

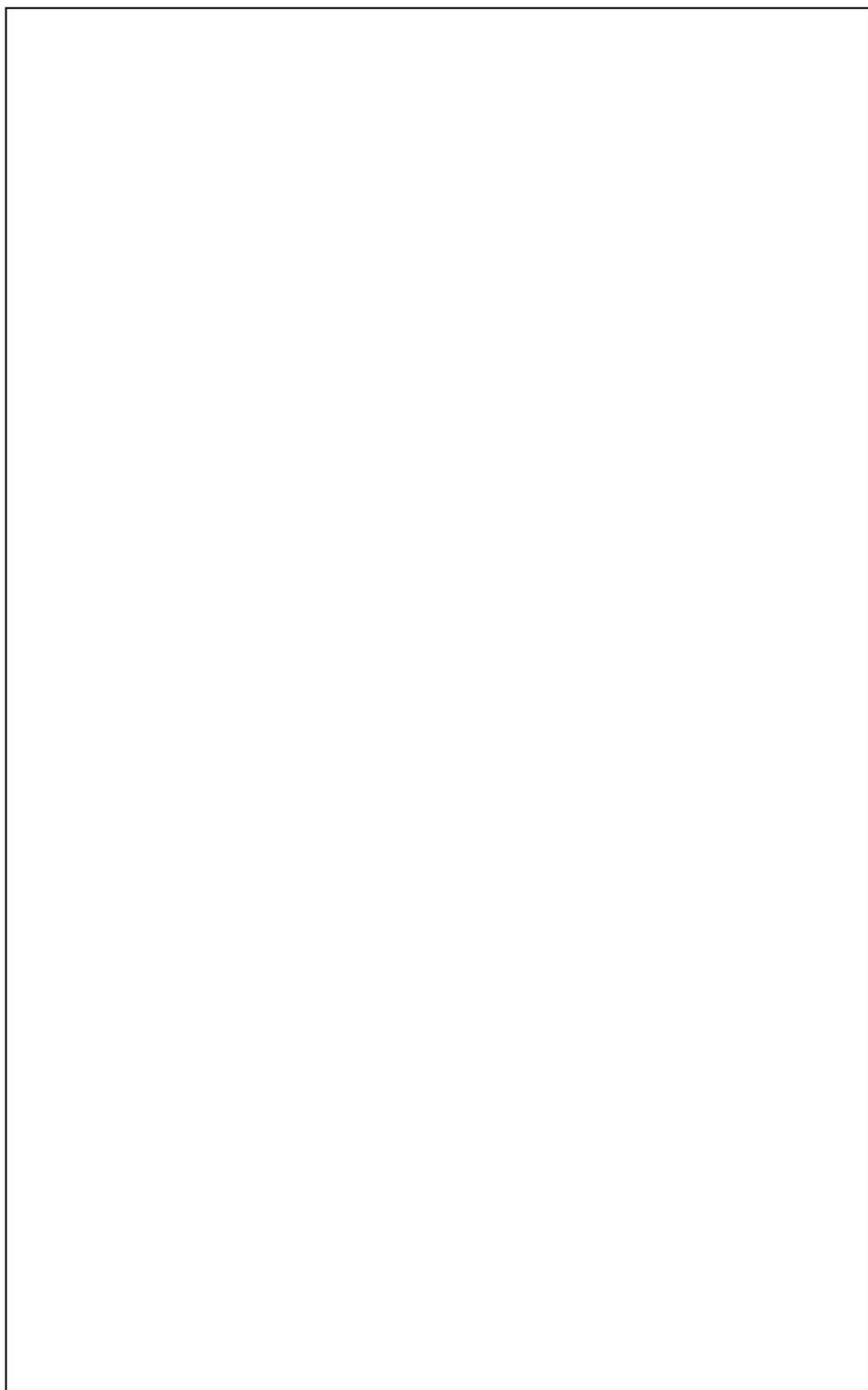
# Rightly Dividing the Word of Truth

## *Bible Study Course*

### Lesson Eight: Baptisms

*We want to fully understand what baptism really means to those who want to become True Christians and inheritors of the Kingdom of God. We will look into the validity of infant baptism, “baptism of the spirit,” and “water baptism.” Are they commanded by God – or ... are they merely the inventions of men supposing that they are serving God by employing them? We need to know God’s truth about this!*

