

BAPTISM *A Much-Ignored Command of Christ*

BAPTISM

A Much-Ignored Command of Christ

An Introductory Study by
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Dedication:

To Jesus who saves us, and to Sandy and the millions who love Jesus, but have never been taught accurately about His baptism.

See Acts 18:24-26

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*"The Law of the Lord is perfect
reviving the soul"*

Psalm 19:7

Once, two believers were discussing the subject of baptism. The one said, "Well, my pastor says [such and such]." The other responded, "My priest taught me [such and such]." A third believer, overhearing the two, asked, "Surely it is best to ask what Jesus says? After all, He died on the Cross. Your priest and pastor did not. What does Jesus say?"

This booklet aims to do just that; ask what Jesus says.

It is not our intention to offend or defend any church group or teacher. We will simply ask: What does God say in His Bible?

Jesus said, "If you love Me, you will keep My commandments..." [John 14:15].

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Please join us in this study as we seek to love and honor Jesus by obeying His commands. He is Lord, so we choose to follow Him.

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PART 1

THE BIBLE HAS NO CONTRADICTIONS

Welcome Bible student! We hope you are blessed by what you read. Let's begin with this essential point: The Bible has no contradictions. It is God's perfect word. However, if one group of believers gathers their favorite verses to use against another group of believers, aren't we in essence saying the Bible contradicts itself? Isn't this a reason many don't believe; because churches argue with each other over Bible verses?

We need to learn: If the Bible seems to contradict itself then we are at fault, because we don't understand the Bible properly. We need, therefore, to humble ourselves and ask God to show us how all of His Word works together. Let's study to understand God's whole message.

NOTHING BUT THE BLOOD OF JESUS

When studying about baptism, it is essential to stress that nothing but Jesus' sacrifice can cleanse sin. Without Jesus, repentance, confession, baptism and everything else would be utterly useless. All the power of forgiveness is in Jesus and nowhere else. We are convinced of this. Scripture teaches:

1 PETER 2:24: *"He himself bore our sins" in His body on the cross, so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness; "by His wounds you have been healed."*

John 3:16 also says that "whosoever believes" in Jesus "will have everlasting life." So, if it is Jesus' sacrifice alone that saves us, why should we even focus on baptism? The reason is Jesus, Himself, commands it. He said:

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MATTHEW 28: *19Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, 20and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."*

Jesus commands that "all nations" be baptized, and this command was not only for that time; it stands "to the very end of the age." His command to be baptized therefore applies to us today.

WILL THE UN-BAPTIZED GO TO HELL?

When studying on the importance of baptism, sooner or later one asks if an un-baptized person will go to Hell. This is not a question any human can definitely answer because we are not the Judge. God is, and He knows the intent of every heart. However, read here what Jesus says:

JOHN 12:48 *He who rejects Me, and does not receive My Words, has one who judges him; the Word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day.*

Jesus' Word – the Bible – is the standard by which we will be judged. When looking at what God's Word says about baptism, it does not look good for anyone who refuses to be baptized.

JOHN THE BAPTIST

To illustrate, consider this example from the days of John the Baptist:

MATTHEW 3: *1 In those days John the Baptist came, preaching in the wilderness of Judea 2and saying, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven has come near." ... 5People went out to him from Jerusalem and all Judea and the whole region of the Jordan. 6Confessing their sins, they were baptized by him in the Jordan River.*

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John taught the people to "Repent" and they were "confessing their sins" and were "baptized by him."

We also read that people traveled from "all Judea and the whole region of the Jordan" to repent, confess, and be baptized. Back then, the main means of travel was by foot. People therefore had walked many hours to repent, confess, and be baptized. Baptism was that important to them.

Imagine, however, someone standing on the Jordan riverbank, shouting across to John, "Great message, John. I have repented, confessed, but I don't think I need to be baptized."

What do you think John would say?

Remember that God had commanded repentance and baptism. It was a package deal. We read:

LUKE 3:3 *He [John the Baptist] went into all the country around the Jordan, preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins.*

John's baptism was one "of repentance for the forgiveness of sins." One was baptized for the forgiveness of sins. Now, can we say without doubt that anyone who refused John's baptism would go to Hell? No, because we are not the Judge. Here, however, is a fair question:

John's baptism was "a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins." How else could anyone have had their sins forgiven except by surrendering to God and being baptized as He commanded?

A direct parallel to John's baptism is the baptism into Jesus. This was first taught on the day of Pentecost when the church was born. We read:

ACTS 2:38 *Peter replied, "Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.*

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The baptism in Jesus' name, like John's baptism, is "for the forgiveness of sins." If one refuses Jesus' baptism then how will their sins be forgiven?

Some ask: Will they who refuse go to Hell? We cannot say, because God is the Judge, not us. But, we beg all to remember Jesus' words while He was being tempted by the devil. He said: "Do not put the Lord your God to the test" [Luke 4:12]. To those who refuse baptism, we plead: Why not just surrender and obey Jesus? What have you got to lose? But, if you refuse to obey the consequences may be eternal! Why put God to the test?

EVEN JESUS WAS BAPTIZED

Another reason we should all be baptized is Jesus was baptized. We read earlier that John's baptism was "a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins" [Luke 3:3]. But, Jesus had no sin. Why should He be baptized? We read:

MATTHEW 3: *13 Then Jesus came from Galilee to the Jordan to be baptized by John. 14But John tried to deter him, saying, "I need to be baptized by You, and do You come to me?" 15Jesus replied, "Let it be so now; it is proper for us to do this to fulfill all righteousness." Then John consented.*

Jesus was baptized "to fulfill all righteousness." It is always righteous to obey God, and God had commanded that all Israel be baptized. Jesus was part of Israel, so He obeyed. If Jesus showed obedience to His Father by being baptized, how can we choose to do anything less? Put another way: Can we refuse Christ's baptism and still consider ourselves obedient to Him? No, we cannot.

HOW SHOULD WE BE BAPTIZED?

Sprinkle, pour, or immerse?

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There is some confusion regarding the mode of baptism. Some sprinkle water and call it baptism. Some pour, and some immerse. Which is correct? Does it matter?

APPLES AND ORANGES

Here's an illustration to show why it does matter: Imagine while in a restaurant you order apple juice. The waiter brings orange juice. You ask that he fix his mistake, but he says, "It actually doesn't matter, because both apples and oranges are fruit."

This can be applied to baptism. The mode of baptism [whether sprinkling, pouring, or immersion] does matter if we want to be obedient to Jesus. Just as the waiter should be concerned about getting our drink order correct, so we should be concerned about following Jesus' orders correctly.

The question is: What was in Jesus' mind when He commanded "baptism"? What did the Holy Spirit mean when He inspired the word "baptism" in the Bible?

