

B A P T I S M

(Its Points, Purposes, Procedure and Policy)

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I. POINTS ON WATER BAPTISM

- A.** Baptism is a command to follow for this age (Matt. 28:19, 20; Mark 16:16). Jesus promised the disciples of His abiding presence until the end of the age; thus, it is assumed that baptism is to be practiced until the end of the age. You should be obedient to what God expects of you. *When the believer submits to baptism, they are testifying of their desire to obey the Lord in every area of their lives. The first step of obedience starts with the act of baptism.* Our baptism pleases God. You should be baptized soon after you are saved. It should be the first step after your salvation (Acts 2:41, 8:36, 16:33).
- B.** Baptism was taught and practiced by the apostles and early disciples (Acts 2:41, 8:35-38, 9:18, 10:47-48, 16:15, 18:8, 19:5; I Cor. 1:12-17).
- C.** Baptism is not part of salvation (Acts 16:31; John 1:12, 3:16, 36, 5:24, 6:47; Romans 10:9; Eph. 2:8-9). This means baptism is not a sacrament through which the grace of God is transferred into your life. *A sacrament implies something that saves us.* Baptism is merely an ordinance of the church. No apparent contradictory verse could ever destroy this overwhelming evidence of truth.
- D.** Baptism follows salvation (Acts 2:41, 8:35-38, 10:44-48, 18:8).
- E.** Baptism is only for those who are already believers (Acts 8:12-13, 36-37, 16:14-15, 18:8, 19:5).

II. PURPOSES OF WATER BAPTISM

A. Baptism has a practical purpose.

It demonstrates publicly that we are already saved and are one with Christ. It tells the truth that we are His and His alone. It is a testimony, which portrays to others of our willingness to break away from the old life and live a new life of devotion to Christ as a result of the baptizing work of the Holy Spirit. In Acts 2:41, the young believers were baptized publicly to show that they had broken away from the old life of Judaism, identifying themselves with Christ. Baptism has the meaning of identification and *when you are baptized in the authoritative name of someone you are identifying yourself with that individual*. By their baptism, the new converts were testifying that they now wanted to live and follow their Savior. In Paul's day, to be baptized meant to renounce the popular paganism of that day and to embrace the new life of Christianity. This was often punishable by death as portrayed in I Cor. 15:29-30. This public display of baptism is also seen in Acts 16:15, 30-34, 18:8, 22:16. The newness of life which baptism points to is seen in Romans 6 and Colossians 3:1-3.

B. Baptism has a two-fold doctrinal purpose.

1. Baptism, as a symbol, pictures the work of the Holy Spirit at the time of salvation (Acts 2:41, 10:47-48; Romans 6; Col. 2:12).

Water baptism is the representation (photograph) of the real baptism of the Holy Spirit. *Water baptism is simply the symbolic enactment of the believer's participation in Christ's death, burial and resurrection*. The Holy Spirit at the time of salvation joins us to Christ in an unseen, spiritual union. This joining act is called the Baptism of the Holy Spirit (I Cor. 12:13; Romans 6; Gal. 3:27; Col. 2:12). The baptizing work of the Holy Spirit places us into Christ's death, burial, and resurrection (see Romans 6:3-5). This is really a spiritual immersion that takes place. Water baptism simply portrays the spiritual immersion.

We believe this by faith and rejoice! In actual experience this baptism of the Holy Spirit occurred at the time of salvation, but God reckoned it to be accomplished in the past at the time of Christ's death. When the Holy Spirit

baptizes us, we are said to be “in Christ” (Romans 6:3; I Cor. 1:2). This is a union and position all believers have. The word baptism (“baptizo”) literally means to be “overwhelmed.” Therefore, when the Holy Spirit baptizes us, He overwhelms us “in Christ.” We are spiritually immersed in Christ. That means Christ is all around the believer. Being “in Christ” is like being inside a circle. He is all around us and will keep us safe forever. We now have a new union, new identification and new oneness with Christ. This new union should lead to new living.