Larry E. Ford



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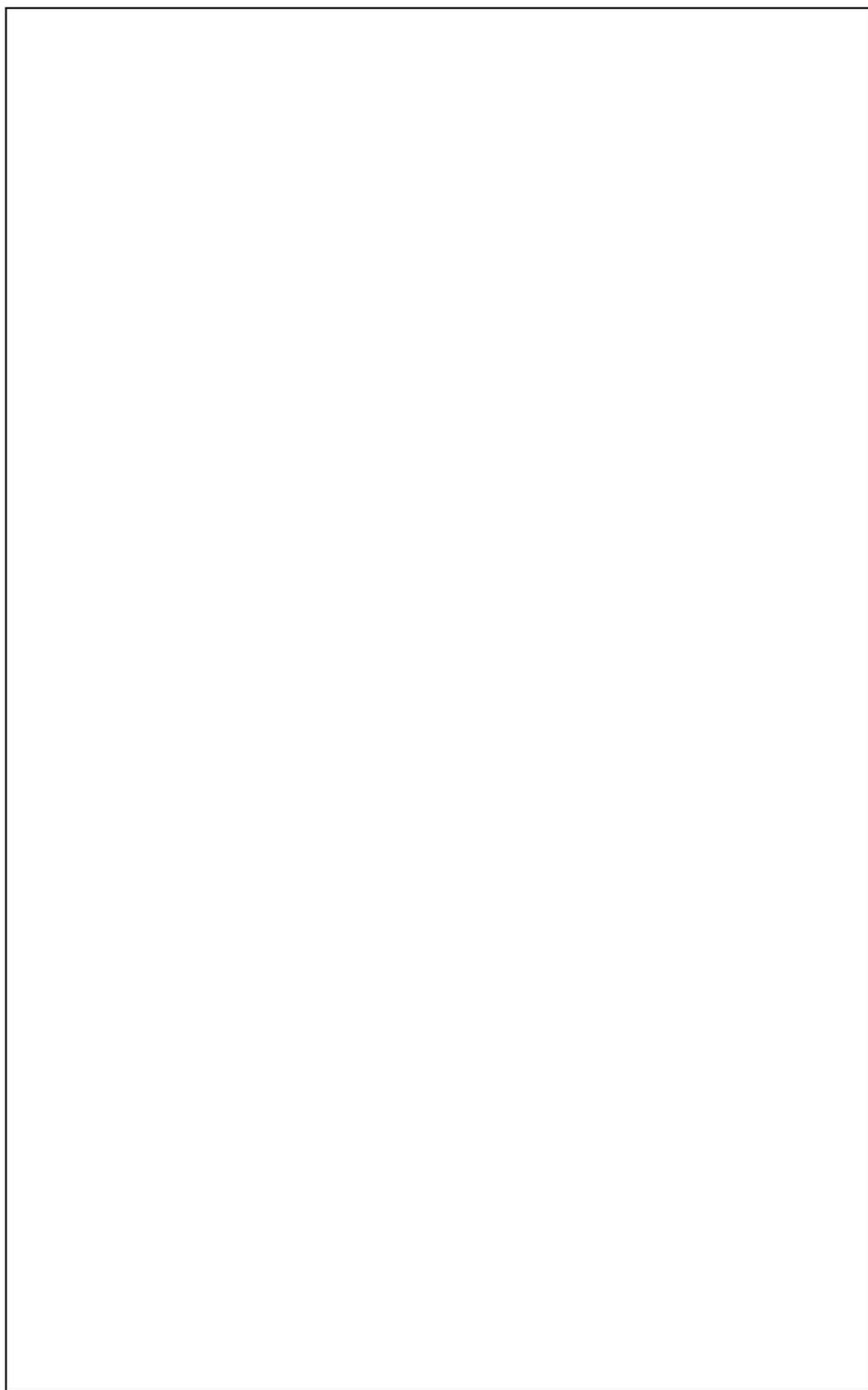
Revised 2021

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Scriptures in this work are quoted from the *King James Version (KJV)* of the Bible, unless otherwise noted. The author changes terms like “thee,” “thou,” “thine,” and other 17th Century expressions to more modern terms.

