

# Baptism

There are many diverse teachings concerning baptism today, but what does the Bible say? In this Bible study, we will find the scriptural answers to the following three questions:

1. Why are we baptized?
2. How should we be baptized?
3. In whose 'name' should we be baptized?

## 1. Why are we baptized?

### a. Jesus taught us to be baptized.

Just before Jesus ascended to heaven, he gave his disciples what has become known as the Great Commission. Various parts of the Great Commission are recorded in each of the Gospels and also in the book of Acts. Matthew's account is the one most familiar to people today. In it, Jesus told his disciples,

*"Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: . . ."* (Mt. 28:19-20)

Notice that baptism is very prominent in Jesus' commission to us to win the lost. In fact, in Mark's account of the Great Commission, Jesus gives us even more information on the importance of baptism:

*"He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned."* (Mark 16:16)

Jesus' words here indicate that baptism is even a condition of salvation. We will examine the necessity of baptism later in this lesson.

Jesus himself was baptized (not because he needed redemption for he was without sin) to leave an example for us to follow.

### b. The Apostles/Disciples taught us to be baptized.

- The Apostle Peter, standing with the rest of the Apostles, preached baptism in the very first message of the gospel of Jesus Christ:

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

- When Phillip carried the good news of the Gospel to the Samaritans, baptism was included in his message:

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

- When Peter was directed by God to take the message of Jesus Christ to the Gentiles for the very first time, baptism was a part of that message. In fact, he *commanded* Cornelius and his household to be baptized:

*Can any man forbid water, that these should not be baptized, which have received the Holy Ghost as well as we? And he commanded them to be baptized in the name of the Lord. Then prayed they him to tarry certain days. (Acts 10:47-48)*

- Apostle Paul was baptized and preached baptism himself. He thought baptism so important that he even had disciples of John the Baptist be re-baptized:

*Then said Paul, John verily baptized with the baptism of repentance, saying unto the people, that they should believe on him which should come after him, that is, on Christ Jesus. When they heard this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. (Acts 19:3-4)*

You can't read the book of Acts without realizing that baptism was a central part of the message of the Apostles and the disciples as they spread the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

### c. Baptism is an integral part of the plan of salvation.

Before Jesus ascended to heaven, he had told his disciples to go to Jerusalem to wait for the "promise of the Father" (the Holy Ghost). Jesus said they would receive power after the promise came and would be witnesses unto him. The disciples went to Jerusalem to wait on the promise and the Bible says that when the day of Pentecost was fully come they were all baptized with the Holy Ghost and began to speak with other tongues. Evidently, they spilled out of the upper room they were in because the event caused a stir in the city. A multitude gathered to see what was going on. God had set the stage for the first message of the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

Peter had only weeks earlier had denied even knowing Jesus, but now, through the power of the Holy Ghost, he boldly preached Jesus to them and proclaimed that they had crucified the Messiah! They believed Peter's preaching and were greatly convicted in their hearts, but didn't know what to do about this grievous sin they had committed. "Men and brethren, what shall we do?" They asked. To paraphrase, You've told us what we did wrong—man, don't leave us here—tell us how to make it right!

Let me ask you, Isn't this the most perfect opportunity to tell some one how to be saved! You'd better believe it. And that is exactly what Peter did:

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

#### **NOTE**

It is no coincidence that the person God chose to unlock the door of salvation was the same one to whom Jesus said he had given the keys to the kingdom of heaven.(Mt 16:19)

The plan of salvation was laid out for the New Testament Church in Acts 2:38. And you know what, it happened just like Jesus had said it would happen. In Luke 24:47 Jesus told the disciples that, “. . . *repentance and remission of sins should be preached in my name, beginning at Jerusalem . . .*”

<u>Luke 24:47</u>	<u>Acts 2:38</u>
repentance and . . .	Repent and . . .
remission of sins . . .	be baptized . . . for the remission of sins
should be preached	(Peter was definitely preaching)
in my name	be baptized . . . in the name of Jesus Christ
beginning	(This was the very message of the Gospel of Jesus Christ)
at Jerusalem	(They were in Jerusalem)

Line by line, it happened just like Jesus said. So, baptism was included as part of the plan of salvation in the very first message of the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

Why didn't Peter just tell them to believe? Well, for one thing, they already believed—that's why they were pricked in their hearts and were asking what they needed to do. Secondly, as we've seen, there is more to salvation than believing Jesus is the Messiah.