Note: The verses dealing with the baptism of the Holy Spirit are described as being baptized “into Jesus Christ” (Rom. 6:3), “into Christ” (Gal. 3:27), or “into one body” (1 Cor. 12:13). The verses that speak of water baptism speak about the “name” of the Lord and indicate a person’s testimony at the time of their water baptism concerning God’s saving grace and forgiveness which they already have (Acts 22:16). The “name” of the Lord also expresses the wonderful truth that the triune God has saved the believing sinner forever (Matt: 28:19). Praise ye the triune God!

2. Baptism, as a symbol, pictures our inner washing or cleansing from sin at the time of salvation (Acts 22:16, 2:38 with I Cor. 6:11; Eph. 5:26 & Titus 3:5). *This is why the two concepts about the washing away of a person’s sins and their baptism are sometimes linked together in the same verses.*
 - a. Water baptism is the representation (picture) of what Christ has already done for us. At the very moment we believed on Him for salvation; He washes all of our sins away (Colossians 2:13; Colossians 1:14, Revelation 1:5). The judicial cleansing from sin is a once-for-all and complete cleansing that can never be repeated again (Hebrews 10:10-12).
 - b. Our baptism speaks figuratively (pictorially) of the inward spiritual cleansing experienced by those who have received Christ’s forgiveness (I Peter 3:21).

MISUNDERSTOOD BIBLE PASSAGES DEALING WITH THIS PICTURE OF BAPTISM

1. I Peter 3:18-21

1 Peter 3:18-21

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

God’s judgment which was poured upon Christ on the cross was likened to a Baptism (Matthew 20:22; Luke 12:50 with I Peter 3:18). All of our sins were placed upon Christ as He hung on the cross. This was a flood of Divine judgment like the flood of old. There on the cross, Christ became our ark of safety from judgment.

Note: The water in Noah’s day only saved Noah, his three sons and three wives because it lifted the ark above the watery judgment below. The water alone could not save them. We must remember that the water judged the lost world but saved those who were in the ark. The water could only save them because they were shut into the ark of safety. The message is clear! The water of God’s judgment came upon Christ on the cross (our ark) so we could be saved through God’s judgment being placed upon His Son instead of upon ourselves. **It’s the ark in the water that saved them, not the water in the ark!** So Christ on the cross of God’s judgment can and does save us today.

“The like figure” (meaning by picture) - our water baptism looks back to the time when Christ (our ark) was judged for our sins (by God’s flood of Divine judgment), so we could be cleansed from all of our sins. God’s flood of judgment upon Christ (our ark) is what saves us. Baptism is a picture of

what Christ has done for us. *Christ bore all of our sins and has taken God's baptism of judgment upon Himself, so that He could cleanse us from our sins. **Baptism saves us pictorially or by picture.*** The picture or "like figure" of what baptism represents (Christ's judgment for our sins) is what actually saves us.

3. Acts 22:16

Acts 22:16

"And now why tarriest thou? arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord."

Note: Paul was already saved on the road to Damascus (Gal. 1:11-12) and was already a brother (Acts 22:13). This verse actually points to the **time of Paul's baptism and not to the time of his salvation.**

This verse in Acts 22:16 would indicate how baptism was a **testimonial** or **confirmation** of one's salvation in Christ. Baptism, which followed on the heels of belief (faith) served as a token of one's *genuine repentance, faith, and salvation*. In other words, it served as a confirmation of one's salvation through Christ. Acts 22:16 would then be understood in this sense: "And now why tarriest thou? arise, and be baptized (as a Christian), and wash away thy sins (confirmation of one's salvation), calling on the name of the Lord (consecration to Christ's cause).

