. They also knew the Greek word *rantizo* meant to sprinkle and the Greek word *cheo* meant to pour. These often used words were never interchangeable, having separate meanings. If God had intended for baptism to be sprinkling, the Greek word *rantizo*, or pouring, the Greek word *cheo*, He would have been employed them rather than immersion, the Greek word *baptizo*.

2. The Bible Evidence

The best way to understand a Bible command is to study the passages that refer to it in context comparing them to other passages on the subject. This is how we learn the meaning of words. Notice what baptism requires and consider what action fits what the Bible says:

a. Baptism requires water

The element or substance used is not inherent in the word "baptize." The substance, though, used in the baptism that Jesus commanded everyone, is water.

- Acts 10:47-48 — "Surely no one can refuse the water for these to be baptized..."

b. Baptism requires much water

- John 3:23 states, “And John also was baptizing in Aenon near to Salim, because there was much water there...” “Much water” is not needed if one is merely being sprinkled or poured, but it is necessary for immersion.

c. In baptism people came to water.

- Acts 8:36 — “They came to some water.”
- Matthew 3:5-6 — “Then Jerusalem was going out to him, and all Judea, and all the district around the Jordan; and they were being baptized by him in the Jordan River, as they confessed their sins.”

Some people think the eunuch pulled out a bottle of water and Philip used some of it to baptize him. Not so! The water used to baptize the eunuch was a body of water they came to as they traveled. When people receive sprinkling or pouring, do they need to go to the water? No, the water can come to them, because not much is required, but when people are immersed, do they go to the water.

d. Baptism involves going down into and coming up out of the water.

- Mark 1:9-10 — “It came to pass in those days that Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee, and was baptized by John in the Jordan. And immediately, coming up out of the water, He saw the heavens opening, and the Spirit descending upon Him” (NKJV reads ‘like a dove’).
- Acts 8:38-39 reads, “...and they both went down into the water, Philip as well as the eunuch; and he baptized him. And when they came up out of the water...”

Here the obvious reference is to immersion. Does sprinkling or pouring require going down into the water? No, but baptism does.

e. Baptism is a burial and a resurrection.

- Colossians 2:12 — “... buried with Him in baptism, in which you were also raised with Him through faith in the working of God, who raised Him from the dead.”
- Romans 6:4-5 — “Therefore we have been buried with Him through baptism into death, in order that as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father so we too might walk in newness of life. For if we have become united with *Him* in the likeness of His death, certainly we shall be also in the likeness of His resurrection.”

In baptism we are buried with Jesus and raised with Him. As He was buried in the earth, we are buried in baptism.

Some say baptism is “just a symbol” of Jesus' burial, so it does not matter how it is done. There is a symbolic element in baptism, but how does that prove that the action does not matter?

Do the passages say Jesus was buried, but it doesn't matter whether or not we are buried? It says **we are buried** and **we are raised** in baptism. The one to be baptized is to be buried and raised.

Actually, symbols are important, especially, when it was God Himself who selected the symbols. Who would presume to change what God wanted?

Obviously, death, burial and resurrection in baptism is something that God wants us to know and be reminded of by the symbolic action that He chose for us to do. See Romans 6:1 — 12 and see how important and practical it is for the Christian to be reminded that he died with Christ in baptism.

“What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin that grace might increase? May it never be! How shall we who died to sin live in it? Or do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus have been baptized into His death? Therefore we have been buried with Him through baptism into death, in order that as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father so too might walk in newness of life. For if we have become united with Him in the likeness of His death, certainly we shall be also in the likeness of His resurrection, knowing this, that our old self was crucified with Him, that our body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves of sin. For he who has died has been freed from sin. Now if we have died with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with Him, knowing that Christ, having been raised from the dead, is to never die again; death no longer is master over Him. For the death that He died, He died to sin, once for all; but the life that He lives, He lives to God. Even so consider yourselves to be dead to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus. Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body, that you should obey its lusts.” (Romans 6:1-12)

3. COMMENTS FROM SOME SCHOLARS WITH DIFFERENT BELIEFS

a. Encyclopedias

World Book Encyclopedia: “At first all baptism was by complete immersion” (vol. 1, p. 651).

The Catholic Encyclopedia: “In the early centuries, all were baptized by immersion in streams, pools, and baptisteries” (vol. 2, p.263).