Thankfully we do not have to look too hard to understand what Jesus meant when He said "baptism." "Baptize" in Greek, the original language of the New Testament, is *baptizo*. It means:

to immerse, submerge; to make whelmed (that is, fully wet); used only (in the New Testament) of ceremonial ablution, especially (technically) of the ordinance of Christian baptism: - baptist, baptize, wash [STRONG'S GREEK DICTIONARY #G907]

Baptize means "immerse." It does not mean "sprinkle" or "pour." There are different Greek words for "pour" and "sprinkle." In Matthew 28:19 Jesus says "baptizo" which means "immerse."

But, what if one doesn't understand Greek? That's okay, because the concept of immersion still comes through in the English New Testament. Baptism is referred to as a "burial."

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BAPTISM IS A BURIAL

We have all been to cemeteries, and we know how the dead are buried. Does one sprinkle or pour soil on their heads and then leave them, or are they immersed in soil? They are immersed [buried].

See now the link between baptism and burial in the New Testament:

ROMANS 6: *3 Or don't you know that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death? 4We were therefore buried with Him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life.*

Baptism is a burial. These next verses teach the same:

COLOSSIANS 2: *11 In Him you were also circumcised with a circumcision not performed by human hands. Your whole self ruled by the flesh was put off when you were circumcised by Christ, 12having been buried with Him in baptism, in which you were also raised with Him through your faith in the working of God, who raised Him from the dead.*

Baptism is an immersion in water. Sprinkling or pouring water are changes people have made, and this is not what Jesus meant when He commanded baptism. Remember that Jesus died on the cross. We should obey Him and not human traditions.

LITTLE KIDS DON'T NEED BAPTISM

The Bible tells us that baptism is for anyone who understands they have sinned by breaking God's commands, believe that Jesus died for them, and want to follow Him. Baptism is, therefore, not for infants, because they don't understand sin or Jesus' sacrifice. These Bible verses teach this:

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MATTHEW 28: *19Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, 20and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."*

Here Jesus teaches that one needs to be a disciple before being baptized. A disciple is a learner-follower. Little children are too young to be learner-followers and so should not be baptized. Please read the next verse:

ACTS 2: *38 Peter replied, "Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit."*

Peter teaches that one needs to repent before they are baptized. Repentance means to turn from sin and back to God. This is a decision we make before being baptized and all our Christian lives. Little children cannot understand sin, and so cannot repent. Again, they should not be baptized.

Furthermore, there are no Bible examples of little children being baptized. Not one. We do read of entire "households" being baptized [Acts 16:15, 31,32], but, just like today, there are many households without little children.

We also have this interesting Scripture in Acts:

ACTS 8: *12But when they believed Philip as he proclaimed the good news of the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women.*

This refers to the gospel being preached in a city in Samaria. Out of the entire city [which doubtless included many households with little children] only "men and women" were baptized. No little children.

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Again, there is no authority in the Bible for baptizing little children or babies. Neither is there a need because little children do not understand sin or Jesus' sacrifice.

WHEN SHOULD A CHILD BE BAPTIZED?

Concerned parents and grandparents often ask when their children should be baptized. The answer is that anyone who understands they have sinned, that Jesus died for them, and want to follow Jesus may be baptized.

How old should a child be, specifically? It is hard to say because different children mature differently. Some are baptized when they are as young as 7. Others when they are in their teens.

The key is the person being baptized must personally mourn their sin, understand that Jesus is the only Savior, and they must love and want to be with Him. It is, therefore, every parent's job to teach their children about God's law, how much He loves them, that He died for them, and that, when they are ready, they need to surrender to Him.

But, we must be very careful not to force our children to be baptized. They must not do it to please us. They must be baptized because they love God and want to obey Him. This is true baptism.

May all who believe Jesus repent and surrender to Him in baptism.

PART 2

DIVING DEEPER INTO GOD'S WORD

God has created us all different. For some, the above information about baptism is sufficient to obey Jesus. Others want to understand more of what the God says. For these people, we will dive deeper into the subject.

Before we do, we'd like to encourage all who have not yet obeyed Jesus in baptism to do so. If you cannot find someone to help you, please contact us, and we will try to find someone in your area. Email: jacobsohns@gmail.com

CAUTION!!

A word of caution: Some of what you will now read from the Bible may be different from what you have been taught. We encourage you to follow Jesus alone. He is the One who died for us all, so His Word is superior to all religious traditions and human teachings.

Here are the subjects we will address in this deeper study:

- "Saved Through Water"
- The First Christians Obeyed Jesus
- The Book of Acts: Examples of Conversion
- **Case #1:** Acts 2 – The Church's Birth
- What About People Who Live in Deserts?
- What about My Loved-One Who Died Un-Baptized?
- **Case #2:** Acts 8 – The Ethiopian Man
- **Case #3:** Cornelius' household

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- Q1: The Thief on the Cross
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- Final Word

Let’s begin:

“SAVED THROUGH WATER”

This may seem like a strange heading, but it is taken directly from the Bible:

1 PETER 3: *18 ...being made alive, 19 He [Jesus] went and made proclamation to the imprisoned spirits— 20 to those who were disobedient long ago when God waited patiently in the days of Noah while the ark was being built. In it only a few people, eight in all, were saved through water, 21and this water symbolizes baptism that now saves you also—not the removal of dirt from the body but the pledge of a clear conscience toward God. It saves you by the resurrection of Jesus Christ, 22who has gone into heaven and is at God’s right hand—with angels, authorities and powers in submission to Him.*

In these verses, Peter parallels the Flood waters in the days of Noah to the waters of baptism “that now saves you also.” One may wonder how the water of Noah’s day saved anyone. Wasn’t the water the very thing

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that was threatening their lives? Surprisingly, no. It was sin that was threatening to destroy all humanity. The water was sent to cleanse the earth. The water separated and saved those who trusted in God from those who didn't. That is why Peter wrote "this water symbolizes baptism that now saves you also."

Is Peter teaching that water washes away sins? No, because only the blood of Jesus removes sin. Baptism, however, is still deeply important. Let's read what Peter meant:

1 PETER 3: *21 not the removal of dirt from the body, but the pledge of a clear conscience towards God. It saves you by the resurrection of Jesus Christ...*

Baptism saves, not by the washing of dirt from the body, but rather baptism is how we make a "pledge of clear conscience towards God." Being baptized is coming to God on His terms. It is surrendering to God; doing things His way – not ours. If you have not yet made this pledge of baptism, we encourage you to.

THE FIRST CHRISTIANS OBEYED JESUS

What did the first Christians believe regarding baptism? This is an important question because, unlike us, they were not separated from Jesus by centuries of conflicting human teachings. Just think: Many of the early Christians heard the teachings of Jesus and His apostles first-hand. Many of their churches were even planted by people like Peter and Paul.