John 3:16 is probably one of the most quoted scriptures in the Bible, and well it should be for it beautifully captures the wonderful love God showed to us and how he provided salvation for us.

*“For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.”*

However, the scripture is often taken out of context and interpreted to mean that you can just believe that Jesus was the son of God and be saved.

What about repentance? John 3:16 doesn't say anything about repentance. Does that mean that you can be saved without repentance? Of course not. But if you truly believe, as the Bible says, *“to the saving of the soul” (Heb 10:39)* then you will follow it through to repentance.

What about the Holy Ghost? John 3:16 doesn't say anything about the Holy Ghost. Yet I Cor. 12:3 says that, *“no man can say that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Ghost.”* And Romans 8:9 says that, *“if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his.”* John 7:38-39 says that *“He that believeth on me, as the scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water. (But this spake he of the Spirit, which they that believe on him should receive:”* So if you believe like the scripture says to believe, not only will you follow on to repentance, you will also follow on to receive the Holy Ghost.

What about baptism? Can baptism be discarded? Well, if you read just a few verses prior to John 3:16, you see that Jesus had answered that question:

*John 3:5 Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.*

Likewise, *everyone* that left Egypt was “baptized” in the cloud and in the sea, which is representative of Spirit and water baptism.

*“Moreover, brethren, I would not that ye should be ignorant, how that all our fathers were under the cloud, and all passed through the sea; And were all baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea;” (I Cor. 10:1-2)*

The brazen laver in the Tabernacle of Moses was representative of the New Testament baptism. Priests were required to wash at the laver prior to entering the holy place. If they bypassed the laver and tried to enter the holy place they would die. (Exodus 30:20)

In Mark 16:16 Jesus said, *“He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved, he that believeth not shall be damned.”*

Baptism is integral to the plan of salvation and cannot be discarded.

## 2. How should we be baptized?

### a. Baptism by immersion.

Jesus was baptized *in* the Jordan river and Mt 3: 16 says that he came *“up out of the water.”* John 3:23 records that John the Baptist baptized in Aenon *“because there was much water there.”* When Phillip baptized the Ethiopian eunuch, the Bible says that they went down *“into the water”* and that they came *“up out of the water.”* (Acts 8:38-39) Both Romans 6:4 and Colossians 2:12 stated that we are “buried” with Jesus in baptism. “Baptizo” was the Greek word translated as baptism and the word itself means “to dip.”

Catholic Biblical Encyclopedia  
Vol. BB, page 61:

“Immersion was oldest method employed. BurC:\My Documents\Church\Baptism.docC:\My Documents\Church\Baptism.docied in baptism—Romans 6:4.”

Schaff-Heraog Religious Encyclopedia,  
Vol.1, page 451:

“Baptism was always a burial. The command to baptize was a command to immerse.”

New Catholic Encyclopedia,  
Vol. 2, page 56:

“It is evident that Baptism in the early church was by immersion.”

### b. Baptism by sprinkling

There are no references in the Bible to any type of baptism other than immersion.

### 3. In whose name should we baptize?

We've learned that baptism is part of the plan of salvation. But now we want to focus on what name was used during baptism and whether it is important or not.

#### a) In what name did the Apostles baptize?

- The first example is found in Peter's message in Acts chapter 2:

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

Peter preached baptism in the name of Jesus.

- Later, in Acts chapter 8, Phillip went to Samaria to hold a revival. The Samaritans believed the preaching and they were baptized:

*But when they believed Philip preaching the things concerning the kingdom of God, and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women. (. . . they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus.) (Acts 8:12,16)*

Phillip preached baptism in the name of Jesus.