Unless otherwise stated, all definitions for Greek terms are from the *Bauer-Arndt-Gingrich A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament* (University of Chicago Press, 1957; abbreviated as *BAG* in text). All definitions for Hebrew terms are from the *Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew and English Lexicon* (Hendrickson Publishers, 1999 – reprinted from the 1906 edition by Houghton, Mifflin and Company, Boston; abbreviated as *BDB* in text).

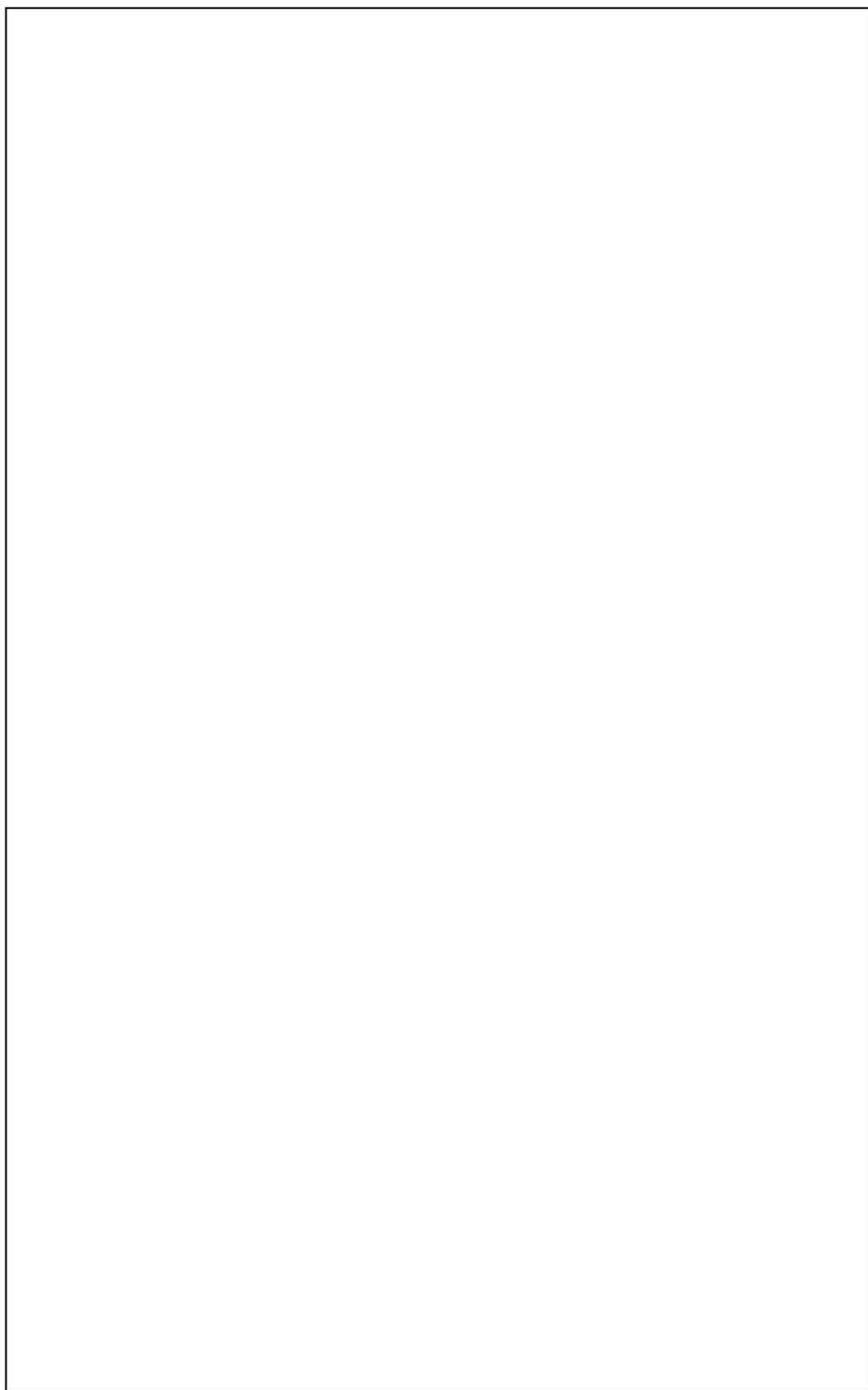


# *Scriptural Admonitions*

*They that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand people. (Acts 2:41)*

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

*We are buried with Him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. (Romans 6:4)*

