



A Fresh Look at
What God Says
About Water Baptism

As always, if we can help you in any way, please contact the church here at
P.O. Box 68309, Indianapolis, IN 46268 USA.

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A Fresh Look At What God Says About Water Baptism

It is unfortunate, yet undeniable, that the subject of water baptism has polarized and divided men for centuries. Unregenerate religious leaders and other “christians” have littered history with ungodly exploits in defense of their doctrines. Not uncommon are accounts of religious leaders and “scholars” physically seizing those that would dare to question whether or not infant baptism via sprinkling is allowable by God. After a mock “orthodoxy” trial, these well-respected church elders, preachers and authors literally drowned to the death the nonconformists in a river to demonstrate the superiority of their doctrine of sprinkling over immersion baptism.

As documented case history, the City Council of Zurich passed a legal decree in March, 1526. The edict commanded that those who immersed in water one that had confessed faith in Jesus Christ (rather than upholding the accepted church ordinance of the day: sprinkling all infants) were to be publicly executed by drowning. In a short span of time, the socially acceptable religious bodies of that day had murdered between four and five thousand men and women in this manner (p.269, Church History in Plain Language, Bruce L. Shelley).

While the atrocity of murder seems uncivilized and socially unacceptable in our day and time, our Master, Jesus Christ, said very clearly that the barriers and divisions and antagonism that mark the “christendom” of today is murder,

as judged by the Heavenly Courts. This is true as absolutely as if we also literally murdered one-another by forcible drowning (Mt.5:21-24; 7:1-2; 12:7; Jas.3:13-18; 1Jn.3:14-16; 4:20-21; Lk.10:29). That's really frightening, isn't it?

Is there an answer? Should we, or can we, allow the schisms that have characterized all of christian history to mar our unity and Fellowship with the Father and one another? Of course not. We have no desire, if we're honest and discerning, to face Him with our current divisions. Should we then compromise the Word of God to the lowest common denominator of "truth" to accommodate everyone that seems sincere enough? God forbid! In so doing, we would allow others to lose their souls by our careless or cowardly approach to the Word of God. That Word will judge every man impartially on the Last Day, regardless of our sincerity (Jn.12:48; 1Tim.4:1-2, 16; Mt.7:21; 2Tim.4:3).

What then can we do? On the subject of baptism, or any other subject in God's Word, we must in some respect view the subject from God's perspective, as one "seated with Christ in Heavenly Realms" with "the mind of Christ." The other alternative (seemingly the one exercised most frequently in history) is warring with words and an attorney's logic. This eliminates any chance whatsoever that we will truly understand the Word of the Lord. (See Mt.11:25-27; 1Cor.1:25-30, 2:9-16.)

Always the Challenge

Though you may feel as if you already understand biblical "baptism in water," in view of the fact that this subject is so important to Jesus, I would still plead with you to enter into the next few pages with a posture of true Wisdom: "Fear of the Lord." Pretend (as I attempt to in looking into any subject in the Word of God) that you have never previously considered the idea and just want to know what Almighty God (rather than man) has said regarding this important subject of baptism. Pretend that you are on a desert island and have never seen a Bible before, or heard of the idea of "church." Suddenly, the Creator of the Universe dropped a Book down to you and asked you to act on what He has to say about "baptism" in His Book. Will you do this, regardless of your previous position on the subject? Can you discipline your heart to do this, just one more time, no matter how well studied you may be? (If you can't look inside your own heart and say "Yes, I will honestly look at, and prayerfully consider these thoughts from the Scriptures without the eyeglasses of a predetermined viewpoint on baptism," then it would be best not to go on at this point. The temptation to peruse casually, or to use the time evaluating the author, rather than letting the Word evaluate us, will always be with us in such situations. Only the truly "good and honest hearts"

will approach challenges in the Word in the way our Father intends—with teachable hearts. What a battle for us all!

Having gotten to this point, it is my desperate prayer that the divisions and complexities that the “doctrines of men” have created (it surely is not our Father’s fault!) can be in some measure diminished by God’s great grace and whatever Truth you may find in these pages. In the remainder of this discussion would you give me the privilege of being very frank and to the point? I will have to trust you that you will not ask me to walk a tightrope of diplomacy and Dale Carnegie (I’m not very good at that kind of thing anyway). I do promise that I’ll do my best to speak the Word of the Lord if you’ll read on. I must do it, however, without apology to the myriad of “teachings” in the religious world today. Our God is a person, and therefore does not hold two contradictory opinions on any subject whatsoever. It really does matter to our Father (as you read in the previously listed verses of Scripture) what we believe and what we do. Will you resolve, as I truly hope that I have, that you will not pass from this life having forfeited any of the riches that He has held out to you, His child?

We can choose to forfeit His Best, and even salvation itself, by ignorance of His Word. Loss will also be suffered whenever laziness, procrastination, or defensiveness hinder our pursuit of that which would honor the God that died for us. So many have disobeyed the Living God due to potential consequences in their families or workplace or church. Please look to Heaven with a clear conscience and say “Yes! I’ll follow You Jesus wherever you go, immediately, no matter what the cost!” Now, onward!

The Dilemma

In my experience in various parts of the religious world, it seems to me that some of us have overlooked the significance that the Word of God assigns to the subject of baptism. Why would a person with a good heart and a good understanding of the Word of God and the Good News of Jesus Christ overlook the heavy weight that God places on water Baptism every single time that He (God) mentions it? Usually it is because all of their lives most have been taught (wonderfully) that Salvation is by Faith and the Grace of God—and Baptism doesn’t seem to fit in to this picture anywhere.