Well, what did they believe about baptism?

To investigate this, please consider this chart of conversion cases from the book of Acts. In each of these cases we ask: Did they believe? Did they confess? Were they baptized?

Bible Verses

Believed?

Confessed?

Baptized?

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Pentecost Acts 2:14-41	YES Acts 2:36	INFERRED Acts 2:47	YES Acts 2:41
Priests Acts 6:7	INFERRED Acts 6:7		
Samaritans Acts 8:5-13	YES Acts 8:12		YES Acts 8:12,13
Bible Verses	Believed?	Confessed?	Baptized?
Ethiopian Acts 8:26-39	INFERRED Acts 8:36	YES Acts 8:37	YES Acts 8:38
Saul [Paul] Acts 9:17,18 Acts 22:6-16	YES Acts 9:20	INFERRED Acts 22:16	YES Acts 9:18
Cornelius' House Acts 10:34-48	INFERRED in the context		YES Acts 10:48
Greeks Acts 11:19-21	YES Acts 11:21		
Proconsul Acts 13:6-12	YES Acts 13:12		
Lydia Acts 16:13-15	YES Acts 16:14		YES Acts 16:15
The Jailer Acts 16:30-34	YES Acts 16:34		YES Acts 16:33
Thessalonica Acts 17:1-4	YES Acts 17:4		
Bereans Acts 17:10-12	YES Acts 17:12		
Corinthians Acts 18:1-8	YES Acts 18:8		YES Acts 18:8
Ephesians Acts 19:1-7	INFERRED Acts 19:2		YES Acts 19:5

NOTE: Acts contains other cases not found in this chart

From the above we see that baptism is mentioned more than a few times, and the actual cases in Acts show the people were baptized immediately after believing. Some may point out that baptism is not mentioned every time. This is true, but neither is confession or even belief. Obviously the people did believe, so just because confession or baptism are not always mentioned does not mean these were not done.

THE WHOLE COUNSEL OF GOD

Many churches today, however, tell people to “confess Jesus as Lord,” but they largely ignore baptism. In Acts, however, baptism is mentioned far more than confession. Are we saying that one should not confess? Not at all. Rather, let’s submit to the whole counsel of God; do all He says. The first church – who were closest to Jesus’ time on earth – believed, confessed, and were baptized. Shouldn’t we do the same?

THE “SINNER’S PRAYER”

While looking at the cases of conversion table you may have noticed something missing: The “sinner’s prayer.” Nowhere in the New Testament is anyone ever led to Jesus by prayer. Now, it is not wrong to pray to Jesus for forgiveness, but “praying Jesus into your heart” is a concept foreign to the Bible. Jesus wants us to believe, confess, and be baptized.

[Note: The following verses are often used to support the “sinner’s prayer”: “If we confess our sins He is faithful to forgive us...” [1 John 1:9]; “See I stand at the door and knock...” [Revelation 3:20]. Please know that those verses were written to people who had already come to Christ, and not to those outside. Also verses like Luke 18:38 refer to people who were already part of Israel, and very often they were not crying out for salvation, but for healing.]

On the subject of the “sinner’s prayer,” allow me please to quote from a far better Bible scholar and researcher, George Barna, founder of the Barna Group:

However, it is typical in most contemporary churches for baptism to be separated from conversion by great lengths of time. Many Christians were saved at one age and baptized at a much later age. In the first century, this was unheard of.

In the early church, converts were baptized immediately upon believing. One scholar says of baptism and conversion, “They belong together. Those who repented and believed the Word

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were baptized. That was the invariable pattern, so far as we know.”[1]

Another writes, “At the birth of the church, converts were baptized with little or no delay.”[2]

In the first century, water baptism was the outward confession of a person’s faith.[3] But more than that, it was the way someone came to the Lord. For this reason, the confession of baptism is vitally linked to the exercise of saving faith. So much so that the New Testament writers often use baptism in place of the word faith and link it to being “saved.”[4] This is because baptism was the early Christian’s initial confession of faith in Christ.

In our day, the “sinner’s prayer” has replaced the role of water baptism as the initial confession of faith. Unbelievers are told, “Say this prayer after me, accept Jesus as your personal Savior, and you will be saved.” But nowhere in all the New Testament do we find any person being led to the Lord by a sinner’s prayer.

Instead, unbelievers in the first century were led to Jesus Christ by being taken to the waters of baptism. Put another way, water baptism was the sinner’s prayer in century one! Baptism accompanied the acceptance of the gospel.

For example, when Lydia heard Paul preach the gospel, she believed and was immediately baptized with her household (Acts 16:14-15). In the same way, when Paul led the Philippian jailor and his household to the Lord, they were immediately baptized (Acts 16:30-33).

This was the New Testament pattern (see also Acts 2:41; 8:12, 35-37). Baptism marked a complete break with the past and a full entrance into Christ and His church. Baptism was simultaneously an act of faith as well as an expression of faith.[5]

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So when did baptism get separated from receiving Christ? It began in the early second century. Certain influential Christians taught that baptism must be preceded by a period of instruction, prayer, and fasting.[6]

1. Green, *Evangelism in the Early Church*, 153.
2. David F. Wright, *The Lion Handbook of the History of Christianity* (Oxford: Lion Publications, 1990), “Beginnings,” see the section on “Instruction for Baptism.”
3. Augustine called baptism a “visible word” (*Tractates on the Gospel According to Saint John*, LXXX, 3).
4. Mark 16:16; Acts 2:38; Acts 22:16; and 1 Peter 3:21 are some examples.
5. The importance of water baptism in the Christian faith is depicted in early Christian art (Andre Grabar, *Christian Iconography* [Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1968]).
6. Ferguson, *Early Christians Speak*, 33.

—Barna, “Pagan Christianity?” 2008 [emphasis mine, T.J.]

CONFUSING!

It is confusing that today many will happily lead people in a “sinner’s prayer,” but will insist that people study some time before being baptized. Why? They answer that baptism is very important, and should not be administered lightly.

But, should you ask: “Which is more important, the “sinner’s prayer” or baptism?” they will answer, “The sinner’s prayer.”

Surely, then, it is the “sinner’s prayer” [and not baptism] that needs weeks of study because it is “more” important? Something is askew here. [Don’t forget the “sinner’s prayer” is not in the Bible.]

The fact is that in the Bible no one ever went for weeks of baptismal classes. One believed the gospel, they confessed Jesus as Lord, and were baptized immediately. Sadly, much baptism today has come under the control of human tradition and religious red-tape.

[Some may ask: What if there is no preacher available to do the baptism? For an answer, please see the section, ***Who May Baptize Others?*** towards the end of this booklet.]