The baptism may also serve as a pictorial reminder of how Christ had washed all of Paul's sins away through His death. To "be baptized and wash away thy sins" may also be viewed as a portrait or picture of what our baptism represents. *Baptism does not literally wash away our sins but pictorially reminds us about how our sins were already washed away through the blood of Christ.* Therefore, baptism and the cleansing of sins are linked together to bring out this picture concept. *Paul's baptism would then become a pictorial representation or outward display of what Christ had already done for him.* Acts 22:16 could also be understood in this sense: "And now why tarriest thou? arise, and be baptized (as a Christian), and wash away thy sins (portraying what Christ had done for you), calling on the name of the Lord (personal testimony)."

Note: Peter could not be referring to the fact that baptism saves in this verse because he later promises forgiveness of sins on the basis of faith alone (Acts 10:43, 13:38-39, 26:18).

In addition, at his time of baptism, Paul would (like other Jews) confess Christ to be the true Messiah (Lord) or Savior of his soul and the very One who now had control over his life (“calling on the name of the Lord”). This confession is also seen in Acts 2:38. **At the time of their baptism (not salvation)** the Jews would simultaneously call upon the Lord’s name. Today we should call upon the Lord at our time of baptism acknowledging His control over our lives and give a testimony of His grace upon our lives. We should let everyone know what the Lord has done for us.

3. Acts 2:38

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

Note: The Greek preposition (“eis” - “for”) in Acts 2:38 can actually have the meaning of “because of” as it does in Matt. 12:41. These people were to be baptized because of their repentance and faith, which they already placed in Christ. The preposition would indicate *result* and not *attainment*. For instance, I take an aspirin “for” my headache and not to bring about my headache!

Once again, Acts 2:38 would stress the **confirmation** aspect of one’s salvation. The individual’s baptism was viewed as a testimonial, token, and confirmation of a person’s salvation. Acts 2:38 would then be understood in this way: “Then Peter said unto them, Repent (the means of salvation), and be baptized (the testimony of one’s salvation) every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins (the confirmation of one’s forgiveness and salvation), and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.”

Their baptism would immediately follow their repentance and also portray the picture of how Christ had washed their sins away. Therefore, these people would be baptized **because** of the forgiveness which they already

possessed and confess Christ to be their true Messiah at their time of baptism.

Neither of these verses mentioned above teach that baptism washes away sin. In Acts 2:38, 22:16, 8:16, 10:48 & 19:5 baptism is seen to be a **confirmation** of one's salvation and **picture** or pictorial reminder (**at the time of the person's baptism**) of what Christ has actually done for them. It portrays by picture the cleansing of Christ for all that have already believed on Him.

4. Mark 16:16

Once again, this text of Mark 16:16 can be understood as a **confirmation** of the salvation of the new converts. In other words, they entered the waters of baptism which served as a *token* or *testimonial* of the salvation they already possessed in Christ. They would believe and then immediately baptized to demonstrate they were saved and Christ's followers. Hence, their "belief" and "baptism" were linked together in some passages. **Belief is what saved them while their baptism confirmed them as being genuine Christians and Christ's followers.** Mark 16:16 would then be understood in this way: **"He that believeth (way of salvation) and is baptized (testimony of salvation) shall be saved (the confirmation ones salvation); but he that believeth not (missing salvation) shall be damned."**

Belief and baptism are linked together in Mark 16:16 because Christians were immediately baptized following their faith in Christ. The act of conversion preceded baptism; however, baptism is coupled together with the truth about salvation. *This verse may also suggest the picture concept of one's baptism – it serves as a picture of one's salvation.* **The believer's immediate baptism following their time of salvation served as a sign or picture (not an act) of their cleansing from sin.**

<p>Note: The very last part of Mark 16:16 will tell us that belief is all that's required for salvation. If baptism was required the text would say, "but he that believeth not and is not baptized should be damned."</p>