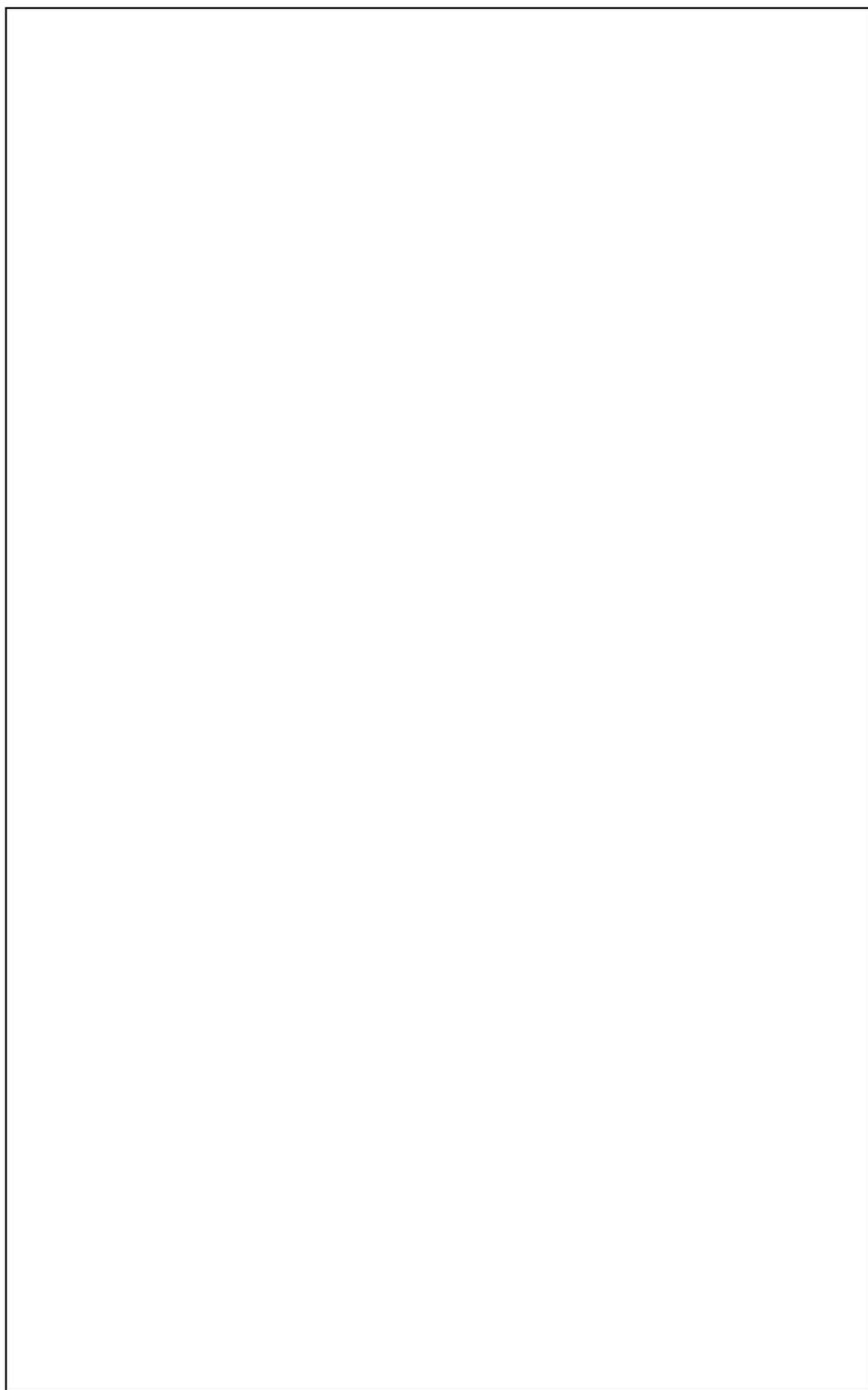


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# Introduction

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Several years ago, I heard a well-known minister of his day describe “baptism” by sprinkling as being like laying a dead person against a tree and throwing a shovelful of dirt into his face. While that is considered to be a humorous analogy, there is a kernel of truth in it.

I have also heard sincere people say that all they need to do for salvation is to raise their hands to God, declare their faith in Jesus Christ, and ask to be saved. In explaining the “all-I-need” part, they said that they did not need to be baptized or get involved in any other kind of *ritualism*.

Many radio and television preachers claim that all you have to do to receive salvation and go to heaven is to pray the sinner’s prayer – that is: “God be merciful to me a sinner!” (Luke 18:13) – and confess Jesus as Savior. Is that really all that God requires of us?

All of this provokes some very serious questions about what God requires of us as part of our *faith*. It is easy to take a particular scripture out of context and make an article of faith out of it. But ... will the resultant article of faith represent God’s full truth about the matter? This, of course, requires more questions and answers.

Why should we be baptized? What is baptism, anyway? Is it merely some kind of hokey *ritual* that *churches* have devised in order to initiate someone into their group? Why do various churches practice totally different types of “baptisms”? Should a penitent be sprinkled, poured upon, or fully

immersed? What is the meaning of the practice? What is *valid baptism* in God's sight? Surely, if God *requires* such a ritual for people of *true faith*, there must be some reliable instruction in His word that will forthrightly answer these questions.