THE BOOK OF ACTS: CASES OF CONVERSION

As seen in the Acts table, there is much we can learn from the first Christians' conversions. Let's look at some of their cases in more detail.

CASE #1: ACTS 2 – THE CHURCH'S BIRTH

This is an important case to stress, because this is the day the church was born. What happened this day affects the remaining New Testament books, and should be the example for all churches today. We read:

ACTS 2: *36 "Therefore let all the house of Israel know for certain that God has made Him both Lord and Christ—this Jesus whom you crucified." 37 Now when they heard this, they were pierced to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, "Brethren, what shall we do?"*

Peter preached. The people's hearts were cut and they asked what they should do. Peter did not lead them in a prayer. We read:

38 Peter said to them, "Repent, and each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit."

First, Peter said they must repent and be baptized "for the forgiveness of sins" and to "receive the gift of the Holy Spirit."

We need to repent and be baptized. This is God's command. We must surrender & obey.

This is similar to the 1 Peter 3:21 Scripture we looked at earlier: Baptism how we make our "pledge of a clear conscience towards God."

In Acts 2:38 Peter also said that this was how we receive "the gift of the Holy Spirit." The Spirit and water [baptism] are involved in salvation.

WATER & THE SPIRIT

One cannot help but see the parallel to John 3 where, years earlier, Jesus taught a wise man named Nicodemus how to be born again:

JOHN 3: [Jesus said] *Truly, truly, I say to you, Unless a man is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.*

Jesus told Nicodemus that people must be “born of water and the Spirit.” Years later in Acts 2, the day the church is born, Peter told the people the same thing: They needed to “repent and be baptized” in water and they would “receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.” They would then be born again. Scripture works hand-in-hand with Scripture.

[NOTE 1: Some question whether the Acts 2:38 baptism is in water. We know this because baptism “in Jesus’ Name” is in water. See Acts 10:47,48.]

[NOTE 2: Some people teach that the water of John 3:5 refers to the natural birth – the amniotic fluid – and the Spirit refers a spiritual rebirth in Christ. This interpretation is highly questionable because: (a) It finds no support elsewhere in the Bible; (b) It is most logical that Nicodemus would have understood the water to refer to baptism, because both Jesus’ disciples and John had been baptizing people. See Matthew 3:6 and John 4:1; (c) What about stillborns or aborted babies? Is Jesus teaching that they have no hope of heaven because they were not born?]

Let’s continue with Peter’s sermon in Acts 2:

ACTS 2: 38 Peter said to them, “Repent, and each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.

39 “For the promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off, as many as the Lord our God will call to Himself.”

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Peter says that this promise is for "all who are far off, as many as the Lord our God will call to Himself." In other words, the promise is for all people for all time. All churches should still be teaching this today.

Let's read further:

ACTS 2: 41 Those who accepted his message were baptized, and about three thousand were added to their number that day.

We see that "those who accepted his message were baptized." Note that there are only two groups of people here: Those who accepted and were baptized, and those who did not. Unlike today, there was no third group who believed, but were not baptized.

Next, we learn that "about three thousand were added to their number that day." It must have been quite a chore to baptize so many people, but all were baptized "that day." It was that important to the first Christians, because it was Jesus' command. They obeyed.

Today some don't baptize because they say it is inconvenient. It really depends on how seriously one wants to obey Jesus. Many people drive dozens of miles to go to a certain restaurant. Some fly thousands of miles for a meeting or vacation because it is important to them. Remember that people walked hours to be baptized by John because it was that important. Baptism is only "inconvenient" if it is not important to you. True baptism isn't inconvenient. It is a joy!

Lastly, in much of today's world it is far easier to baptize than it was then. Many of us have access to bathtubs, hot tubs, public pools, fish ponds, etc. There are also rivers, lakes, and oceans. The point is that most of us can obey Jesus' command to be baptized if we really want to.

BUT, WHAT ABOUT DESERTS-DWELLERS?

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It is true that some live in deserts and don't have access to much water. Also, some people are extremely ill, and cannot leave their beds to be baptized. What can they do?

I believe Jesus addresses this in the final chapter of John:

JOHN 21: 19... *Then Jesus said to Peter, "Follow Me!"* 20*Then Peter, turning around, saw the disciple whom Jesus loved following (the one who also leaned on His breast at supper, and said, Lord, who is he who betrays You?)* 21*Seeing him, Peter said to Jesus, "Lord, and what of this one?"* 22*Jesus said to him, "If I desire that he remain until I come, what is that to you? You follow Me."* 23*Then this saying went abroad among the brothers, that that disciple should not die. Yet Jesus did not say to him, He shall not die, but, "If I desire that he remain until I come, what is that to you?"*

Jesus calls each of us to personally follow Him. He told Peter, "Follow Me!"

But, Peter pointed to another disciple and asked, "Lord, what of this one?"

Jesus replied, "[W]hat's that to you?" In other words: *Peter, that is not your business.*

Romans 14:12 teaches that "[E]ach one of us will give account concerning himself to God" We will not be answerable for anyone else. How God judges someone else is simply not our business.

So, how will God judge the person who simply cannot be baptized? We can have great peace because God understands our situations and limitations [Hebrews 4:15], and He is the fair Judge who knows all hearts [Luke 16:15]. He knows whether someone is genuinely unable to obey Him, or if someone is lazy or has chosen to refuse Him. Our God will always judge correctly.

The real question we need to ask is not how the bed-ridden or desert-dweller will be judged, but: Have I

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obeyed Jesus? Have I been baptized? Remember, Jesus said, "You follow Me."

On a more serious note: James wrote: "Anyone, then, who knows the good he ought to do and doesn't do it, sins" [James 4:17].

WHAT ABOUT MY LOVED-ONE WHO DIED WITHOUT BEING BAPTIZED?

This links closely to the above point. God knows each individual's situation. He is the Righteous and Fair Judge. Please read the section directly above.

CASE #2: ACTS 8 – THE ETHIOPIAN MAN Baptism is Part of the Gospel Message

Philip, a preacher, meets an Ethiopian eunuch who is reading from the Bible book of Isaiah. He is reading Isaiah 53, where Jesus' suffering on the Cross is prophesied 700 years before. The Ethiopian man doesn't understand the verses, and so invites Philip to explain them to him. We read:

ACTS 8: 32 ...*"He was led like a sheep to the slaughter, and as a lamb before its shearer is silent, so he did not open his mouth. 33 In his humiliation he was deprived of justice. Who can speak of his descendants? For his life was taken from the earth."* 34 *The eunuch asked Philip, "Tell me, please, who is the prophet talking about, himself or someone else?"* 35 *Then Philip began with that very passage of Scripture and told him the good news about Jesus.* 36 *As they traveled along the road, they came to some water and the eunuch said, "Look, here is water. What can stand in the way of my being baptized?"*

How wonderful! The man believed and was baptized. But, did you notice anything extra-interesting about the message Philip preached?