Encyclopedia Britannica, 11th ed., vol. 3, pp.365-66: Immersion was not convenient after the Catholic Church instituted infant baptism; thus the mode was changed to sprinkling.

b. Commentary from Various Denominational References

i. Episcopalian

a). "This passage (Romans 6:4) cannot be understood unless it be borne in mind that the primitive baptism was by immersion" - Conybeare & Howson Life and Epistles of St. Paul.

b). "Baptism means immersion; and it was immersion...Unless it had been so, Paul's analogical argument about our being buried with Christ in baptism would have had no meaning. Nothing could have been simpler than baptism in its first form. When a convert declared his faith in Christ, he was taken at once to the nearest pool or stream of water and plunged into it, and henceforward he was recognized as one of the Christian community” Cunningham The Growth Of The Church.

c). “Baptism is the grave of the old man and the birth of the new. As he sinks beneath the baptismal waters. The believer buries all his corrupt affections and past sins; as he emerges he rises regenerated, quickened to new hopes and a new life. This baptism is an image of

his participation both in the death and resurrection of Christ” – Bishop Lightfoot (Commentary).

ii. Methodists

- a). “Alluding to the “immersion” practiced in the cases of ‘adults’, wherein the person appeared to be buried under water, as Christ was buried in the heart of the earth; His rising again the third day, and their emerging from the water, was an emblem of the resurrection of the body” – Adam Clarke (commentary of Co. 2:12).
- b). ““We are buried with him.’ Alluding to the ancient manner of baptizing by immersion” – John Wesley (Notes).

iii. Lutheran

- a). “The sacrament of baptism was administered in this century (the first) without the public assemblies, in places appointed and prepared for that purpose, and was performed by an immersion of the whole body in the baptismal font.” – Moshein, Moshein’s Church History.
- b). “For the explanation of this figurative description of the baptismal rite it is necessary to call attention to the well-known circumstances that in the early days of the church, persons, when baptized, were first plunged below and then raised above the water” Toluck (Commentary on Romans).

iv. Catholic

- a). Brenner The Catholic Encyclopedia: “Baptism: ... The most ancient form usually employed was unquestionably immersion. In the Latin (Catholic) immersion seems to have prevailed until the twelfth century.”

Conclusion: Let us not change what God has ordained.

IS THERE A CERTAIN FORMULA OF WORDS THAT MUST BE SPOKEN WHEN ONE IS BAPTIZED?

I do not believe there is such a formula and here are the reasons why:

- Some say: “I baptize you in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit”
 - Some say: “I baptize you in the name of Jesus.”
 - Some add to these: “for the remission of sins” or “for the remission of sins and to receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.”
 - Some even baptize the person three times, once “in the name of the Father”, again “in the name of the Son” and finally “in the name of the Holy Spirit.”
 - Some do not believe that it is required to say anything special, as long as the person being baptized understands what they are doing and why they are being baptized.
1. **Does doing something in the name of another require the repeating a formula using that person’s name?**
 - The apostles could not cast out demons, heal the sick or do other miracles except in the name of Jesus but Peter sometimes omitted saying this formula (Acts 9:40).
 - Christians pray in the name of Jesus but did not always repeat this formula (Acts 4:23-30).

- Preaching is done in the name of Jesus (Luke 24:46, 47) but this doesn't mean that these words always have to be repeated for the preaching to be valid.
- All we do, we do in Jesus' name (Colossians 3:17) but this doesn't mean the words must always be repeated.
- Actually, the scriptures do not teach that a certain formula of words must be said when one is baptized.

2. No single identical formula was given in examples of Bible baptisms:

- Matthew 28:19 — “in (*eis* into) the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit”
- Acts 2:38 — “in (*epi* upon) the name of Jesus Christ”
- Acts 8:16 — “in (*eis* into) the name of the Lord Jesus”
- Acts 10:48 — “in (*en* in) the name of the Lord”
- Acts 19:5 — “in (*eis* into) the name of the Lord Jesus”

3. Some ideas about what “in the name of” means:

- Thayer: “by one's command and authority, acting on his behalf, promoting his cause.”
- Pulpit Commentary: “into the power ... influence ... faith ... family of”
- International Critical Commentary: “by way of consecration to”
- W F. Flemington: “into the ownership of”

4. Jesus Only Doctrine

There is a “Jesus only Doctrine” that is taught by Oneness Pentecostals.