Let's practice our research skills from the Bible. Read Acts 2:38. Now read Acts 8:25-38. What was the example of Jesus Christ? Read Matthew 3:13-17. What did Paul do (Acts 9:1-18)? What did Peter do (Acts 10)? If there are scriptures that show the conversion of someone without showing that they were subsequently baptized, it would **not** be proper to assume that it did **not** happen.

You should ask yourself the following question: What was the typical practice among the leaders in God's true Church? The answer will give you the witness of scripture regarding God's truth about the matter. Our problem, if we want to worship God in spirit and truth (John 4:23, 24), is whether or not we will obey God's revelation (Luke 6:46-49).

Then ... there is Ephesians 4:5: "[There is] ***one baptism...***" (emphases added). It cannot be made any plainer than that. That statement alone would make it apparent that we must understand whether *sprinkling*, *pouring*, or *total immersion* is the only acceptable manner in which one is to be baptized. Two of the three are bogus. What does God's revelation tell us? Are you willing to submit to God's revelation? This is where "the rubber meets the highway," as they say, because *baptism* represents your willing submission to God's will and rule in your life.

### What is *Baptism*?

Let's analyze the word itself, which is translated from a Greek word, and see what conclusion we can draw based on its meaning. You should understand that every reference in

the New Testament to the word *baptize* – whether it is the action taken or the person who performs the action – is derived from the root word *bapto*.

This root word describes the action of dipping something into a liquid in order to *fully drench* it with that liquid. This could include anything from dipping one’s finger into a liquid or dipping a portion of a garment into a liquid. The major emphasis and focus of this root word are in the idea of *fully drenching* the object, not whether or not the *part* or the *whole* is dipped. So, whatever is *fully drenched* is going to be *fully immersed*.