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In verse 35 Philip preached the “good news about Jesus,” and in the next verse the man asked to be baptized. Why did he ask to be baptized? Didn’t Philip only preach to him the good news? Yes, but Jesus’ command to be baptized is part-and-parcel of that gospel message. It is part of the Great Commission [Matthew 28:19]. One cannot preach the gospel without including Jesus’ command to be baptized.

When teaching the gospel we must include Jesus’ command to be baptized. If we don’t then we are teaching an incomplete or changed gospel. [See Galatians 1:6-8.]

CASE #3: ACTS 10 – CORNELIUS’ HOUSEHOLD

This is a wonderful, but long case beginning in chapter 10 and flowing over into chapter 11. If you have never read it, you should now.

Here is the climax:

ACTS 10: 44 While Peter was still speaking these words, the Holy Spirit came on all who heard the message. 45 The circumcised believers who had come with Peter were astonished that the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out even on the Gentiles. 46 For they heard them speaking in tongues and praising God. Then Peter said, 47 “Can anyone keep these people from being baptized with water? They have received the Holy Spirit just as we have.”

48 So he ordered that they be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ. Then they asked Peter to stay with them for a few days.”

Let’s discuss some important points:

First, even though the Holy Spirit baptized the Gentiles, this did not cancel their need for baptism in water. Everyone who understands needs to be baptized in water in obedience to Jesus.

Second, baptism in water is baptism “in the name of Jesus Christ” [v48]. When you see baptism in Jesus’ name, for example Acts 2:38, you know this is baptism in water.

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Third, there was no delay. Cornelius' household was baptized immediately.

CASE #4: ACTS 22 – PAUL'S CONVERSION

In Acts 22 Paul shares his testimony of how he came to Christ. He had seen Jesus on the road to Damascus, and he had been fasting and praying for three days before God sent a man named Ananias to him. Ananias said:

ACTS 22: *16 "And now what are you waiting for? Arise and be baptized and wash away your sins, calling on the name of the Lord."*

First, some believe Paul was saved when Jesus appeared to him on the road, or later while he was praying and fasting. But if this was true why would he be told, "be baptized and wash away your sins"?

Again, we know Jesus washes away sins – not water, but baptism is how Jesus wants us to come to Him. Baptism is surrendering to Christ.

Second, let's consider Paul the person. Galatians 1:15 teaches that Jesus specially chose Paul from birth to be an apostle [See Galatians 1:15]. Paul was chosen, but even he had to obey. He was told: "Arise and be baptized and wash away your sins, calling on the name of the Lord."

If Paul, who had been specially chosen by God, had to be baptized, then how can any of us refuse to obey?

PART 3

GOD'S PROFOUND BEAUTY IN BAPTISM

One reason people don't get baptized [or do not get baptized properly] is they do not understand the joy and beauty involved in baptism.

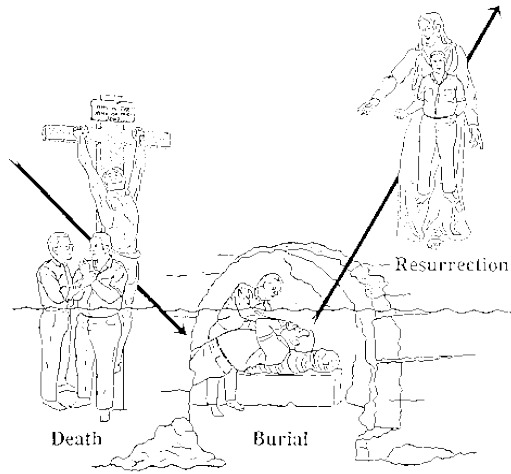
Let's look at that now.

1: BAPTISM IS UNION WITH CHRIST

ROMANS 6: *3 Or don't you know that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? 4We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life. 5For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we will certainly also be united with him in a resurrection like his. 6For we know that our old self was crucified with him so that the body ruled by sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves to sin— 7because anyone who has died has been set free from sin.*

This image illustrates the above verse

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Jesus died, was buried and raised, and Scripture teaches that through baptism, we die, are buried, and raised with Him. We identify with Christ in a deeply profound way.

Verses 3 and 5, however, explain that baptism is more than merely identifying with Jesus.

Verse 3 says we are “baptized into Christ.” We become part of Him through baptism. Furthermore, verse 5 teaches that this is how we are “united with Him.” We read:

ROMANS 6: *5 For if we have been united with Him in a death like his, we will certainly also be united with Him in a resurrection like His.*

Baptism is how we are united with Christ. This promise, however, comes with the conditional word, “if.” To better understand the condition, let’s consider the opposite:

For if we have [not] been united with Him in a death like His, we will certainly [not] also be united with Him in a resurrection like his.

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How are we united with Christ? Through baptism. Of course it is essential to believe, repent, and confess, but Scriptures says that baptism is how we are united with Him. What a profoundly deep and personal invitation Jesus offers!

2: BAPTISM IS BEING CLOTHED WITH CHRIST

GALATIANS 3 *26So in Christ Jesus you are all children of God through faith, 27for all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ.*

All who are baptized into Christ are clothed with Christ. What a wonderful picture! This parallels with the time in Eden when our first parents, Adam and Eve, sinned and tried to cover their nakedness and shame with fig leaves. God sacrificed an animal for clothing to cover them [Genesis 3:7,21].

In the same way, today God provides a covering for us in Christ. Jesus was sacrificed on the Cross to cover our sin and shame.

Now that God has provided a way for us to be saved, we must choose to accept it. How? We must "clothe ourselves in Christ" through baptism.

Now that Christ covers us God no longer sees our sin. How wonderful!

3: BAPTISM IS THE CIRCUMCISION OF CHRIST

COLOSSIANS 2: *11 In Him you were also circumcised with a circumcision not performed by human hands. Your whole self ruled by the flesh was put off when you were circumcised by Christ, 12having been buried with Him in baptism, in which you were also raised with Him through your faith in the working of God,*

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who raised Him from the dead. 13When you were dead in your sins and in the uncircumcision of your flesh, God made you alive with Christ. He forgave us all our sins, 14having canceled the charge of our legal indebtedness, which stood against us and condemned us; He has taken it away, nailing it to the cross.

Circumcision was a physical reminder in the flesh to Old Testament Israel that they were set apart as God's people. In the New Testament baptism is the circumcision of Christ.