“Doctrines are taught that a person cannot be saved unless this person first forsakes his belief in the Trinity and is re-baptized ‘in the Name of Jesus only’, according to an interpretation of several scriptures, most notably Acts 2:38. Conversely, the baptismal formula accepted by most Christians is found in Matthew 28:19” (ref. *Wikipedia Free Encyclopedia*).

Following are comments on this doctrine from the web site of the United Pentecostal Church International (<http://www.upci.org>).

“The Formula for Baptism”: “Jesus commanded His disciples to “teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost” (Matthew 28:19). He did not command them to use these words as a formula, but He commanded them to baptize in “the name.” The word name is used here in the singular, and it is the focal point of the baptismal command. The titles Father, Son, and Holy Ghost describe God's relationships to humanity and are not the supreme, saving name described here, which is Jesus. “...there is salvation in no one else; for there is no other name under heaven that has been given among men, by which we must be saved (Acts 4:12).”

Jesus is the name in which the roles of Father, Son, and Holy Ghost are revealed. The angel of the Lord instructed Joseph, “She will bear a Son; and you shall call his name JESUS: for it is he who will save His people from their sins” (Matthew 1:21). Jesus said, “I have come in my Father's name,” and, “The Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, (John 5:43; 14:26).” Thus, by baptizing in the name of Jesus, we honor the Godhead. “For in Him all the fullness of Deity dwells in bodily form” (Colossians 2:9).

Luke 24:47 describes the commission that Jesus gave: “and that repentance for forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed [preached] in His name to all the nations [Jews and Gentiles], beginning from Jerusalem.” Peter, [ten days later, preached] “Repent, and let each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit” (Acts 2:38). Cornelius and his household were Gentiles, yet there again Peter “commanded them to be baptized in the name of the Lord” (Acts 10:48). (Most translations actually say, “In the name of Jesus Christ.”)

The Samaritans, who were not Jews, were also baptized in the name of Jesus. “And Philip went down to the city of Samaria, and began proclaiming Christ to them....” “But when they believed Philip preaching the good news about the kingdom of God, and the name of Jesus Christ, they were being baptized, both men and women...”. “...They had simply been baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus” (Acts 8:5, 12, 16).

Paul went to Ephesus many years after the Day of Pentecost and found some disciples of John the Baptist there. “He said to them, ‘Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?’ And they said to him, ‘No, we have not even heard whether there is a Holy Spirit.’ And he said, ‘Into what then were you baptized?’ and they said, ‘Into John’s baptism.’ And Paul said, ‘John baptized with the baptism of repentance, telling the people to believe in Him who was coming after him, that is, in Jesus.’ And when they heard this they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus.” (Acts 19:2-5) Although these disciples had already been baptized, the name of Jesus was so important as to cause them to be re-baptized in His name.

The apostles not only preached baptism in Jesus' name, but they practiced it. Nowhere can we find that they baptized using the words “in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.” Instead, we find them baptizing in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. In baptizing in Jesus' name, they fulfilled the command of the Lord in Matthew 28:19.

History tells us that it was not until many years after the apostles that the mode and formula of baptism in the name of Jesus Christ were changed. (See *Hastings' Dictionary of the Bible*, vol. 1, p.241.)

It seems obvious that the reason for this group’s debate concerning the words that must be said in baptism is not really the insistence upon a formula, but rather an objection to the doctrine of the triune nature of God – are there really three persons in the Godhead? This must be the subject of another study.

HOW MANY BAPTISMS ARE THERE?

I believe that today there is only one literal baptism usually referred to as Christian baptism or “baptism into Christ.”

1. Ephesians 4: 4-6 — “There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were 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.”

The question is asked: “If there is only one baptism, why does the writer of Hebrews refer to “baptisms”? **Hebrews 6:1, 2** — **“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”** (NKJV).

There are several baptisms mentioned in the Bible, but discounting those that were only symbolic and those that were temporary, there remains only one baptism practiced in the church today. It is immersion in water in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of the sins of those who come to Jesus, repentant of their sins and trusting in His death on the cross to take away their sins.

2. VARIOUS BAPTISMS IN THE BIBLE

a. Baptism of John

Mark 1:4 — “John the Baptist appeared in the wilderness preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins.”

Acts 18:25 — “This man had been instructed in the way of the Lord; and being fervent in spirit, he was speaking and teaching accurately the things concerning Jesus, being acquainted only with the baptism of John.”

Acts 19:4 — “And Paul said, ‘John baptized with the baptism of repentance, telling the people to believe in Him who was coming after him, that is, in Jesus.’”