Let’s look at the classic instruction we have in Romans 6. Here we get acquainted with the idea that *baptismos* is likened to a *burial* (Greek = *sunthapto*). This is compared to an *interment* – being covered over in the earth, hidden, and concealed. You understand exactly what is going to happen when the obituary says that the *interment* of the deceased will take place at such-and-such a cemetery. Whether they are put into the ground or placed into a mausoleum, the net effect is the same: they are *completely covered* – that is: *fully immersed*.

So, in Romans 6, Paul points out two things: (a) our *baptism* is to be a *full immersion* in water as a symbolic *burial* of our old self, and (b) it is to be thereafter a *full immersion* into the life of Jesus Christ (*buried* into Christ and *buried* like Christ).

Is this *burial* the final word in our confession of faith? No! If we are *buried* like Christ, then we will also look forward to being *resurrected* from that grave like Christ was from His. This is very important imagery.

Now, let’s read Matthew 12:38-40. In this “sign” that Jesus gave these scribes and Pharisees, He pointed out two important items: (a) He would be *in the heart of the earth* in the same way Jonah was *in the belly of the great fish*, and (b) He would be there for 72 hours – *three days and three nights*.

There is no doubt left that He would be *fully immersed* in the grave like Jonah was *fully immersed* both in the great fish and the ocean. Both were *buried – interred*. **Both** were *fully dead*.

Anyone who *baptizes* according to the scriptural meaning of the word, therefore, will *fully immerse* the one getting baptized. John the Baptist could very easily have been called *John, the one who fully immerses in water*.

As they say, “here’s the kicker” [the ironic or surprise part]: There is not one example of *baptism* by *pouring* or *sprinkling* in the entirety of scripture! You might see examples of people having olive oil poured on them (anointing) or blood sprinkled on them (ceremonial cleansing), ***but neither of these rituals is ever represented as being a baptism!***

Do either of them achieve a *full drenching* of a part of something (*bapto*)? Yes. But – and this is a meaningful exception – *anointing with oil* and *sprinkling with blood* do not represent a **burial**. We must not allow ourselves to think otherwise. To think otherwise is to fall victim to “the way that *seems right*” (Proverbs 14:12).

The term *sprinkle* occurs only seven times in the New Testament – always in connection with the blood of Jesus Christ, not baptism. It comes from the Greek term *rantidzo*. Why, in this case, is the *sprinkling* used relative to the blood of Jesus Christ? Read Leviticus 16. It is about the ritual revealed by the Lord God relative to the feast day *atonement*. Note the roles of the bullock and the two goats. The bullock and one of the goats will be killed for *blood* sacrifices that are representative of *the blood shed by Jesus Christ to atone for mankind’s sins* (vv. 5-11). Now notice what happens in vv. 14-16. In both cases, the High Priest, Aaron, *sprinkles* the mercy seat of God in the Holy of Holies in the Tabernacle with the blood of the sacrificial animals. Why? For *atonement*. *That blood represents the shed blood of Jesus Christ*

(see Heb. 10).

The term *pouring* is also used several times in the New Testament – but *never* in relationship to *baptism*. It comes from the Greek term *cheo*. *Baptizo* is the term God inspired the New Testament writers to use exclusively for the ordinance of *baptism*. Therefore, *pouring* and *sprinkling* are *not* forms of *baptizo*. *Baptizo* is shown to be a symbol of *complete burial*; *rantidzo* and *cheo* are not.

With that in mind, let's get started in this most important and revealing lesson. Our objective is to fully understand exactly what God commands concerning *water baptism*. We want to fully understand what baptism *really* means to those who want to become *True Christians* and the *inheritors of the Kingdom of God*. We will look into the validity of infant baptism, “baptism of the spirit,” and “water baptism.” Are they commanded by God – or ... merely the inventions of men supposing that they are serving God by employing them?