One may point out that this circumcision is "not performed by human hands" and so cannot be baptism. It is true that water cannot circumcise the sinful flesh; it is Jesus who does that without "human hands." But, **when** are we circumcised by Christ? We read:

"...when you were circumcised by Christ, having been buried with Him in baptism, in which you were also raised with Him through your faith in the working of God, who raised Him from the dead."

We are therefore circumcised at baptism.

This verse also teaches that faith and baptism work together. So, when we have faith and are baptized Jesus circumcises our hearts.

[NOTE: Some use the above verses to teach infant baptism. They say just as male infants were circumcised in the Old Covenant, so all infants should be baptized today under the New Covenant. But, the Bible doesn't teach this. We refer to Jeremiah 31:31-34. Verse 32 clearly says that the New Covenant will not be like the Old. Those who baptize infants follow the Old Covenant pattern, not the New. Under the Old Covenant boys were included in Israel as babies by circumcision, and then as they grew, were taught to "know the Lord." Likewise, today those who follow the Old pattern "baptize" infants and then, as they grow up, teach them to "know the Lord." Jeremiah 31:34, however, teaches that the New Covenant is not like this. Under the New Covenant, "no longer will a man teach his neighbor and brother saying, Know the Lord; for they will all know Him." All in the New Covenant know the Lord. How? Matthew 28:18-20

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explains one must first be a disciple, i.e. they must first believe and “know the Lord,” before they are baptized. Since infants cannot know the Lord, they should not be baptized. This is how the New Covenant works. (And remember: Infant baptism is not in the Bible.)]

PART 4

THE THIEF ON THE CROSS AND OTHER QUESTIONS

ISAIAH 1: 18Come now, and let us reason together, says Jehovah; though your sins are as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red like crimson, they shall be like wool.

As you have studied this booklet, perhaps questions have come to the fore in your mind. This is good. Christians should never fear questions. In Isaiah 1:18 we learn that God wants us to “reason together.” He wants us to understand.

Below, we will address some common questions that people ask about baptism. If your question is not answered, why not email us? Email: jacobsohns@gmail.com

Q1: BUT, THE THIEF WAS NOT BAPTIZED

While Jesus hung on the cross, there were two thieves; one on His left, one on His right. Here is a conversation they had:

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LUKE 23: *40But the other criminal rebuked him. "Don't you fear God," he said, "since you are under the same sentence? 41We are punished justly, for we are getting what our deeds deserve. But this man has done nothing wrong." 42Then he said, "Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom." 43Jesus answered him, "Truly I tell you, today you will be with me in paradise."*

This is one of the most wonderful examples of Jesus' forgiveness. It shows how accessible God's grace is, no matter where or what we have done.

People, however, often ask, "If the thief was saved without being baptized, why do we need to be baptized?" This is a fair question. Let's discuss it together:

First, how do we know that the thief was not baptized? John the Baptist had been baptizing multitudes [Matthew 3:6]. How do we know the thief was not one of those baptized?

IMPORTANT: Second, Jesus' baptism did not yet exist. Remember, Jesus' baptism is when one is baptized into His death, burial, and resurrection. [See Romans 6:3-7.] Jesus had not yet died, so how could the thief be baptized into Jesus?

But, the main point is that the thief on the cross surrendered to Jesus as much as he was able. We must do the same.

Q2: WHAT ABOUT CONFESSING WITH YOUR MOUTH & BELIEVING IN YOUR HEART?

In Romans we read these words:

ROMANS 10: *9 If you declare with your mouth, "Jesus is Lord," and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. 10For it is with your*

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heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you profess your faith and are saved. 11As Scripture says, "Anyone who believes in him will never be put to shame."

12For there is no difference between Jew and Gentile—the same Lord is Lord of all and richly blesses all who call on him, 13for, "Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved."

Do these verses teach that all we need to do to be saved is believe and confess? Some answer yes, but what about all the Scriptures on baptism? Is the Bible contradicting itself?

THE BIBLE HAS NO CONTRADICTIONS

Let's re-address this very important Bible-study principle: Good Bible students do not use certain Scriptures to prove their point at the exclusion of other Scriptures. We need to look at the whole Bible, and not just at our favorite verses to understand what God is saying. However, if one group of believers gathers their favorite verses to use against another group of believers, aren't we in essence saying the Bible contradicts itself? Isn't this a reason many don't believe; because churches argue with each other over Bible verses?

We need to learn: If the Bible seems to contradict itself, then we are at fault – not the Bible, because we don't understand the Bible properly. We need, therefore, to humble ourselves and ask God to show us how all His Bible works together.

BACK TO ROMANS 10: Based on the fact that the Bible is the perfect word of God, Romans 10's "believe and confess" cannot contradict the numerous baptism verses we have already discussed. These verses have to all work together.

ROMANS 6 OR ROMANS 10?

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Remember, in Romans 6:3-7 [just 4 chapters before Romans 10] Paul explained that we are united with Christ when we are baptized. Is Paul contradicting himself when he emphasizes baptism in Romans 6, and then faith and confession in Romans 10? Of course not, because faith, confession, and baptism all work together.

In fact, faith, confession, and baptism is the pattern we see in the first church. Look back to page 16 to the examples of conversion from the book of Acts. You will see that the first Christians believed, confessed, and were baptized. Romans 10's faith and confession and Romans 6's baptism therefore work together for salvation.

[NOTE: Verses, like John 3:16, emphasize faith in Christ for salvation, but not at the exclusion of confession and baptism. We need to take all of God's Word into account, and not just parts.]

WHY THEN, DID PAUL WRITE ROMANS 10?

So, why would Paul say that one only needs to believe and confess to be saved? The answer is in the context. He is making a point about faith and works. Let's look at the first verses of Romans 10:

ROMANS 10: *1Brothers and sisters, my heart's desire and prayer to God for the Israelites is that they may be saved. 2For I can testify about them that they are zealous for God, but their zeal is not based on knowledge. 3Since they did not know the righteousness of God and sought to establish their own, they did not submit to God's righteousness. 4Christ is the end of the law so that there may be righteousness for everyone who believes.*

Paul is discussing the Israelites who had great zeal for God, but had rejected "God's righteousness": Jesus. They were trying to be saved by keeping the Old Testament law – good works. Paul says that "Christ is the end of the law

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so that there may be righteousness for everyone who believes" [v4]. Faith as opposed to works.

That is Paul's point. Salvation is a gift. It cannot be earned by zealous works; it comes by faith.

Furthermore, this gift was for all people – not just the Jew. "For there is no difference between Jew and Gentile-- the same Lord is Lord of all and richly blesses **all** who call on Him..." [v12]. So everyone, whether Jew or Gentile, who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved by faith; not works.

Q3: BUT, ISN'T BAPTISM A WORK?

Some then ask: "Isn't baptism a work? After all, we just read that faith saves, not works."