It is said, “If it is a ‘work’ necessary to be saved that is added to the work of the cross—it is surely optional and superfluous, no matter how good a thing it might be.” While this is certainly true, without discernment, a delicate line can easily be crossed which leads down a path of denying Jesus by denying the immutability of His Word.

Others, meanwhile, in good conscience and an honest attempt to “speak where the Bible speaks and be silent where the Bible is silent” have moved in a direction that has deeply grieved our God. This has endangered true Fellowship with Jesus as a living Person. This school has viewed baptism as part of a formula for Salvation. In the process (though the place of these issues in the Scriptures is immense), we have raised up a generation of church-goers that have never known a living intimacy and vital, tangible friendship with Jesus. Though certainly no one would verbalize it as such, Jesus, in this environment, isn't the focal point of Salvation at all. He's really, objectively speaking, not even a “sixth step” along with “hear, believe, repent, confess and be baptized.” He is, instead, thought to have taught us a recipe that would yield salvation if properly implemented, even down to the “magic words” that we say over the ceremony. If we pursue this course, Jesus died in order to leave us a formula for salvation and a rule book for living the “good christian life.”

Unfortunately, when this view is embraced, the only true hope for true, “abundant Life” as a “new creation,” with “rivers of living water gushing from his belly” and living in the “power of an indestructible life,” in true, deep fellowship with the Creator of time and eternity is lost because we have never met, really met, Jesus from Nazareth. Some have embraced only a historical idea and doctrine, rather than a living friend. What a tragedy!

The living and active Word of the living and active God of the Word must be our source of wisdom and guidance in order to harmonize (without compromise) the seeming complexities of trusting absolutely “justification by Faith” with many other verses that may *seem* to require adding something to our Faith. How are we to understand: “Unless you Repent, you will all perish,” and “He that believes and is baptized shall be saved.” Is the verse “If you confess with your mouth, ‘Jesus is Lord,’ and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved” adding a “good work” (confessing literally and verbally with your mouth) to simple Faith as a basis of Justification by the Blood of Christ? (Rom.3:22-24, 10:9-10; Luke 13:3; Mk.16:16; Acts 2:38). Since “In the Beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God and the Word was God” was written before time and creation in the heart of the Eternal Godhead, it is well worth our while to penetrate deeply into every aspect of the Utterance of God recorded for us. Would you agree?

It seems reasonable that we should never relegate anything to a secondary place due to abuses perpetrated in the past. Right? What God says to us about any given subject we must hold precious and jealously guard. Make it your fervent quest to “let none of His Words fall to the ground” ...for as we

penetrate deeper into the Word of God, we penetrate deeper into Eternal Divinity. "...and the Word was God."

Please do not, as you read this, make the mistake of letting the prejudices of the "empty traditions handed down by our forefathers" blind you to anything in His Word and Heart. There is so much that the Creator would desire us to comprehend more fully and respond to in Faith-filled obedience. Is that not the whole of the Christ-life, to walk in intimate fellowship with and obedience to "every Word that proceeds from the mouth of God?" (Jn.17:3-4; Jn.14:15-22; Deut.8:1-14; Mt.4:4). Please move on to the thoughts that follow with a "good and honest heart." (This is the only "good soil" according to Jesus: Lk.6:43-49; 8:8-15.) Approach the Word, always, with instant "on earth as it is in Heaven" obedience if it is truly the Word of the Lord. Do not consider ramifications. Do not ponder the cost of walking in the Truth of God and then procrastinate or dilute the Truth or your response to appease mere men. It cannot be worth it, under any circumstances. Agreed?!

Jesus in His Fullness and ALL of His Word

A principle worth remembering is, as the writer of Psalm 119 said (by the authority and inspiration of God), "The sum of Thy Word is Truth" (RV, NAS, verse 160). What that means is simply this: We cannot take a verse of scripture that says what we'd like it to say and camp out on that passage as if it is not part of an integral whole. The Person of Jesus Christ is "Truth" (John 14:6; 1:1). Nothing less than the entire Word, and the entire Person of Jesus of Nazareth should be held out as "Truth" on any given subject. It was readily seen in Jesus' day that the "experts in the Bible" did err, "not knowing the scriptures or the power of God." They continually accused the Author and the Personification of Truth of being "unscriptural." Take a step back in awe before you pigeon-hole baptism as some trite religious nicety for goopy zealots. Try to understand *all* that God has to say and all that Jesus did (and "is") about any given subject!

EXAMPLE: Suppose that I said to you, "You must receive nutrition or you will absolutely die." You would agree that the truth stands as beyond debate (particularly if God had made a sovereign statement to this affect). While this statement is absolute in terms of its accuracy, it does not eliminate the mandatory nature of other elements, such as air and water.

APPLICATION: "The sum of Thy Word is Truth." It is therefore fair to say that we may not take a verse such as "If you confess with your mouth that 'Jesus is Lord,' and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead,

you will be saved” (Rom.10:9) and call that verse the way unto salvation. Why? Because Jesus, our Lord said, “Unless you REPENT you will all perish” (Lk.13:3, 14:33). Since no one can at the same time perish and be saved (remember that “the sum of Thy Word is Truth”), it is absolutely necessary to believe in your heart that God raised Jesus from the dead and gave Him a Name above every Name.

Clearly, it is also necessary to literally speak out loud with your lips that you hereby declare publicly that you acknowledge what the Father has done in Jesus: He is Lord of Heaven and earth. Henceforth He will also be recognized Lord of every nook and cranny, ambition, fear, vice and thought in your life also.