The baptism of John was temporary and no longer to be practiced after Christ gave his life on the cross.

b. Baptism in Fire

Matthew 3:7-12 — “But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees coming for baptism, he said to them, ‘You brood of vipers, who warned you to flee from the wrath to come? Therefore, bring forth fruit in keeping with repentance; and do not suppose that you can say to yourselves, ‘We have Abraham for our father’; for I say to you that God is able from these stones to raise up children to Abraham. And the axe is already laid at the root of the trees; every tree therefore that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. As for me, I baptize you with water for repentance, but He who is coming after me is mightier than I, and I am not fit to remove His sandals; He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire. And His winnowing fork is in His hand, and He will thoroughly clear His threshing floor; and He will gather His wheat into the barn, but He will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire.’”

The baptism in fire is symbolic of God’s judgment on the unrepentant.

c. Baptism into Moses

1 Corinthians 10:1-2 — “For I do not want you to be unaware, brethren, that our fathers were all under the cloud, and all passed through the sea; and all were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea.”

When Israel left Egypt, crossing the Red Sea, they were encompassed by water – the cloud over them and the Red Sea around them. This is a symbolic use of the word “baptism” in several details, not only them being surrounded by water (though passing on dry land). It is indeed a prophetic type of our experience. As they were freed from their slavery and came into the relationship with Moses as their leader, so we, in baptism, are freed from the bondage of sin and come into a relationship with Jesus as our Lord.

d. Baptism of Suffering

Matthew 20:20-23 — “Then the mother of the sons of Zebedee came to Him with her sons, bowing down, and making a request of Him. And he said to her, ‘What do you wish?’ She said to him ‘Command that in Your kingdom these two sons of mine may sit, one on Your right and one on Your left.’ But Jesus answered and said, ‘You do not know what you are asking for. Are you able to drink the cup that I am about to drink?’ They said to Him, ‘We are able.’ He said to them, ‘My cup you shall drink; but to sit on My right and on My left, this is not Mine to give, but it is for those for whom it has been prepared by My Father.’”

In Matt. 26:39 — He prays to the Father to “let this cup pass from me; yet not as I will, but as thou wilt.” In John 18:11: “the cup which the Father has given me, shall I not drink it?” The “cup” and “baptism” Jesus spoke of here was a symbolic way of talking about the terrible things he would soon suffer as he offered himself as our sin sacrifice. It is symbolic language.

e. Baptism into Christ

Mark 16:16 — “He who has believed and has been baptized shall be saved; but he who has disbelieved shall be condemned.”

Gal. 3:27 — “For all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ.”

Romans 6: 3 — “Or do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus have been baptized into His death?”

f. Baptism with (in-ASV) the Holy Spirit [also see Appendix II below]

In Matthew 3:11, John refers to Jesus: “He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit.”

In Acts 1:5, Jesus said to them “For John baptized with water; but you shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now.”

The baptism in the Holy Spirit was what Jesus did with the Spirit on the day of Pentecost.

John 15:26 — “But when the Helper comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, that is the Spirit of truth, who proceeds from the Father, He will bear witness of Me.”

On the day of Pentecost, Jesus poured the Spirit out on “all flesh” (see Acts 2:17). The baptism in the Holy Spirit was a once for all time historical event. The effects remain but the Spirit has already been poured out on all humanity.

CONCLUSION:

There is now one baptism. All the others are either symbolic uses of the word meaning “immersion” or historical events that do not need to be repeated.

APPENDIX

BAPTISM WITH THE HOLY SPIRIT.

One of the Bible subjects most confused and misunderstood in people’s minds is the baptism with the Holy Spirit. A large part of the confusion is resolved with a proper biblical definition - exactly what is the baptism with the Holy Spirit? This lesson tries to do just that. When this is understood, then many of the other subjects become clear, such as:

1. When is somebody baptized with the Spirit?
2. How can somebody know if they have been baptized with the Spirit or not?
3. Is speaking in tongues the sign that somebody was baptized with the Spirit?
4. What happened in the house of Cornelius in Acts 10?
5. Is baptism "with" or "in the" Spirit the same thing of baptism "for" or "of" the Spirit?
6. Was Jesus speaking of the baptism with the Spirit when said to the Apostles: "you will receive power when the Holy Spirit descends on you" (Acts 1:8)?
7. If there is a baptism with the Holy Spirit and a baptism in water, can we say that there is "only one baptism?"