- Several years after the day of Pentecost, Peter was still preaching baptism in the name of Jesus.

*Can any man forbid water, that these should not be baptized, which have received the Holy Ghost as well as we? And he commanded them to be baptized in the name of the Lord." (Acts 10:47-48) [What is the name of the Lord? Jesus. Remember, "do" instead of "repeat."]*

Years later, we find Peter was still preaching baptism in the name of Jesus.

- Paul was instructed to be baptized, "*calling on the name of the Lord.*" (Acts 22:16) And after receiving the Holy Ghost, Paul said he conferred not with flesh and blood but received the gospel through revelation from God. (However, he later went to Jerusalem to meet with the Apostles to confirm with them that he was preaching the same message as the Apostles.) So, how did Paul baptize? In the name of Jesus. In fact, he thought it so important to be baptized in the name of Jesus that he had some disciples of John the Baptist be re-baptized:

*And he said unto them, Unto what then were ye baptized? And they said, Unto John's baptism. Then said Paul, John verily baptized with the baptism of repentance, saying unto the people, that they should believe on him which should come after him, that is, on Christ Jesus. When they heard this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. (Acts 19:3-5)*

Paul preached baptism in the name of Jesus.

- Paul also gave us one of the most compelling statements regarding baptism in Jesus Name in the book of 1st Corinthians chapter 1. The Corinthians were saying, I'm of Paul or I'm of Apollos or I'm of Christ. Paul was telling them that this division was wrong. He said, "Is

Christ divided?" Then he asked, "Was Paul crucified for you? Where you baptized in the name of Paul?"

*Now this I say, that every one of you saith, I am of Paul; and I of Apollos; and I of Cephas; and I of Christ. Is Christ divided? was Paul crucified for you? or were ye baptized in the name of Paul?(I Cor. 1:12-13)*

No, Paul you're right, Jesus was crucified for us and it is His name we should be baptized in. Here are four undeniable examples of the Apostles and disciples baptizing in the name of Jesus. There are no examples anywhere in the Bible of anyone being baptized any other way. Not even one. But what about Matthew 28:19?

#### b) In what name did Jesus say to be baptized?

After Peter preached the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus on the day of Pentecost, the Jews were pricked in their heart and cried, What shall we do? As we learned earlier, Peter's answer, "*Repent, and be baptized everyone of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.*" (Acts 2:37:38) exactly fulfilled Jesus' words in Luke 24:47 about repentance and remission of sins being preached in his name beginning at Jerusalem. Yet, in Matthew 28:19, Jesus said to baptize "*in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.*"

Is Jesus saying one thing in Matthew and another in Luke 24:47? Did Peter disobey what Jesus said in Matthew 28:19? To believe the answer to either of those questions is true would mean that the very basis of Christianity is full of contradictions. If such was the case, Christianity would be meaningless and the Bible would be just another book. The answer is that Jesus said exactly what he meant in both places and Peter preached exactly what Jesus prophesied that he would.

Since we know that Luke 24:47 and Acts 2:38 are in perfect harmony, let's turn our attention to Mt 28:19. It has been said before, "I'd rather do what Jesus said than what Peter said." To a true Christian, that is really an absurd statement. If Acts 2:38 or Luke 24:47 contradicts Matthew 28:19, then the Bible is not inerrant and therefore not reliable. First, it must be noted that Matthew (who wrote Mt. 28:19) and *all* the other Apostles were standing there when Peter preached baptism in the name of Jesus on the day of Pentecost. If Peter was disobeying what Jesus taught, one of the Apostles surely would have had enough desire for truth to correct Peter. And even if not right then, surely the eleven on them would have taken Peter in private and said, Look Peter, that isn't what Jesus said. But that didn't happen either because years later, Peter preached the same thing to Cornelius; Phillip preached it to the Samaritans; and Paul preached it to the world. That meeting didn't happen because Peter preached exactly what Jesus taught.