It is also clear (“the sum of the Word is Truth”) that repentance (the change of mind and implementation in a practical, observable way of the new direction you are now taking) is just as mandatory for salvation! The first passage is fully true, yet so is the second passage fully true. We need to fully embrace all Scripture, not accept some and push some to the “back burner” because we don’t completely understand how to harmonize the two ideas.

If other things, such as baptism, were given similar weight in the heart and Word of God, they would be no less valid because these other things are true. Would you agree with this much?

EXAMPLE: Because we know that it is true, “You must eat food or you will absolutely die,” that is not to say, “If you eat food you will absolutely live.”

APPLICATION: We have already seen that “If you confess with your lips, ‘Jesus is Lord,’ and believe in your heart God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved.” Yet, who more than Satan believes that God raised Jesus from the dead? It is not enough to believe this only! “Even the demons believe—and tremble! You foolish man, do you want evidence that faith without deeds is useless?” (Jas.2:19-26). Most that we say are “believers” don’t believe as much as the demons do. Few men that “go to church” have ever really “trembled” at the thought of approaching an all-powerful and Holy God. Most have been taught just to say a little prayer in order to go to Heaven. Since the demons believe enough to “tremble,” are they therefore saved? Of course not.

Let’s carry the analogy a step further. The confession with the lips that “Jesus is Lord” is apparently not a free ticket into salvation, in and of itself, either. Jesus Himself said, “Many will say to me on that day, ‘Lord, Lord did we not prophesy in Your Name, and in Your Name drive out demons, and perform many miracles?’ Then I will tell them plainly, ‘I never knew

you. Away from me you evil doers! You did not do the will of my Father.” (Mt. 7:21-23). To say with your lips “Jesus is Lord” isn’t the end of the road, is it? And obviously they believed God raised Jesus from the dead—they even performed miracles and cast out demons in His Name! While the Word of God is inspired and therefore confession of “Jesus is Lord” with the lips is mandatory, it is obviously not sufficient in itself to guarantee salvation. “The sum of the Word is Truth.”

What IS Water Baptism, According to God?

With that as a backdrop, let’s look without prejudiced or preconceived ideas at what the Bible, the heart of God, is on Baptism. We mustn’t, of course, eliminate or minimize the other expressions of approaching God through faith in Christ alone, but understand God’s heart and penetrate into what HE means when He speaks of “faith”.

On the next page, you will find a listing of every single time that God used the word “baptism” in His Word. If you are serious in understanding what God has to say about this, I know that you’ll find it greatly rewarding and enlightening to look up each of the references our God has made to water baptism. Look at His Word about this subject in the teaching of Jesus and His Apostles, and in the Book of Acts (where God was gracious enough to give us living examples of men walking in this teaching). The two (the teaching and the example) correspond, as we might imagine that they would. If you wanted to know everything that an encyclopedia has to say about “Relativity,” you wouldn’t look under “skydiving.” Nor would you try to understand God’s view of money by looking at Jesus’ teaching about divorce. It is also safe to say that the best way to learn of the mind of your Creator on baptism is to read each of the times our God (Who wastes no words) presents to us His thoughts on the matter.

Please read each reference. Honestly write down (as a child, in simplicity, without straining to apply some high and lofty denominational doctrine to it!) the *weight* that the Father has assigned to “water baptism.” Now if you believe exactly **that** (which Jesus, and the men of God that knew Him, had to say about water baptism), and tell others exactly **that**—you are not far from the Kingdom. I wouldn’t dare teach anything about baptism that gives it less value than these passages, would you?

Baptize, Baptized, Baptizing, Baptism

Matthew 3:1, 3:6, 3:7, 3:13, 3:11, 3:14, 3:16, 11:11, 11:12, 14:2, 14:8, 16:14, 17:13, 20:22, 20:23, 21:25, 28:19

Mark 1:4, 1:5, 1:8, 1:9, 10:38, 10:39, 11:30, 16:16

Luke 3:3, 3:7, 3:12, 3:16, 3:21, 7:29, 7:30, 12:50, 20:4

John 1:25, 1:26, 1:28, 1:31, 1:33, 3:22, 3:23, 3:26, 4:1, 4:2, 10:40

Acts 1:5, 1:22, 2:38, 2:41, 8:12, 8:13, 8:16, 8:36, 8:38, 9:18, 10:37, 10:47, 10:48, 11:16, 13:24, 16:15, 16:33, 18:8, 18:25, 19:3, 19:4, 19:5, 22:16

Romans 6:3, 6:4

1 Corinthians 1:13, 1:14, 1:15, 1:16, 1:17, 10:2, 12:13, 15:29

Galatians 3:27

Ephesians 4:5

Colossians 2:12

Hebrews 6:2

1 Peter 3:21

There is absolutely no possibility that one could read what the Bible has to say about it and conclude that it is simply a ritual or symbol to obey because “Jesus said so.” Nor is the significance of baptism limited to the example of Jesus Himself being immersed in water. It is not simply a way to “place membership” at a local church. It is not just a horizontal “outward act.” At least that is not the way Jesus, Paul, Peter, John, Luke, and the men we can trust saw it! All of the folks we read about in the Bible, under apostolic teaching, that saw the opportunity of being immersed in water did so *immediately*, even after midnight! There was nothing in any of them that wanted to debate the issue or wait until “Baptism Sunday!” They saw something that today’s religious world often has overlooked about God’s Heart in water baptism.