THE BAPTISM WITH THE HOLY SPIRIT WAS DONE BY JESUS, EXCLUSIVELY

A. Matthew 3:11 "I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance, but He who is coming after me is mightier than I, whose sandals I am not worthy to carry. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire.

Mark 1:8 "I indeed baptized you with water, but He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit."

Luke 3:16 John answered, saying to all, "I indeed baptize you with water; but One mightier than I is coming; whose sandal strap I am not worthy to loose. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire.

John 1:33 "I did not know Him, but He who sent me to baptize with water said to me, 'Upon whom you see the Spirit descending, and remaining on Him, this is He who baptizes with the Holy Spirit.'"

Note: it was not something done by men nor something done by the Holy Spirit, but by Jesus.

1. John (who immersed) is preaching to his listeners to repent of their sins to be saved.
2. He informs them that someone greater than he was coming; therefore the time to make their decision to repent was limited.
3. John is not talking about dates or chronologies (neither the order nor when it would happen); but only about the greatness of Jesus.
4. His authority would be seen in that He could baptize with the Holy Spirit and with fire.
 - a. Jesus has power over the two.
 - b. Not that the two are the same thing.
5. Baptism with the Holy Spirit did not involve fire.

- a. The "tongues of fire" that rested on the apostles in Acts 2 were not an immersion in fire.
 - b. These two baptisms have two different purposes.
6. The baptism with fire.
- a. Matthew 3:12; "His winnowing fan is in His hand, and He will thoroughly purge His threshing floor, and gather His wheat into the barn; but He will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire."
 - i. John knew that among his hearers were two groups of people, the ones who would accept his message (the wheat), and the ones that they would reject it (the chaff).
 - ii. The ones who would accept it and repent would receive the blessing of the baptism with the Spirit.
 - iii. The ones who rejected it would receive the punishment of the baptism with fire.
 - (a) This did happen with these listeners in year 70 A.D. when the Romans destroyed Jerusalem.
 - (b) This event is not mentioned in the gospel of John, probably because John was written after 70 A.D.
 - iv. Malachi 4:1-6 is a parallel to Matthew 3:10-12.

B. Acts 2:33; "Therefore being exalted to the right hand of God, and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, He poured out this which you now see and hear."

C. Nobody (neither men nor the Spirit) would baptize with the Spirit. Only Jesus would do that. Men baptized in water and the Spirit gave gifts and power to be able but neither baptized with the Spirit. When we read in the Bible of a man acting or the Spirit doing something, we can know that such a thing does not refer to the baptism with the Holy Spirit.

THE BAPTISM WITH THE HOLY SPIRIT WAS SOMETHING DONE WITH THE SPIRIT AND NOT DONE BY THE SPIRIT.

- A. Matthew 3:11 Jesus ... "baptizes with (or in) the Spirit."
- B. The Bible does not speak of the baptism "by the" Spirit but the baptism "with" the Spirit.
 - 1. It was not something that the Spirit did (to fill, to seal, to give power, to give gifts) but something that Jesus did with the Spirit.
 - 2. It is not the gift of speaking in languages (that is something that the Holy Spirit did and not Jesus (1 Corinthians 12:11)).
 - 3. Simply, it was not something that the Spirit does, but something done with the Spirit.

THE BAPTISM WITH THE HOLY SPIRIT HAPPENED ON THE DAY OF PENTECOST AND NOT BEFORE.

- A. Matthew 3:11 - It had not happened yet when Jesus was baptized by John.

- B. John 7:39 11 and 12:16, 23 - It would only happen after Jesus was glorified (after his resurrection). Acts 1:4-5 – Here, in the hour of the ascension of Jesus, they had still not received the promise from the Father (v. 4), which was the baptism with the Holy Spirit (v. 5).
- C. Acts 2:16-17 - On the day of Pentecost, in his sermon, Peter identifies the events of that day as being the fulfillment of the prophecy of the baptism with the Holy Spirit made by Joel the prophet.
- D. The Spirit had been present, acting, moving, empowering, etc. since the creation of the world but nothing that He did or that was done with Him before the day of Pentecost is called "the baptism with the Spirit". Before Pentecost, people had been full of the Spirit and had received power from the Spirit, but none of this was called "baptism with the Spirit."
- E. Therefore, It is not...
 - 1. the power to do miracles (many had done miracles before Pentecost).
 - 2. the gift of inspiration (many had been inspired before Pentecost).
 - 3. to be full of the Spirit (many had been before Pentecost).
 - a. John (Luke 1:15).
 - b. Isabel (Luke 1:41).
 - c. Zachariah (Luke 1:67).
 - 4. to be clothed by the Spirit since people in the Old Testament (before Pentecost) had been clothed with the Spirit (see Judges 6:34; 1 Chronicles 12:18; 2 Chronicles 24:20).