Sure, baptism can be a work – if your faith is in the water, and not in Christ. But, the same can be said of anything – even confession. Romans 10:10 says: "and *it is with your mouth that you confess your faith and are saved.*"

Does this mean that confession of faith saves us? Is your mouth the instrument of your salvation? Of course not. But then, does this mean we don't have to confess our faith?

Let's put this another way: What if someone believed in their heart, but refused to confess with their mouth that Jesus is Lord; would they be saved?

Again, we are not the Judge, but whoever refuses God is on dangerous ground.

Now, why can't the same be said of baptism? Jesus commands baptism. What will happen to the person who refuses to be baptized? Again, God is the Judge, but wouldn't you rather just obey Him? Why take the chance?

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The point is that baptism – like confession – is a natural extension of our faith in Christ who saves us. Baptism and confession are not “works” because we are not trusting in them to save us. We are trusting in Christ. Anyone who refuses to confess Christ as Lord or refuses to be baptized is resisting God. We should follow the example of the first Christians in the book of Acts. They believed, confessed, and were baptized. [Again, see the chart on page 16.] Should we do anything less?

“CALLING ON THE NAME OF THE LORD”

Romans 10:12 teaches that salvation is promised to “all who call on Him [Jesus].”

Well, how does one call on Jesus? How did the first Christians call on His name? We know they didn’t say the “sinner’s prayer” [page 17]. Thankfully, we don’t need to guess. We can read exactly how one “calls on the name of the Lord” from Paul’s conversion:

ACTS 22: *14“Then he [Ananias, the man who baptized Paul] said: ‘The God of our ancestors has chosen you to know His will and to see the Righteous One and to hear words from His mouth. 15You will be His witness to all people of what you have seen and heard. 16 And now what are you waiting for? Get up, be baptized and wash your sins away, calling on His name.’*

Paul was baptized while “calling on His [Jesus’] name.” What a wonderful example! It shows the confession of faith [Romans 10] working with baptism into Christ [Romans 6]. Paul wrote, “Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved” [Romans 10:13]. That is exactly what Paul did when he was baptized.

So, again, Paul [1] believed and was [2] baptized while [3] calling on the name of the Lord. This is Romans 6 and 10 working together.

The Bible is God’s perfect Holy Spirit-inspired Word. It always works together [2 Peter 1:20,21].

Q4: PAUL DIDN'T COME TO BAPTIZE

In 1 Corinthians we read that Paul said he did not come to baptize. What did he mean? Again, the context gives us insight:

1 CORINTHIANS 1: *11 My brothers and sisters, some from Chloe's household have informed me that there are quarrels among you. 12 What I mean is this: One of you says, "I follow Paul"; another, "I follow Apollos"; another, "I follow Cephas"; still another, "I follow Christ." 13 Is Christ divided? Was Paul crucified for you?*

Were you baptized in the name of Paul? 14 I thank God that I did not baptize any of you except Crispus and Gaius, 15 so no one can say that you were baptized in my name. 16 (Yes, I also baptized the household of Stephanas; beyond that, I don't remember if I baptized anyone else.) 17 For Christ did not send me to baptize, but to preach the gospel—not with wisdom and eloquence, lest the cross of Christ be emptied of its power.

Let us remember again that the Bible cannot contradict itself, so let's seek to understand what God is saying to us:

First, Jesus commanded baptism [Matthew 28:19,20]. Paul would not preach against Jesus' command.

Second, if Paul was so opposed to baptism, why did he baptize Crispus, Gaius, and the house of Stephanas at all? [v14-16]. Also, why was he, himself, baptized? [Acts 9:18].

Thirdly, here's the context: Paul was addressing a disunity problem in the Corinthian church. Some followed Paul, others Apollos, and others Cephas [1 Corinthians 1:12]. Paul wanted no part of that. He wanted the people

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to follow Christ alone. He was concerned that if he baptized more people, they would claim to follow him, and not Christ, and cause even more disunity.

Paul came to preach the gospel and not baptize because he wanted them to understand that salvation was in Jesus only and not in any person. This is exactly what Paul explains:

1 CORINTHIANS 3: *5What, after all, is Apollos? And what is Paul? Only servants, through whom you came to believe—as the Lord has assigned to each his task. 6 I planted the seed, Apollos watered it, but God has been making it grow. 7So neither the one who plants nor the one who waters is anything, but only God, who makes things grow.*

Paul wanted people to come to Christ and be baptized, not because they wanted to follow him, but because they were convicted by the message of the gospel. His goal was, therefore, not to baptize, but to plant and water the gospel seed. If people believed Christ it wouldn't matter who baptized them, because they were being baptized into Christ.

A PERSONAL TESTIMONY

As a foreign missionary, I can personally attest to what Paul means when he says he did not come to baptize. I was often asked to baptize others because some thought foreign missionaries were superior to the local workers. I refused and rather let the local Christians baptize because the churches had to realize that the power of salvation is in Jesus, and nowhere else.

When considering the above and the numerous verses for baptism already mentioned in this booklet, it is clear that Paul was not against baptism.

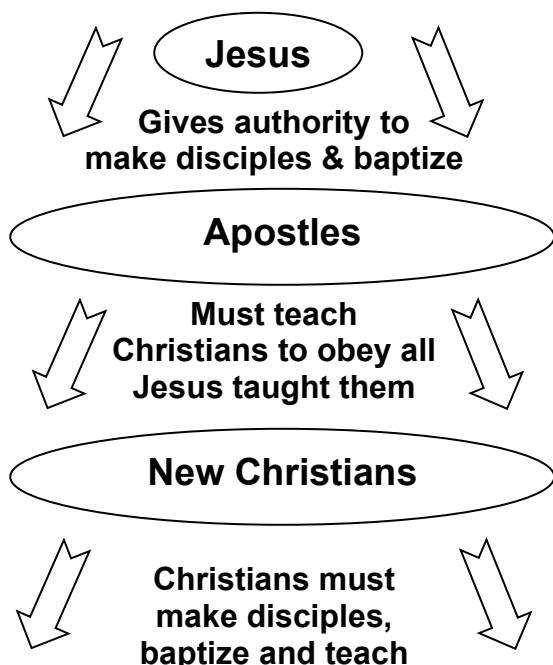
Those who refuse baptism because "Paul refused it," are taking the Bible out of context and are ignoring Jesus' command.

Q5: WHO MAY BAPTIZE OTHERS?

Some may ask: "If Paul did not baptize, then how would people be baptized?" This is wonderful question, because it reveals a freedom in Christ largely lost in modern churches. The fact is every Christian has the Christ-given authority to baptize others!

There is only one place in the Bible where authority is given to baptize others. Matthew 28:18-20. Please read this carefully, because once understood it opens doors for all Christians to spread the Gospel with Jesus' authority and joy.