Is it a “command?” Jesus did, we all know, “say so.” Specifically, “He that believes and is baptized shall be saved” and “Go make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy

Spirit, teaching them to obey all things I have commanded you” (Mk.16:16; Mt.28:18-20). And, you surely agree, that the reigning King of the Universe “said so” is more than sufficient cause for anyone who has not been immersed in water to respond to His command.

Shouldn't we all eagerly pursue all that God has for us? Remember the Treasurer of the nation of Ethiopia who responded to the teaching about Jesus (Acts 8) with, “Here is water, what hinders me from being baptized?!” Certainly 100% of those that really love Jesus will “keep His commands” (Jn.14:15) without rationalizing. If you are a devoted follower of Jesus, or are ready to become one, and are not in Christ's ultimate Will and have not been immersed in water to this point, you can (and should) quickly find a Disciple to immerse you, even if it is after midnight when you read this.

That would be a response made in “good company.” Recall the man who was the apostle Paul's guard in the jail cell in Philippi. He gave his life to Christ and was immediately baptized (Acts 16:33)—at probably 1:00 AM, not the next month, or three years later! The men and women that heard the teaching about Jesus, and the response that God called for, were all seemingly very convinced at the urgency of response to the Good News about Jesus. We must also, if we are responding to the same Jesus and the same Gospel that they heard.

Even beyond that, no one could honestly read only what the Word of God has to say about baptism (as if on a desert island without preconceived ideas) and conclude that it is simply a visible ritual to compliment the religious life, or to join a local church roll. If you have read the attached complete list of verses in context, you must be impressed as I was at the awesome weight that God attaches to “baptism”/“baptizein, baptisma” (“immersion” is the Greek word that God selected) every time He mentions it. At no time is the idea of baptism in water, immersion of a person who has given his life to Jesus Christ, ever referred to, or treated by anyone in the Bible, as an optional symbol. It mustn't be done at one's leisure (or skipped entirely), or be done by sprinkling.

(God could have used the words “*ballo*” or “*rhantizo*” if He had meant them to be baptized by “pouring” or “sprinkling.” One could say that *baptizo* and the associated words for “baptism” may include “pouring, until totally saturated” based on certain references related to the Holy Spirit “outpouring”—though certainly never would the word baptism mean “sprinkled.”)

I know, fellow pilgrims, that God is not a tyrant that is looking to smoke anyone who does not line up with every “jot and tittle.” Yet I also know how presumptuous it is of mere men such as you and I to trifle with the Eternal

BAPTISM, BAPTIST, BAPTIZE
A. Nouns.

1. **BAPTISMA** (*βαπτισμα*), **baptism**, consisting of the processes of immersion, submersion and emergence (from *baptō*, to dip), is us

Vine's Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words

Funk & Wagnalls Dictionary

ba-o-bab (bā'ō-bab, bā'ō-) *n.* An African tree with a thick trunk, bearing edible fruit. [*< native African name*]
bap-tism (bap'tiz-əm) *n.* 1. The act of baptizing or of being baptized; esp., the Christian sacrament of initiation into the Church. 2. Any initiatory or purifying experience. [*< OF < LL < Gk. baptisimos immersion*] — **bap-tis-mal** (bap'tiz-məl) *adj.* — **bap-tis-mal-ly** *adv.*
Bap-tist (bap'tist)

bap-tize (bap'tiz/, bap'tīz) *v. -tized, -tizing* *vt.* 1. To immerse in water or sprinkle water on in Christian baptism. 2. To christen. 3. To cleanse or initiate. — *vi.* 4. To administer baptism. [*Also Brit. -bap-tise*]. [*< OF < LL Gk. baptizein to immerse, wash*] — **bap-tiz'er** *n.*
bar (bār) *n.* 1. A piece of wood, metal, etc., evenly shaped and long in proportion to its width and thickness, used as a

Word that “was with God and was God!” Agreed? *And the blessings that we forfeit by not penetrating fully into His Will for us!* I want everything that He wants for me. I crave to “apprehend that for which I am apprehended of Christ Jesus.” Surely that is no less than we owe the God who gave His Son to die for us.

Additionally, you must not be “yoked” to, be a member of, a Christian group that would persist in denying or rationalizing away what our One Lord has clearly said about this or any other subject. Our lives must be joined only to those that really love Him enough to obey Him from the heart every time they learn something new, regardless of the consequences. There is no time to waste!

Consider these examples:

1. (Acts 2:36-41) A multitude were “cut to the heart” and asked what to do to be saved. Would you have a *different* answer than an apostle who was “filled with the Holy Spirit?” If someone asks me: “What must I do?” I dare say I am not going to answer as men often do today “Bow your heads and ask Jesus to come into your heart to be your personal Savior.” Nowhere in the Bible is the “Sinner’s prayer” (or sprinkling of an infant) given as the hope of salvation.

The majority of popular teaching makes Jesus out to be a wishy-washy “do me a favor” kind of “savior,” rather than the Infinite and Immortal Creator of the galaxies. If we really “see Him Who is invisible,” we bow our knee to Him, in reverence and sorrow that we were the cause of His death when He

walked among us. And we “follow the Lamb wherever He goes” because He is a great and mighty King over all of the heavens and the earth.

To demonstrate that the popular view of “conversion” just mentioned cannot be correct, look at the multitude of conversions that occur in the New Testament church record. Not even one time is anyone asked to say a “sinner’s prayer” and invite Jesus into their heart. In light of that fact, how could we, even one more time, dare to answer the question “What must I do to be saved” with an answer like that? (Remember—you gave me the permission to be frank with you early on in this discussion. Don’t get upset now—just see if these things are true. Can you find even one example of “asking Jesus to come into one’s heart and be their personal Savior?”)