THE BAPTISM WITH THE HOLY SPIRIT IS CALLED THE “PROMISE OF THE FATHER”

- A. Jesus had already spoken about the promise of the Father to his disciples. The Father promised to send the Spirit in the name of Jesus after Jesus returned to heaven.
 - 1. John 14:16,17,26 "And I will pray the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may abide with you forever; "the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees Him nor knows Him; but you know Him, for He dwells with you and will be in you. ... "But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all things that I said to you.
 - 2. John 15:26 "But when the Helper comes, whom I shall send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth who proceeds from the Father, He will testify of Me.
 - 3. John 16:7 "Nevertheless I tell you the truth. It is to your advantage that I go away; for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you; but if I depart, I will send Him to you.
 - 4. Acts 1:4,5 And being assembled together with them, He commanded them not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for the Promise of the Father, "which," He said, "you have heard from Me; for John truly baptized with water, but you shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now."
- B. On the day of Pentecost, Jesus poured out the Spirit on all flesh. This event was what Joel (and Isaiah) has prophesied centuries before:

1. Isaiah 32:15 Until the Spirit is poured upon us from on high and the wilderness becomes a fruitful field and the fruitful field is counted as a forest.
2. Isaiah 44:3 For I will pour water on him who is thirsty and floods on the dry ground; I will pour My Spirit on your descendants.
3. Joel 2:28 (Acts 2:17) "And it shall come to pass afterward that I will pour out My Spirit on all flesh.

C. On the day of Pentecost, the Father fulfilled His promise and Jesus poured out the Spirit - Acts 2:33 "Therefore being exalted to the right hand of God, and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, He poured out this which you now see and hear."

Note: Baptism with the Spirit was always a promise and never a command.

A Definition Of "Baptism With the Holy Spirit"

The Baptism with the Holy Spirit is what Jesus did with the Spirit on the day of Pentecost in fulfillment of the promise of the Father - **Jesus poured out the Spirit on all flesh.** The Spirit since then became available to all saved people, independent of race (Jewish or heathen) or role in the government of God (priest, prophet, etc.).

Some Implications:

- A. **This means that the Spirit was made available for all of humanity.** Those who receive the benefit are those who become Christians.
- B. **The baptism with the Spirit occurred once in history.** He, the Spirit, was poured out once for all.
 1. In the same way that Jesus died once for all, the Spirit was poured out once for all. These two historical events never need to be repeated.
 2. Even Acts 10:45 reflects this truth. In the house of Cornelius, the Holy Spirit fell on the Gentiles who heard the gospel. They started speaking in languages. This event convinced the Jews that the Holy Spirit had been poured out on the Gentiles as well as the Jews.
 3. But when had He been poured out on the Gentiles? It was on the day of Pentecost. The perfect tense of the verb in Acts shows this. It indicates an act completed in the past with effects continuing in the present. Once He was poured out, the Holy Spirit began to do His works, but nothing that He does is called "the baptism."
 4. The baptism with the Holy Spirit is what Jesus did with the Spirit on the day of Pentecost. The effect of the baptism with the Holy Spirit is the same as the death of Christ. Although He died for all, only the ones that believe, repent and are baptized in water receive the benefit. Although poured out on all flesh, only the ones that believe, repent and are baptized in water receive the benefit.
 5. Once He was poured out, the Spirit began to do His works, but nothing He did or does is referred to as the baptism with the Spirit. The baptism is what Jesus did with the Spirit on the day of Pentecost.
 6. In practice, the effect of the baptism with the Spirit is the same as the death of Christ. Even though he died for all people of all ages, only those who believe, repent and are

baptized in water receive the benefit. Even though the Spirit was poured out on all humanity, only those who believe, repent and are baptized in water receive the benefit.

C. All people of all ages were baptized with the Spirit potentially and all the saved in Christ of all ages are baptized effectively in the Spirit.