In short, the three alleged passages which are used to support salvation by baptism (Acts 22:16, 2:38, Mark 16:16) are actually passages that teach how each saved believer would automatically be baptized **because** of the forgiveness of sin, which they had already received through Christ. **At the time of their baptism (not salvation)**, as these passages stress, these people would **confirm** their salvation in Christ by identifying with the movement of Christianity, **convey** the picture of their salvation in Christ, and **confess** Jesus as their true Messiah. For these reasons, the two concepts of belief and baptism are harmoniously joined together in a few verses. Not one of these verses contradicts belief alone in Christ for salvation. Rather, they actually explain the true significance of baptism, which is to confirm one's salvation in Christ and picture of convey the truth and testimony to others of God's great salvation that one already possessed in Christ. The picture and testimony of salvation (water baptism) is always to be linked with the reality or actual blessing of salvation!

Note: The baptism in all these verses should be regarded as a witness of the *realities of salvation*, such as the forgiveness of sins, rather than the *means* of bringing them about.

Baptism was that which followed belief (Acts 2:41, 8:35-38, 9:18, 10:47-48, 16:15, 18:8, 19:5) to confirm one's salvation and show or demonstrate Christ's cleansing in the person's life. *Both faith and baptism compliment one another and are thus joined together in several Bible verses* (Mark 16:16; Acts 2:38, 22:16) to demonstrate **at the time of a person's baptism (not salvation)** how Christ has completely washed all of their sins away through His death.

The simple Bible fact is this. **The blood of Jesus Christ cleanses us from all sin and not the waters of baptism (1 John 1:7; Ephesians 1:7; Hebrews 9:14; Revelation 1:5).** "What can wash away my sin, nothing but the blood of Jesus!" I'm still singing it my friend!

Repentance and faith are all that is required for forgiveness and salvation (Acts 5:31, 10:43, 16:31; Luke 24:47). Furthermore, God's grace is only transferred to our life through faith and faith alone in the death of Jesus Christ (Ephesians 2:8-9). **When you look at baptism as the agent through which salvation or regeneration is transferred from God to**

man, then you no longer have your focus on Christ. The object of a person's faith must only be in the person of Christ (Acts 16:31). *Many people feel that they need to believe in some tangible object in this world that they can see and feel, such as water, so that they can channel their faith up to God through this particular object.* The serious problem with this need for faith in a tangible object causes the person's faith to become shifted to the wrong object. **The person's faith becomes water-centered instead of Christ-centered!** There is to be no faith in the sacramental waters of ritual baptism. This kind of faith is placed in the wrong object. Our faith must only rest in Christ (John 14:6).

Note: If baptism is a work or act that one must do in order to be saved, then the person's faith rests in the act of baptism instead of the act of Christ's death for salvation. A person's salvation becomes based upon something other than Christ and His work on their behalf. It cannot be the work of water and Christ! Which work do you choose?

4. Matthew 3:11; Mark 1:5; Luke 3:3 & Acts 19:4

This group of verses is connected with the ministry of John the Baptizer. This baptism was actually a token of their true repentant heart.

Note: The Matthew 3:11 text does not read, "water unto salvation," but "water unto repentance."

The water baptism in John's ministry to the nation of Israel was to be a sign or token of their repentance. Their baptism was an outward expression of their inward repentance and faith in the coming Messiah and Savior, which John spoke about. *The baptism was not connected with their repentance for the salvation of their soul but was actually the fruit or outward expression of their faith and repentance.* It once again became a **confirmation** that their repentance and salvation was genuine.

In Mark 1:5 and Luke 3:3, it is evident that the Greek preposition ("eis-for") can be understood to mean "with reference to," "on the account of" "or on the basis of." This is the evident understanding of this preposition for it's clear that the baptism did not, nor could it, save the people.

Note: In Mark 1:5, the text does not say they came up out of the water “washing their sins away.” The text says that they came up out of the water “confessing their sins.”