Personally, when asked what a person “must do to be saved” I’ve got to answer, at least within the conversation somewhere, like the inspired Apostle Peter did: “Repent and be immersed every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ.” Why, Peter? “So that your sins may be forgiven.” No matter how you translate it, what a great reason to repent and be immersed!

Peter went on to warn them and plead with them to “save themselves” (vs. 40), and “those who accepted his message were immersed”—3,000 of them heard the message of Jesus and were baptized and added to the number of disciples (vs. 41). How would you or I be added to the number of disciples in some *other* manner? Let’s give Peter’s (therefore God’s) answer when someone asks us “What must I do to be saved?” It may not be popular with the denominations that teach something else, but no one can deny that it is the answer that the inspired, spirit-filled apostle gave when he was asked that question. Only if you go with that will you be on God’s ground.

2. (Acts 8:26-39). Philip, the evangelist, was told by an angel to go to the road to Gaza, a city near Egypt. He explained to a high-ranking official from Ethiopia “the Good News about Jesus” (vs. 35). The man’s immediate response to whatever Philip taught him about Jesus was “Look—here’s water. What hinders me from being immersed?” He ordered the chariot to stop. Both Philip and the man went down into the water and Philip immersed him (vs. 36-39).

It seems clear to me that whatever I teach as the “good news about Jesus” had better include something that inspires the one I’m teaching to say: “Look, here’s water. Why can’t I be baptized right now?!” Does your message about Jesus inspire that question? Please! It must!

3. (Mark 16:15-16, Matthew 28:18-20). The last words that a man speaks before he departs are always carefully chosen, aren't they? The Son of God issued a command to make disciples of all nations, immerse them in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, and then teach them to obey all of the commands of God. These were amongst His last words before He left this earth to ascend back into Heaven. Ask Jesus why a person should be baptized, and He'll answer this way every time, "He that believes and is baptized, immersed, shall be saved" (Mark 16:16).

He states at the end of that verse that believing on Him ("putting our full weight on Him," in absolute trust) is the foundation. *Baptism is just "getting wet" without our faith in Him.*

How it must grieve the Father when even a single person is taught in such a way as to cause them to depend on a "formula." Or to depend on a "church" that claims to have all the "biblical" answers. Oh, please! Turn to a living friend named Jesus that "was dead, and behold! is alive forever and ever!" What a heartache that must be to the Father that He gave the very life of His Son to purchase men back from a well-deserved and certain death, and some have the ignorance or audacity to make a doctrine out of a Person. The "Way of Salvation" is a PERSON, and a friendship with Him. There is no other salvation available! (Jn.17:3; 14:6; 7:39-40; 2Cor.13:14; 2Cor.3:16-18; Rom.10:13) There is no single issue in all of a man's span of life in this realm that is more crucial to understand and stand upon with unwavering conviction. Our God can only be pleased with a People that approach Him solely on the basis of Jesus as their "all in all" and only access to His Glorious presence.

Even so! Our Lord Jesus did not stutter—He meant what He said. Man says: "He that believes and is saved shall be baptized." Did you catch the order that man has worded this? Man says: "He that believes and is saved shall be baptized."

Christ says it in a drastically different way. The Son of the Living God said: "He that believes and is baptized—that man has salvation." Not "either/or" at some man's discretion. I'm not going to trifle with God by re-arranging His words. I will "believe and be baptized" as the Lord taught.

If this is intimidating you, or making you angry or defensive, that is surely not my intention. I am trying to state everything in terms that are extremely clear, even if to the point of overstating something, in order that all of this cannot be overlooked or forgotten! We must together "abide in His Word" rather than the traditions of men. OK? All of His disciples "hear Him gladly" and "hang on every word that He says"—without compromise, or furious

rifling through Bible pages to “prove” that Jesus didn’t mean what He said. Let’s just believe Him and obey Him together in peace.

You must see by now that though many do, unfortunately, rely on a form and “works” to justify themselves before the Father, whatever the scriptures say (about baptism in water, or anything else) is the Father’s application of the gift to us of His Son. It is not something “in addition” to His Beloved Son... it *is* His Son, the Word.

4. (1 Peter 3:21; Romans 6:3-5). The Apostle Peter, by inspiration of the Holy Spirit, makes this bold, unthinkable statement: “Baptism saves you.” To say that it has nothing to do with salvation would put you in opposition to Peter and the Holy Scriptures—not a good position to try to defend on the judgment day. The question is not “whether or not,” but rather “*how*” it saves you.

Certainly we know that the blood that was poured out during the scourgings and ultimately on the cross is the only hope that any of us have. It is very obvious that some “good work” can never justify us before the Eternal God—only the death and resurrection of the Only Begotten Son. So how can Peter (by the Holy Spirit) make such radical statements as “Baptism saves you” and “Repent and be baptized for the forgiveness of sins” and “save yourselves?”

The correct way to handle the Word of God is not to pretend that Peter never said these things because, after all, we know that the atonement of Jesus is what saves us—period. Remember, it was Jesus who said: “He that believes and is baptized—that person shall be saved” (Mk.16:16). Jesus, through Peter, said “Repent and be baptized” and “baptism saves you” (Acts 2:38; 1Pet.3:21).

It says what it says—no man has the right to ignore it or try to alter it. God is intelligent enough to “get it right.” Therefore, our job is to understand “baptism saves you” in *light* of the work of Jesus—not pretend that it’s not there *because* of the atoning work of Jesus.