This was the promise of the Father (Acts 1:4,5). Jesus received the promise of the Father (Acts 2:33). Peter, in Acts 2:39, explained that the promise was for “you others” - those Jews present on Pentecost, “for your children” - the Jews of future generations, and “for all who are far off” – the Gentiles (See Ephesians 2:13), for as many as the Lord our God shall call - all Christians in all ages.

D. Today, if you are in Christ, you have been effectively baptized in the Spirit.

But when? On the day of Pentecost. But how? In the same way Jesus died for you 2,000 years ago. You received the benefit of the death of Christ when you became a Christian. The Spirit was poured out on all flesh 2,000 years ago. You received the benefit of this outpouring when you became a Christian.

BAPTISM WITH THE SPIRIT DOES NOT MEAN “RECEIVE MIRACULOUS POWER FROM THE SPIRIT”.

- A. Luke 24:49 "Behold, I send the Promise of My Father upon you; but tarry in the city of Jerusalem until you are endued with power from on high." does not say that the promise of the Father is the same thing as “receive power”. He said that both things would so they should stay in Jerusalem. The Spirit gave power before Pentecost but the baptism with the Spirit did not happen before Pentecost.
- B. Jesus gave the Spirit and the Spirit gave power but the baptism is what Jesus did and not what the Spirit did.
- C. Not all Christians did miracles but all Christians received the Spirit.
- D. Since the baptism with the Spirit is a unique historical event, it doesn’t make sense to talk about “receiving Holy Spirit baptism”. The Bible never uses that type of phrase. How can you receive a past historical event? We can receive the Spirit or we can receive a gift from the Spirit but we cannot receive the “baptism of the Spirit”.

WE NEED TO DISTINGUISH BETWEEN THE “BAPTISM WITH THE SPIRIT” WHICH WAS A WORK OF JESUS, AND GIVING POWER, WHICH IS A WORK OF THE SPIRIT.

- A. This is the most common mistake in the mind of many people - confusing what Jesus did with the Spirit (Baptized or poured out) and what the Spirit did once He was poured out or made available.
- B. For example, the Spirit gave miraculous powers to people to speak in other languages and heal the sick.

- C. He seals believers in Christ, dwells in the redeemed, inspired the apostles and prophets, comforts and guides, etc. but none of this is called “the baptism.”
- D. The baptism is what Jesus did with the Spirit on the day of Pentecost - He poured Him out on all flesh.
- E. In the Bible, when the Spirit descended on someone, came on someone or fell on someone, that person received divine power
 - 1. He descended on Jesus and he did miracles
 - Matthew 3:16
 - Luke 3:22
 - Luke 4:18
 - Mark 1:10
 - John 1:32
 - 2. Luke 2:25-27 - Simeon prophesied
 - 3. Luke 1:35 - Mary conceived Jesus
 - 4. Acts 1:8 - the apostles received power
 - 5. Acts 2:3, 4 - They spoke in languages
 - 6. Acts 8:16 - They performed signs
 - 7. Acts 10:44, 45 - They spoke in languages
 - 8. Acts 19:6 - They spoke in languages and prophesied

Note: In **Acts 8**, the apostles were men especially chosen to witness the resurrection of Jesus. They had qualifications: **Luke 24:48; Acts 1:8; 1; John 1:1-2** and credentials: **2 Corinthians 12:12; 1 Corinthians 9:1; Acts 1:21,22; Acts 8:18**. They and only they had the power to make the Spirit fall on someone by the laying on of hands (and so to give power) .

COMPARE THE BAPTISM WITH THE SPIRIT TO BAPTISM IN WATER TO SEE WHICH OF THE TWO IS THE "ONE BAPTISM" OF EPHESIANS 4:5.

BAPTISM IN WATER (IN THE NAME OF JESUS)

- A. Done by men
 - Matthew 28:1
 - Acts 8:38
 - 1 Corinthians 1:14-16
- B. Done with water
 - Acts 8:38-39
 - Acts 10:47
- C. Happened many times (with each conversion)
- D. Is a commandment and not a promise
 - Acts 2:38
 - Acts 22:16
- E. A Definition: Christian baptism is immersion in water in the name of Jesus (by the authority of Jesus) for remission of sins. It is always preceded by faith and repentance.