What exactly did Jesus say to *do* concerning baptism in Mt. 28:19?

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

What did Jesus say? He said to baptize “in **the NAME** (singular) of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.” If you use the titles when you baptize, you are not doing what Jesus said, you're only *repeating* what Jesus said. What he said to do was to baptize in **the NAME!** Then he went on to tell them whose name to use. To *do* what Jesus said you have to find out what **the NAME** is. Now, we know that the name of the Son is Jesus. That's easy. But what of the Father and the Holy Spirit?

In Hebrews 1:4, the Bible says that Jesus “inherited” his name. Who do you inherit your name from? Your father! In fact, in John 5:43, Jesus said, “*I am come in my Father's name.*” In John 17:6 Jesus, speaking to the Father, said, “*I have manifested thy name.*” In John 14:26 Jesus said the Holy Ghost would be sent in his name.

Even we, when we become part of the family of God, take on the name of Jesus:

*“. . . I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, Of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named,” (Eph. 3:14-15)*

Baptism is a spiritual parallel of the Old Testament circumcision. (Col. 2:11-12) It was at circumcision that Hebrew boys received their name and likewise we take on the name of Jesus during baptism.(Luke 1:59-64)

Acts 4:12 tells us there is only one saving name,

*“Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved.”*

There is only one saving name; Jesus said to baptized in **THE** name; the Apostles all baptized the saving name;—how could anyone would be comfortable being baptized any other way than in the name of Jesus?

Matthew 28:19, Luke 24:47, Acts 2:38, Acts 8:16, Acts 10:44, Acts 19:5 and I Cor 1:9-10 are all in perfect harmony. The Bible does not contradict itself but will, with careful study, interpret itself with amazing clarity. Isaiah said,

*“Whom shall he teach knowledge? and whom shall he make to understand doctrine? them that are weaned from the milk, and drawn from the breasts. For precept must be upon precept, precept upon precept; line upon line, line upon line; here a little, and there a little:”*

We should let scripture interpret scripture rather than taking a single verse and building a doctrine on it that isn't supported by the rest of the Bible. The question is: Are we going to follow Tradition or Bible Truth. The following are reference documents dealing with baptism traditions:

New International Standard Bible Encyclopedia,

Vol. 2, pages 377-378, 389:

“Christian baptism was administered using the words ‘in the name of Jesus.’ The use of a Trinity formula of any sort was not suggested in the early church history. Baptism was always in the name of the Lord Jesus until the time of Justin Martyr when the Triune formula was used.”

Canney Encyclopedia

page 53:

“The early church always baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus until the development of the Trinity, afterward they were baptized in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Ghost.”

Hasting’s Dictionary of the Bible

Thirteenth Ed., Vol. 1, page 88

“It has been customary to trace the institution of the practice to the words of Christ in Matthew 28:19, but the authenticity of this passage has been challenged on historical as well as textual grounds. It must be acknowledged that the formula of the threefold name, which is here enjoined, does not appear to have been used by the primitive church, which so far as our information goes, baptized ‘in’ or ‘into’ the name of Jesus, or Jesus Christ, or the Lord Jesus, without any reference to the Father or the Spirit.”

Life Magazine, October 30, 1950

Vol. 29, No. 18, page 51:

“The Catholics made this statement concerning their doctrine of the Trinity to defend the dogma of the assumption of Mary in an article by Graham Green: Our opponents sometime claim that no belief should be held dogmatically which is not explicitly stated in the Scriptures but the Protestant churches have themselves accepted such dogma as the trinity for which there is no such precise authority in the Gospels.”

Scribners Dictionary of the Bible,

Vol. 1, page 241:

“The original form of words were into the name of Jesus or Lord Jesus. Baptism into the Trinity was a later development.”

We’ve seen scripture after scripture that shows that baptism in the name of Jesus is Bible doctrine. These references clearly show that baptism by the Trinity formula was a tradition developed by the Catholic church and not practiced by the Apostles. Tradition or Bible doctrine—it’s your choice.