Let me say that again. God said what He meant and meant what He said. We know the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus “saves us”—not our “works.” That is an absolute. However, if God Himself said “Baptism saves you” and “Repent and be baptized for the forgiveness of sins” and “He that believes and is baptized shall be saved”—these things are also absolutes. Our job is not to “write these off” as “surely just not so.” Our job is to understand how these things are tied into the work of Jesus. “Understand them in light of the work of Jesus, not pretend that they’re not there because of the work of Jesus.” Do you see? “All scripture is God-breathed.”

Peter goes on to explain how baptism saves us (it is a fact from God that somehow it's involved). Baptism is not washing away dirt from the physical body, it is not "getting wet," taking a bath. It is the "crying out of a good conscience towards God"—repentance and faith in Jesus expressed physically. It "saves you" (Peter reaffirms in case we missed it), "it saves you by the resurrection of Jesus." Aha! The link between this strange thing of "immersion in water" and Jesus of Nazareth.

Paul explains the connection between repentance, baptism and "the resurrection of Jesus" for us in Romans 6:3-5. Here the Holy Word says clearly that "If we've been united with Him in death, we will certainly also be united with Him in His resurrection." Sounds great. It is conditional, however, on being "united with Him in His death." How does that happen, Paul? "We were, therefore, buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead we too may walk in newness of life." The Word of God says clearly that we die to our sins (repentance), bury them, immerse them in baptism, and rise to walk in "newness of life." Literally "born again—of water and the Spirit." Literally "having our bodies washed with pure water," "saved by the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit." Submitting ourselves that we may face Him having "washed our robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb," having "clothed ourselves with Christ in baptism" (John 3:5, Heb. 10:22, Titus 3:5, Rev. 7:13-14, Gal. 3:26-27).

Most would agree that there is no disagreement between the all-sufficiency of the blood of Jesus Christ and the necessity of confessing with your mouth "Jesus is Lord." We agree it is simply an outward expression of our faith—that the Bible says is mandatory, or the Faith was not truly Faith. Likewise, there is no disagreement between the all-sufficiency of the blood of Jesus and the absolute necessity of "repenting of acts that lead to death." Repentance is essential. Jesus said clearly: "Unless you repent, you will all likewise perish." No man will go to heaven without repenting of his sins, changing his mind about what life is about. As Peter said, if you want to be saved, you must "repent and be baptized" (Heb. 6:1, Luke 13:3, Acts 17:30, Acts 2:38, Acts 3:19-23). Certainly repentance is nothing more and nothing less than an expression of our faith in Jesus, "placing our full weight on Jesus." Repentance on our part is mandatory for our salvation and yet in no way minimizes what Jesus accomplished at Calvary. It is simply our expression of true faith.

Satan, "the father of lies," would have you read all of these crystal clear teachings from Jesus Himself, as well as other words of the Holy Spirit, and push them out of your mind as "insignificant" or "legalism" or something worse. Before you fall prey to that, I beg you again to go back to the words of

Almighty God and forget everything you've ever been taught in the religious world about baptism. In the fresh, exciting days of the New Church of the Book of Acts (a world unadulterated by various "kinds" of "christendom"), there is no record of any confusion about this at all! Let's go back to that simplicity, please! What does God say it is for? Does God assign value to it other than a "simple act of obedience"? The only One who was immersed as a "simple act of obedience" ("to fulfill all righteousness") was Jesus Christ. (Matthew 3:13-17). Surely even *one* verse would be sufficient to prompt a true Believer to act immediately to be immersed in water?

5. Again, as we have touched on previously, there was at no time an occasion in the Word of God where something other than immersion (such as sprinkling or pouring) was ever commanded or done as an example of "the method is unimportant," as some teach today. And, in fact, there is an example of Paul reimmersing twelve men that had already been immersed, but with an incomplete Faith. (Acts 18:24, Acts 19:1-7). Think about it. Is it really worth rolling dice with your relationship with God to protect your pride?

6. Also, never was an infant immersed (baptized) in any instance in the Holy Word. There are no infants at all found amongst those baptized in the Scriptures, though many children were in the company of those that followed Jesus. Since the prerequisite (according to the Bible) for baptism is to believe and repent—an infant could not possibly have been Biblically baptized. And the examples in the book of Acts certainly do not show anything of the kind. If that is what Jesus and the apostles had taught (that infants were to be baptized) we would see long lines of children to be baptized forming in the book of Acts, the historical record. Rather, "Those who *believed* his message (about Jesus as the Savior and the Lord of Heaven and Earth) were immersed, and about three thousand were added to their number that day" (Acts 2:41). As for the children, the truth is that Jesus said that "you must become like a little child" in order to go to heaven. The children are just fine (as can be demonstrated with a number of other scriptures) without a religious ritual that we might do on their behalf. Any infant that can be "cut to the heart," repent, put their full weight on Jesus and "call on the name of the Lord" is a candidate for baptism.

7. Probably an example that will be helpful as you make your decision to risk that opposition of the religious world (it seems that Jesus had that problem too!) to be immersed in water, a helpful illustration, might be the conversion of the Apostle Paul.