F. Some teachings:

- Baptism in water is necessary (**Mark 16:16; Acts 2:38; 22:16**)
- Baptism is only permitted for someone who believes (**Acts 8:37,38**)
- Baptism symbolizes a burial (**Romans 6:3-6**). It is by immersion.
- In baptism, we enter into Christ (Galatians 3:26, 27)

Ephesians 4:5 says that there is “only one baptism”. This baptism is baptism in water, because the baptism in the Spirit already happened and does not need to be repeated. Baptism in water in the name of Jesus, though, continues being done whenever someone becomes a Christian.

SOME SAY THAT "HOLY SPIRIT BAPTISM" WAS PROMISED ONLY TO THE APOSTLES.

The "baptism of the Spirit" for these people is when somebody receives the power from the Spirit as inspiration, revelations, miracles, etc. But problems with this idea exist.

First, the expression "baptism of the Spirit" does not exist in the Bible. All the translations have "baptism with the Spirit" or "baptism in the Spirit." It is not a baptism that the Spirit does, but rather, it is a baptism where the Spirit is used. In the promises of the Old Testament, it is the Spirit that would be poured out and this would be evident by the miraculous gifts that the Spirit would give. It has to be kept in mind what it is that was poured out – it was not gifts, but rather, the Spirit. The promise was the Spirit and not the gifts that the Spirit would distribute after being poured out. Miracles and gifts already had been given well before this baptism, but what was promised only occurred on that day and not before. Until that day, the Spirit never was poured out for all people, but since that day all can receive the Spirit. The words of Jesus in Acts 1:4- 5 show that the promise of the Father and the baptism with the Spirit were the same thing. When the apostles received the Spirit in Acts 2, Peter said in v.16 that the prophecy of Joel (the promise of the Father) was being fulfilled. This agrees with the words of Jesus in 1:4,5. In 2:33, Peter agrees with John 7:39 and he says clearly that the promise was the pouring out of the Holy Spirit. When Peter says: "this which you see and hear", he is using the manifestations of the Spirit to illustrate that the Spirit, in fact, was poured out. Jesus poured out the Spirit as was promised since the Old Testament.

Some of those who say that the promise of the baptism with the Spirit was only made to the apostles affirm that in the passages where Jesus speaks about this, only the apostles were present (for example, Acts 1:4-5). But when Jesus spoke to the apostles, this did not necessarily limit the promise. Actually, when we look at all the passages that speak about this baptism, we see that this was not so. When John the Baptist spoke, he was not only speaking to the apostles but to the multitude of Jews who went to be baptized by him (Matthew 3:1-12 and Luke 3:15, 16). When the apostle John spoke about the promise (that it, is the baptism with the Spirit) in John 7:39, it was not only limited to the apostles. The promise of Acts is not limited to only some, but is a promise for all the saved. One reason that some think that it was limited is because they do not understand that the baptism with the Spirit is not the distribution of gifts (ex. languages) nor a miraculous thing.

WHAT ABOUT The CASE of Cornelius? (Acts 10-11)

In Acts 10: 44-45 Peter was called to preach to the Gentiles. While he was preaching, the Spirit fell on the Gentiles and they started to speak in languages. Does this mean that the Gentiles received the Spirit before they became Christians? Not at all. Certainly the Spirit already acted in some people before Acts 2. Saul in the Old Testament is an example. In 1 Samuel 10:10, the Spirit of the Lord possessed Saul and he prophesied (also see 1 Samuel 11:6). In 1 Samuel 16:14 it is said that the Spirit of the Lord was removed, but in 1 Samuel the 19:23 Spirit came upon Saul again and he prophesied. The Spirit can come upon somebody, make him prophesy (or do something else) and then remove Himself. Somebody being influenced by the Spirit, even to the point of prophesying, does not necessarily mean that the Spirit dwells in that person as was promised in the Old Testament.

In Acts, we learn about the promise of the Spirit through the preaching of Peter in chapter 2. When somebody is called by God through the gospel and becomes a Christian, this person receives the gift of the Spirit. This is possible because the Spirit was poured out on all flesh. In Acts 10, God wanted to show that this included the Gentiles, just as would be later preached: "He does not make a distinction". The Spirit fell on them before they had become Christians, showing that God accepted the Gentiles as well as the Jews who believed in Jesus as the Christ. When Peter and the others saw this, they recognized that when the Spirit was poured out, back in Acts 2 (the verb is in the perfect tense), He had been poured out on the Gentiles also. Then, without hesitation, the Gentiles were baptized, without circumcision, and, according to promise, received the Holy Spirit.