It's very clear to see that this baptism was merely a visible witness or sign of their true repentant heart. Thus, the outward sign (baptism) was connected with their repentance. Furthermore, the passage in Luke 3:3-7 will verify the fact that this baptism did not save the people. In verse 7 a group of religious Jews came to John thinking that this baptism alone could insure their salvation. John said that wrath was coming to them even if they passed through the waters of baptism. What they needed to show was genuine, godly fruit as an indication or confirmation of their repentance. Being baptized to merely identify with a nation would not save them as indicated in Luke 3:8.

Note: John the Baptist's message was a two-fold message of repentance (Matt. 3:11; Mark 1:4; Luke 3:3) and faith (Acts 19:4 with John 1:29).

5. 1 Corinthians 15:29

This verse has spawned considerable debate over the years. There are those who claim that this verse condones the teaching of “proxy baptism.” This teaching, which the Mormon Church has adopted, suggests that committed Mormons can actually take the place of their ancestors who were not Mormons and save their souls by being baptized in their place. Of course, baptism to this cultic group has saving merit. However, the Bible is not contradicting itself by teaching vicarious proxy baptism. No living or dead person can be saved by the ritual of water baptism.

The pronoun “they” in verse 29 no doubt refers to the new converts of Christianity. Paul was talking about those who were newly saved through Jesus Christ. Paul contrasts these young converts (“they”) in verse 29 with the older converts (“we”) who were already baptized - see vs.30. *The point is that these young believers, who were recently saved, needed to follow the Lord in believer's baptism just as the previous generation of Christians did prior to their death.*

Note: When the Bible uses the word “for” (Greek – “huper”) it can also be translated “on behalf of.” This may actually give to us a better understanding of what is being suggested. Paul is simply saying that the newly saved converts were being baptized “on behalf of” the example or legacy of baptism, which the dead saints had left behind.

When Paul speaks of the dead (“for the dead”) he is not suggesting that these dead saints were never baptized during their lifetime. **Whoever said that these people were not baptized?** *They actually were baptized while they were yet living, as all the saints were instructed to do during the early days of the church (Acts 2:41). The point Paul is making is that the newly saved and living converts, who were being baptized in their day, were actually being baptized “on behalf of” those baptized saints who had gone on before them and were now dead.* This means that these young believers were in a sense, taking the place of those deceased saints who already had set the example of baptism before them. They were following in their footsteps you might say. These young Christians were in one sense, following in the ranks of those saints who were baptized but now dead and gone. They were following the same Scriptural pattern of baptism, which all the saints followed before their own death.

In short, the living saints were actually being baptized “on behalf of” or “for the sake of” the previous legacy, testimony and example of those who had gone on before them. They were to keep the legacy alive and continue following their leaders or those who had gone before them. They could only do this by being baptized and following in the footsteps of their deceased brothers and sisters. Today, young converts must follow the example of baptism that the previous generations of saints have possessed. We have a great cloud of witnesses that have passed through the waters of baptism before us. Even though they have died, they have stirred the waters and set the example and pattern for young believers to follow. Every time a young Christian passes through the waters of baptism, they are not saving their previous generation of ancestors who were already saved. Rather the young converts were being baptized “on behalf of” or “for the sake of” the ongoing testimony of those believers and the former legacy of baptism, which these deceased believers have left behind.

Any honest reader of the Scriptures must conclude that these verses do not, nor could they teach salvation by baptism. There are several reasons why:

- a. There are dozens of New Testament passages where salvation is said to be by faith alone in Christ. (John 1:12, 3:16, 36, 6:47; Acts 16:31; Romans 10:9; Eph. 2:8-9). No verse or two could ever contradict the plain and clear teaching of the Scriptures on this matter. There are no contradictions in the Bible. One should always interpret the Bible in the light of clearly revealed truth, which is easy and unmistakable to understand. All other obscure verses should be interpreted in light of the clear passages.
- b. The thief on the cross had the assurance of salvation apart from baptism (Luke 23:43). Likewise, Cornelius and his household, as well as Martha, all had the assurance of salvation apart from baptism (Acts 10:43-48; John 11:25-27).
- c. The Savior is not stated to have baptized anyone, a strange omission if baptism is essential to salvation!
- d. The Apostle Paul was thankful that he baptized only a few of the Corinthians - a strange cause for thankfulness if baptism has saving merit (I Cor. 1:14-17).
- e. To include baptism as part of salvation would contradict the Gospel (I Cor. 15:3-4) and would make a "another gospel" (Gal. 1:8-9).
- f. If baptism saves, then a man on his deathbed taking his last few breaths of air could not be saved.

A SIMPLE SUMMARY ON THE DOCTRINAL PURPOSE OF BAPTISM

1. First, water baptism pictures Spirit baptism (Acts 2:41, 47, 5:14, 11:24). It teaches by symbol or shadow the meaning of Spirit baptism. Water baptism is the figure or shadow. Water baptism is a symbol or picture of our total identification with Christ through the work of the Holy Spirit. **Baptism always carries the thought of identification (I Cor. 10:2).**

Spirit baptism is the true and real baptism. Water baptism portrays what really happened when the Holy Spirit joined or united us to Christ by placing us in Him positionally (Romans 6:3-5).

- a. When you are placed down underneath the water, it pictures your union in Christ's death.
 - b. When you are under the water, it pictures your burial with Christ.
 - c. When you are brought out of the water, it pictures your resurrection with Christ
2. Second, water baptism pictures our spiritual cleansing from sin (Acts 22:16 with I Cor. 6:11; Acts 2:38 with Eph. 5:26 & Titus 3:5).

Revelation 1:5 says:

“Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood.”

Hebrews 1:3 says:

“...when he had by himself purged (washed or purified) our sins...”

Other verses such as Titus 3:5, I Cor. 6:11 and Eph. 5:26 speak about the actual cleansing which takes place in the believer's life. He washes the filth of sin away from our lives for time and eternity and implants new life into our spirit. We “were washed” I Cor. 6:11 says. Eph. 5:26 calls it “the washing of the water by the word” for the Bible reveals us as a sinner and informs us how we can be cleansed from our sin. What a glorious thing it is to have our sins washed away through the identifying work of the Holy Spirit in Christ (I Cor. 6:11). Christ's blood has eternally cleansed us from all of our sin and continually cleanses us from sin in the sense that His blood maintains our justified position before God (I John 1:7). *Baptism then pictures the remarkable work of Christ's cleansing in our lives and God's inner work of washing away our sin.*

Our water baptism is telling a story. We are sending out a story and picture to all who witness our baptism. We are saying, *“Oh happy day, when Jesus washed my sins away! Happy day, Happy day when Jesus washed my sins away! What a testimony we have!!!”*

The old saying is still true: Baptism is an outward proof (sign) of an inward work. It is an outward and visible sign of Christ’s inward, spiritual cleansing from sin.

A SIMPLE SUMMARY OF BOTH PURPOSES OF BAPTISM

- 1. Practically,** you show by water baptism that you are now His and want to live for Him, love Him and serve Him in newness of life, as a result of the Spirit’s baptizing work and Christ’s cleansing. You want to show to Christ and others your own willingness to break away from the old life of sin and be totally identified and dedicated to the cause of Christ. You express by your baptism that you want to start on the right course in life and move in the right direction by obeying the Lord. You want others to know that you now belong to Christ. The hymn writer said, *“Now I belong to Jesus, Jesus belongs to me, not for the years of time alone, but for eternity.”*

- 2. Doctrinally,** water baptism tells others that you are joined to Christ, cleansed from all your sins and are now one with Him (“complete in Him” - Col. 2:10) through the work of the Holy Spirit. The people to whom Paul was writing had been baptized in the water after their conversion. *Paul wants their water baptism to help them understand the reality of what Christ and the Spirit had already done for them.* I think if we really understand what our baptism is portraying, then our time of baptism will be very precious to our hearts.