In Acts 9:1-9 Saul/Paul saw Jesus Christ as a glorious light. He was blinded and cried out "Who are you, Lord?" The answer was: "I am Jesus, whom you

are persecuting.” Paul knew He was “Lord”—it seemed rather obvious at the time. He certainly believed Him to be the Son of God and obviously raised from the dead at this point. He fasted penitently without food or water for three full days. By anyone’s definition, of all people, Paul “believed” at this point. Paul recognized Him as the indisputable “Lord” and called Him so with his mouth. *Surely* he’s a Christian—because he believed in Jesus. Virtually no religious group around would consider a man with that kind of experience and faith as yet an “unbeliever.” True? Ask your “preacher.” Virtually none would consider any man with this testimony a non-Christian.

Later, in Acts 22:6-16, Paul is retelling the story of his conversion to a crowd of unbelievers. Paul says that God sent Ananias to him to tell him what he must do. Paul quotes Ananias (by the Holy Spirit’s words) as saying “Saul—what one are you waiting for? Get up, be baptized (immersed) washing away your sins, calling on His Name!” He was not yet a Christian! Note this carefully: A man can believe with all his heart that Jesus is risen from the dead. He can know for sure that Jesus is Lord. He can even fast and pray for his sins for three days—**AND NOT BE A CHRISTIAN**. Some of you may fall into that category...still a non-Christian, though you have had possibly years of christian experience.

Paul believed. He confessed the Lordship of the Risen One with his lips. And yet his sins were not washed away (according to God Himself). He was not a Christian—He was still in his sins, even though he had actually seen Jesus and called Him “Lord.” “Saul—what one are you waiting for? Get up, be baptized (immersed) washing away your sins, calling on His Name!” As Jesus Himself said: “Not all who confess with their mouth ‘Lord, Lord’ will go to heaven” (Matthew 7:21-23). Please drop all prejudice or defensiveness and reconsider! It surely can’t be worth being wrong, even for the sake of pride or family. The stakes are too high!

And now the key question of all of this:

At What Instant Is A Person Saved?

The primary reason that all of this seems to be so traumatic is that man has taken apart the act of making covenant with his God and disassembled it in a way that God never intended. Man has wrecked the simplicity of entering into a Marriage Covenant with Jesus Christ in such a way that only God’s Spirit can interpret and apply the Truths previously mentioned to the jumbled mess of a splintered christendom today, and show us what to do next.

The question of “when” a person actually “becomes” a Christian in a “*technical*” way is a question that reveals the misunderstanding of the one who asked it of the nature of Salvation itself. Being “born of God” will never be of “natural descent, of human decision, or of a husband’s will”—to our dismay and God’s Glory. “Neither circumcision nor uncircumcision means anything; what counts is a New Creation.” I mean to say (by inserting these verses here) that meeting the Person of Jesus Christ, having an encounter with a Resurrected Lord, and being *therefore* “translated from the Kingdom of Darkness to the Kingdom of the Beloved Son” will never happen by knowing all of the technical verses about it. It is either an encounter with the Living Godhead, personally, and truly—or it is a counterfeit. The technicalities are not the issue. God has a habit of blowing up our great cerebral achievements anyway, historically speaking. (For example, Jn.7:45-52; Acts 2:13-16; 10:44-11:18; etc.)

A close friend of mine came in from out of state a few years ago to be married in her home town. In all of the excitement, she and her spouse-to-be had forgotten to get the blood tests and the marriage license. Now, the State has a “book” that spells out what it takes to be legitimately married, and they had taken some liberties due to this “oversight”. Because the sequence of the “book” had been violated, a big problem had resulted. At what point are they married? Is it at the moment the preacher says “I now pronounce you man and wife?” Well, maybe not, since there was no “authority invested in him by the State” to perform the ceremony without a license. The governor of the State would be positive that they were not married after the church ceremony. Well, though, doesn’t the heart, the intent, count for anything? Is it marriage when “a man shall leave his father and mother and cleave to his wife” as a “heart” issue, or is there a need to obey the laws of the land? The preacher, and the State, reached different conclusions. Or is it marriage when it is consummated in the act of the “two becoming one flesh?” What about the soldier boy that gets whisked away overseas before the two physically come together? In all fifty states an annulment (“a judicial declaration that no valid marriage ever existed between the two parties in question”) can be declared in situations where the marriage is never “consummated.” Were they ever married? At what instant are they married? Is it when the license is filled out that the marriage is truly a marriage? But wait! If the license isn’t mailed in a certain period of time, the marriage is invalid. Or is it? As you can see, all of the trauma of “at what instant is a person married” only even becomes a question when the “rule book” is violated. But, oh what a problem! Can you go on a \$100.00/night honeymoon that has already been paid for, or not? Would you be in bed with someone who you are not married to, since no one with “authority invested in him” to perform the ceremony had yet joined them? What a trauma.

And likewise, AT WHAT INSTANT IS A PERSON SAVED? Only because of man's ignoring God's Ways has the question even come up! If we would instantly "at midnight" respond to the teaching about Jesus with "here's water, what hinders me from being baptized?" we would never have to ask "at what instant," in the midst of "calling on the Name of the Lord," is the person saved. It is a ridiculous question and unnecessary if we respond (as the now-married couple wished they had) out of the Truth and harmony and Spirit of the Word of God. If man had not confused the whole issue by fooling with the making of a "covenant" with God (by separating the giving of one's life to Jesus, from repentance, and from baptism by weeks or months or years) there would be no such questions about "at what instant is a person saved" ever raised. Again, we have created the dilemma by breaking the covenant-making experience into little pieces and separating them by time, as was absolutely never the teaching or the case in the Scriptures.