MATTHEW 28: *18Then Jesus came to them and said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. 19Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, 20and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age"*



Please follow the logic of Matthew 28:18-20:

Step 1: Jesus spoke to the apostles. He gave them authority to make disciples and baptize. He then told them to teach all those baptized to obey everything He had commanded them.

Step 2: The apostles make disciples and baptize. They must now teach the new disciples to obey everything that Jesus commanded them. This means they must teach the new Christians to make disciples, baptize, and teach.

Step 3: These new Christians now have authority from Jesus. They go, make disciples, baptize, and teach the new Christians to do the same.

Step 4: And so on "to the very end of the age."

This means that if you are a baptized disciple of Jesus, then you have authority from Jesus Himself to make disciples and baptize! There is no other Bible verse that

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teaches baptismal authority. In fact, we have the great example in Acts 8:1-4 where the apostles stayed in Jerusalem, but the Christians spread the word wherever they went.

The above may be shocking news, but it makes sense. It explains how the 3,000 people baptized in Acts 2 were all baptized "that day." It would have taken hours for the apostles to baptize so many, so they probably had help. Those baptized immediately had authority to baptize others. This also explains why the first century church grew so quickly. All Christians had the authority to teach unbelievers, make disciples, and baptize.

BUT, ISN'T THE PRIEST SPECIALLY ORDAINED?

No. Firstly, the Bible says that all Christians are "royal priests" [1 Peter 2:9]. We are all priests with authority from Jesus.

Second, the power of forgiveness is only in Jesus. The person doing the baptizing has no special power.

To illustrate, what if days after you are baptized it is found that the preacher had been cheating on his wife? Would this make your baptism invalid? Of course not. Your faith is in Jesus. You were submitting to Him, and not to the person doing the baptism. You were united with Jesus – not with the person baptizing.

So, if you are not baptized, and cannot find a preacher to baptize you, ask any baptized Christian. They have Jesus' authority, and once you are baptized, so will you!

[NOTE: Some Christians may argue: Who am I to baptize others? That question reveals that right attitude of heart. Truly we are nothing. The power is in Jesus only. We are honored by God to be called His fellow-workers.]

A RIBBON: THE WATER & THE SPIRIT

God is a God of order and His Bible is therefore ordered too. Here is an exciting "ribbon" that we see running

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through the whole Bible: The “ribbon of the **water** and the **Spirit**.” We should not be surprised that the Spirit and water are linked, because He is referred to as “living water” [John 7:39]. Let’s look closer at that ribbon:

1. GENESIS: First, at the **genesis/beginning** of all things we see the “**Spirit** of God hovering over the **waters**” [Genesis 1:2].

2. JESUS’ BAPTISM: Next, at the **genesis/ beginning** of His ministry, we read, “As Jesus was coming up out of the **water**, He saw heaven being torn open and the **Spirit** descended on Him like a dove” [Mark 1:10].

3. BORN AGAIN: Later, Jesus told Nicodemus that in order for one to be born again one needs to be “born of **water** and the **Spirit**” [John 3:5]. This is a new beginning, a **re-genesis**.

4. BIRTH OF THE CHURCH: Next, we see water and the Spirit emphasized again at the **genesis/birth** of the church. Peter told the people, “Repent and be **baptized**, everyone of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you shall receive the gift of the **Holy Spirit**” [Acts 3:37,38]. [Remember Acts 10:47,48: Baptism in Jesus’ Name is baptism in water.]

5. GENTILES: In Acts 10 we read of the **beginning/genesis** of the Gospel for the Gentiles. The **Spirit** baptizes and they are baptized with **water**.

6. TITUS: We read: “But, when the kindness of God our Savior, and his love toward man, appeared, He saved us, not by works done in righteousness, but according to his mercy, through the **washing of regeneration** [re-genesis] and renewing of the **Holy Spirit**...” [Titus 3:4,5]. Water and the Spirit.

There are other examples, but isn’t it interesting how the Spirit and water are so closely linked to beginnings

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and re-births all through the Bible? This must mean something!

MIGHTY NAAMAN SURRENDERS

Let's end this booklet on a more contemplative note from the Old Testament: The wonderful account of the healing of Naaman. This story provides a powerful example of surrendering to God and doing things His way.

Naaman was a successful soldier from Syria, but he had leprosy. He went to Israel to Elisha the prophet for healing, but Elisha wouldn't even see him. Rather he sent Naaman this message:

2 KINGS 5: *10"Go, wash yourself seven times in the Jordan, and your flesh will be restored and you will be cleansed."*

The story continues:

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. 12 Are not Abana and Pharpar, the rivers of Damascus, better than all the waters of Israel? Couldn't I wash in them and be cleansed?" So he turned and went off in a rage."

Naaman was right in at least one important aspect: How could water cure his leprosy? If it could, surely he could have just washed in the rivers of his homeland? But, God had given him a command through Elisha the prophet. Would he be humble enough to obey God? We read further:

13Naaman's servants went to him and said, "My father, if the prophet had told you to do some great thing, would you not have done it? How much more, then, when he tells you, 'Wash and be cleansed!'" 14So he went down and dipped himself in

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the Jordan seven times, as the man of God had told him, and his flesh was restored and became clean like that of a young boy.

Praise God! Naaman was healed. The power of healing, however, was never in the water. It was always in God. Naaman had to surrender and submit to God, and only when he did, God healed him.

Some say that Naaman was saved by faith. This is true, but "faith without works is dead" [James 2:26]. Question: Would Naaman have been healed had he simply believed, but refused to dip himself seven times as instructed? It is doubtful.

In the same way, baptism is not about the water. It is all about surrendering to God. Water can no more remove sins than it can remove leprosy, but God can do both!

We would be wise to obey Jesus. After all, He is the One who died on the Cross. We need to follow Him, and not what people teach.

FINAL THOUGHTS

Sadly, some disagree with baptism, even though Jesus commands it. But, here is a question: How will being baptized harm you? If you get in the water because you love and want to obey Jesus, it can only be good. On the other hand refusing baptism can result in eternal harm. So, why not just do it? [See James 4:6.]

To those who still disagree with baptism we ask: Are you encouraging disobedience? Didn't Jesus command baptism?

Lastly, some say that baptism is just another command of Jesus, like loving one another or helping orphans and widows. I'm not so sure. If that was true, then why did He specifically include baptism in His Great Commission? Read again:

MATTHEW 28:18-20

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Then Jesus came to them and said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age"

If you need to be baptized, but can't find anyone to help you, email me and I will try to find someone in your area.
Contact: jacobsohns@gmail.com or visit
www.NeverEndingHope.com

May God bless you! He loves you and sent Jesus to save you. I look forward to meeting you in heaven one day!

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