III. PROCEDURE OF WATER BAPTISM

A. Baptism is by immersion (Acts 8:35-38; Matt. 3:16). As stated earlier, the word baptism means to be “overwhelmed.” Thus, the procedure of water baptism is to overwhelm or immerse the convert in water. Only this procedure tells the story of our completeness in Christ’s death, burial, and resurrection. Bible expressions such as “much water,” “down into the water” and “coming up out of the water” all verify this **mode of baptism** (see Acts 8:38; John 3:23; Mark 1:10). Jesus Himself was immersed under the water (Matt. 3:16). The Bible is very clear on the mode of baptism. Churches today have departed from the very clear teaching and practice that the early church had concerning baptism. *The mode of baptism has always been to by immersion or dipping in the water.* Only a person with their head under the water will miss this truth. No pun intended!

Note: “Baptizo” is the Greek word meaning to immerse or overwhelm in water. By changing the final letter of “Baptizo” to an “e” instead of the “o”, we have baptize. *Please understand that the word for baptism in the Greek language was left untranslated by the translators.* It should be rendered immerse or dip.

This literal rendering would clear up much of the confusion about sprinkling and pouring by water. “Baptizo” is the Greek word meaning to overwhelm or dip by water. This word is used 127 times and never should be translated sprinkling or pouring. “Rantizo” is the Greek word for sprinkling and “chea” is the Greek word “pour.” In Scripture, sprinkling or pouring (rantizo or cheism) is never used in the context of one’s baptism as a believer. Therefore, these methods or modes are unscriptural and do not depict our completeness and cleansing in Christ.

Immersion was the prevalent mode until the Roman Catholic Council of Trent in 1545 abandoned the practice. The Reformer John Calvin also felt that sprinkling was as effective as immersion. In many ways it was hard for the Reformers to break away from the long established roots of Roman Catholicism. This is why Martin Luther stressed the necessity of baptism as a sacrament or agent to receive God’s saving grace.

Luther wrote in one Large Catechism:

“Moreover, it is solemnly and strictly commanded that we must be baptized or we shall not be saved.”

Of course, all of these conclusions are simply the reasoning of men and church councils and not God's authoritative Word. We must follow what God's word says on the matter of salvation and the specific mode of baptism. The Bible teaches baptism by immersion.

B. Baptism is to be done in the name of the Trinitarian oneness of God (Matt. 28:19)

1. Some conclude from this verse that there is a command for three separate immersions. However, it should be noted that the verse says "NAME" of the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost, not NAMES. The three members of the Godhead (Father, Son and Holy Spirit) share the same existence as the one true God. The singular word ("name") signifies that each person shares the same existence and being as the **one** true God. We are therefore to baptize only **once** while spelling out the "name" of the **one** triune God or the Trinitarian oneness of the Godhead. *Three immersions are not heresy, they are merely not necessary.*
2. Acts 2:38, 8:16, 10:48 and 19:5 still support this same formula of baptism. There is no evidence that the writer wanted to give a new formula ("Jesus only") baptism. The record of Scripture may simply not repeat the entire formula of Matthew 28:19. Furthermore, this record may not be talking about the liturgical repeating of Christ's name but the authority of Christ's name. It is important to understand that the phrase "**in the name of**" in Biblical times carried the meaning "**by the authority of**" that person. This verse simply indicates that these new converts to Christianity were baptized according to the authority of Jesus Christ. It does not indicate that the words "**in the name of Jesus Christ**" must be liturgically pronounced over each person being baptized (Col. 3:17). It's clear that the words "in the name of Jesus Christ" are not intended as a formula but a theological and practical expression which indicates Christ's authority over the one's being baptized in the water. The converts were being baptized embracing the Lordship of Jesus Christ over their lives! The disciples did not depart from God's

original instruction given in the Great Commission to baptize in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit (Matt. 28:19).