The illustration previously offered, "at exactly what instant is a couple married," cannot be fully resolved. Nor can this more Eternal issue. Cry out to Him! Get on your knees and appeal to Him from a good and sincere heart to translate your life from the corruptible to the Eternal. Tell Jesus of your selfishness, your self-indulgence, your pride and ask Him for a new heart. Our response to His love for us is to offer all at once to Him, as a sonnet of our love and thanksgiving. Put the "Ring" of water baptism on as a seal of the Covenant. Let the Lord of Hosts baptize you in His Spirit.

In summary, we get ourselves in a fix the moment we elect to separate the Marriage consummation in a technical way, rather than simply plunging into the whole counsel and love and promises of God. If we elect to follow men's denominational traditions instead of God's Ways, from then on we must "pound a square peg into a round hole" in our attempt to answer questions on these subjects. Let's simply respond as God has called us to respond. Let's all have the honesty and guts and humility to swim upstream against what we've thought (or even taught) and tell others that are followers of Jesus or anxious to become so, the truth about WHAT GOD SAYS ABOUT WATER BAPTISM. It is a very freeing alternative! And an urgent matter...

And *of course* it's tough! Our battle is not with flesh and blood and merely "understanding" of Bible verses, but with principalities and powers, according to Paul. If God values anything, Satan will desperately try to soft-sell or pervert it! While in western India, some brothers and I discovered how true this is. There, to tell those in your village (or those in law enforcement) that you are a Christian will seldom have consequences. Yet to be baptized will result in being severely ostracized and often imprisoned.

Another man, once a Jewish atheist, and now a teacher of the Truth of God in Jesus Christ on several continents, adds his testimony to this. He also has seen what seems to be supernatural opposition to baptism in water that goes beyond logic. He has seen again and again those of his own Jewish heritage telling their families and their rabbi that they believe that Jesus, Y'shua, is the Messiah and that they have given their lives to Him. This, he says, is often met with "That's nice." But when they say they have been baptized in water, great and violent fury and disinheritance takes place almost inevitably. Frequently an actual funeral is held for the baptized Believer.

No doubt you too will suffer the retribution of Satan and prideful, fearful men as you respond to the Truths of God's Word about baptism. It is a privilege. Count it all joy, and don't shrink back, procrastinate, or compromise one tiny bit. If you follow Jesus in Truth, you will always leave all to do so (Luke 9:57-62, 14:33)!

A few beautiful pictures, before we part, might show us something of God's heart in calling us to be immersed in water. In 1 Corinthians, chapter 10, God gives us the picture of the baptism into the sea and the cloud (water and the Holy Spirit, John 3:5, Acts 2:38, Titus 3:5). This is representative of our victory over all of the enemies of God. The armies of bondage and ("Egyptian") slavery to selfishness, lust and the world system gallop after us when we choose to give our lives to our Savior and Lord. These are DROWNED under the ocean of God's grace, just as they were in the Red Sea.

This is water baptism's purpose—to drown our enemies and God's enemies, amazingly, both in type and in reality! If you can explain how the Lord's Supper is both symbolic and supernatural at the same time (1Cor.11:29-30; 10:16-22; Jn.6:53), then you've got a shot at understanding this!

A similar picture is in Romans 6. Here, we have made a covenant with God to die to sin (repentance) and that sin is then buried under the water of baptism. We now rise to walk in newness of life. If we've been buried in baptism, we'll rise in the same resurrection life that He rose into (vs. 5). Sounds good to me!

In 1 Peter 3, God paints for us the picture of all of the mountaintops of our sins being forever buried under the water of baptism. As surely as the wickedness of Noah's day was totally immersed, our corruption in the "old man" is buried with Christ. Then, the dove brought back an olive branch representing a whole new world, a "new creation!" In Him, if we're truly converted, we "Taste the Powers of the coming Age." In Him, we receive a "downpayment guaranteeing our inheritance," the Holy Spirit of Almighty God filling us with the Life of the Eternal Kingdom, and the Ages to come!

(Read prayerfully Eph.1:13-14, 18-20; Rom.8:9-11; Acts 2:38-39; Jn.3:5,8; Ezek.36:24-27; Jer.31:31-34; Heb.6:5; Jn.17:22, 7:38-39). This is just simple, fundamental, undeniable, biblical christianity. What a joy! Thank your God for this opportunity!

In Galatians 3, Paul states that our Sonship, our Faith and Baptism are all inseparable. The picture is given by God that as we are baptized, we are “clothed” with God’s precious Son, Jesus. From this moment on, He sees only Jesus (as we’ve “hidden our life” in Him) when He looks down on us.

Now, if you have “ears to hear,” you have been given a very clear opportunity to see, understand and obey the Lord Jesus Christ on this matter of immersion in water. I don’t claim to understand everything about the subject of Baptism. Not at all. I can only pray, along with you and an army of others, that God will shed Light on this in the days to come that all of us might be fully equipped for battle with our only real enemy, the devil. I must say that if you have not yet been immersed in water, and you truly desire to fully walk with your Lord, you now have more than enough cause to lose a lot of sleep until you have prayerfully yielded yourself to all that God has held out for you.

Almost always, the battle is not waged against “what the Bible says about baptism,” per se. Here’s an observation that you can test against your own heart. Nearly always the one who refuses immersion in water is in one of two situations. Either they have never been shown God’s heart about it in the Word of God, or he or she has never truly repented of their fears and desires for the world’s goodies or men’s approval. Baptism itself is seldom the hangup.

Are you ready to “eagerly accept the good news about Jesus,” surrender your life to Him and cry out “Here’s water. What are we waiting for?” As the song goes, “I only want to see you there!” Let’s go all the Way, my friends and brothers.

MP