In addition, these references to the name of Jesus may also indicate the **person's testimony to the authority** of Christ over their lives at the time of their baptism (Acts 22:16). They bore public witness that they were the property of Jesus and would call on His name in such a way as this at the time of their baptism. We must remember that a name in Bible times always represented a person and his work. Thus, when the believer gave witness of the name of Jesus at their baptism, it indicated that they were giving a public witness or demonstration of their faith, which they already had placed in Jesus Christ. They were claiming that Christ was the only sufficient basis for divine forgiveness. However, the truth that baptism was done while mentioning all three names of the Godhead (Matt. 28:19) reveals to us that the whole triune God was involved in the plan of our salvation. Therefore, we are commanded to baptize in the name of the Father, Son (Jesus) and the Holy Spirit. *The Father planned it, the Son supplied it and the Spirit applied it to our lives.* I say it again. Praise ye the triune God!

IV. POLICY FOR WATER BAPTISM

- A.** The Pastor of the local assembly should meet with all that would like to be baptized.
- B.** It should be recommended that each person being baptized share his or her testimony during the baptismal service.
- C.** There is to be no strict age requirements concerning baptism. However, the Pastor of any assembly should be concerned that children truly are saved and understand this significant event. The question of ("How old one must be?") is simply this - old enough to understand that they are a sinner going to Hell and that they need to receive Christ as their Savior.

What about infant baptism? Any Bible believing church should be opposed to infant baptism. **Christ blessed children but did not baptize them (Matt. 19:13-15).** The disciples would have never rebuked these children if Christ practiced infant baptism. Christ declared that these babies and young children are already of the kingdom of heaven. Baptizing is not needed to put them into it. The idea that sprinkling a little infant will save that child's soul is erroneous.

Furthermore, the idea that baptism replaces the Abrahamic sign of circumcision is also a fallacy. This is the teaching of Reformed Theology. These theologians teach that water baptism has replaced ritual circumcision as a sign of the Covenant of Grace, which God has with man. They also teach that baptism is equivalent to the O.T. ritual of circumcision and is the means by which an infant becomes a member of the covenant community. This of course is blatant error. Baptism does not bring salvation into a person's life. Nor does it promise salvation to any child.

Note: Actually, the sign of the New Covenant which is to be practiced today is the Lord's Supper (Luke 22:20). This supper is to be practiced as a memorial of the death of Christ. It has no sacramental value attached to it.

We must remember that people become members of this new and distinct community today called the church, through the merits of the actual blood of Christ (1 John 1:7). No water or ceremony is involved in becoming part of this New Testament church of Christ, which completely replaces the old community of Israel.

“There is not a single instance in the Scripture which gives the slightest support to the doctrine of “baptizing infants.”

M.R. De Haan

AN OUTLINE SUMMARY ON BAPTISM

I. Who should be baptized?

Only believers in Jesus Christ

II. Why should we be baptized?

In obedience to Christ's command

III. How should we be baptized?

By immersion

IV. When should we be baptized?

As soon as possible after conversion

Will you obey Christ and be baptized as a believer? If you have not been immersed, you need to be! Christ is saying, "Show to others that you are mine! Declare to others that you are on my side! Take that step of baptism and show the world what I have done for you and what you will do for me!"

May we by our baptism say

"Take my life and let it be consecrated Lord, to Thee. Take my moments and my days, let them flow in ceaseless praise. Take my hands, and let them move at the impulse of Thy love. Take my feet, and let them be swift and beautiful for Thee. Take my silver and my gold, not a mite would I withhold. Take my will and make it Thine; it shall be no longer mine. Take my heart; it is Thine own; it shall be Thy royal throne. Take my love; my Lord I pour at Thy feet its treasure store. Take myself and I will be ever, only, all for Thee. Ever, only, all for Thee."