You should also remember that those who are *buried* should be *fully dead*. God expects our old self to *fully die* so that what He raises from the *grave* can be *fully new* (see 2 Corinthians 5:17; 15:50-54). I thought you might need to understand that, too.

Get out your Bible and study materials so you can read every scripture and write down all of your answers. Do not be tempted to take shortcuts because you will only deny yourself the *full* understanding that God is making available to you. Don't forget to ask God to help you to understand what you are about to study and to *thoroughly comprehend* the vital *truth* of this most important subject.

May the God of Truth bless your understanding as you do so.

In Christ's Service,

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# Chapter One

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## A Babel of Confusion

I am often amused by the things that people claim are either *necessary* or *unnecessary* for salvation. At times it seems that the *unnecessary* things are the ones with which people simply do not want to be bothered ... because they think they are either beneath their dignity to submit themselves to them, or that they know better than the word of God what they need to do. Of course, they could also just simply not *understand* them. It is a *Babel* of confusion to them. Such is often the case with *baptisms*. What possible *necessity* in the salvation process *must be served* by plunging someone beneath the surface of a body of water? That's a fair question. God has an answer.

Please notice that the study concerns itself with *baptisms* (plural). Why? Because God reveals that there is more than one type of *baptism* to which we *must* subject ourselves. I will unfold that mystery for you as we get into the lesson. Whatever they are shown to be, please understand that we are to be *fully immersed* in them – thoroughly and entirely *covered* and *spiritually drenched* by them.

Our objective, then, is to understand: (a) why God's word *pluralizes* the word and (b) how we should respond to God's revelation. We will see what form of baptism God

requires and why we should not avoid doing it just as He has required it. So, prepare yourself spiritually for a wonderful, eye-opening study. Approach it just as I have instructed and drink deeply from this fountain of truth from God!

## The Things that God Requires

The street evangelist gets permission from the city to turn on a fire hydrant so he can spray water all over the listening crowd that has answered his “altar call” to believe in Jesus Christ. In the process, he proclaims over them the words of Jesus Christ in Matthew 28:19 that they are, therefore, *baptized* in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Down the street, another church official sprinkles, or pours, a few drops of water over the head of an infant barely a few days old and pronounces the same words over it. In another part of town, another individual steps into a deep tank of water to be plunged completely beneath the surface and have the same words pronounced over him/her.

Which “baptism” is the correct form based on scripture? Which form is valid in God’s sight? Why should there be any *confusion* about this among churches claiming to represent the God of Truth? We would do well to understand what baptism is all about – and if it is *necessary* for salvation. Millions are worshiping God in vain and do not even recognize it. Jesus warned about this *Babel* of confusion during His earthly ministry (see Matt. 24:4, 5; John 4:23, 24). You should also read Matthew 7:15-23.

In Matthew 24:4, 5, why was it necessary for Jesus to warn that imposters would come claiming to represent Him in one way or another? In Matthew 7:21-23, why did Jesus warn that it is possible to do all manner of *religious* things *in His name*, yet be His enemy? Re-read these verses and write down the *reason* He will reject them. In Mark 7:6-9, what information does Jesus give us in this scripture that

helps us to understand His rejection of the *bogus religious actions* of some so-called “Christians”? What is the difference between the *traditions of men* and the *commandments of God*? Does He tell us that some prefer the *traditions of men* over the *commandments of God*? See also Matthew 15:1-9. This is the process of learning God’s truth.

Do Matthew 7 and Matthew 24 indicate that the *many* would be guilty of this? Does that leave us with the *few* who would be faithful to God? What does it mean to *you* when you consider the existence of 32,000+ “Christian” denominations? Would that suggest the possibility of *many bogus baptisms* – among other things? *Why*? Continue to follow the logic of scripture.

## Divisions and Heresies

In 1 Corinthians 11:18, 19, why does Paul say that God allows *divisions* or *heresies* to exist? The Greek word for *division* is *schisma*. This describes a split or gap between the beliefs and actions of some as opposed to those of others – a *division of opinions*. The Greek word for *heresy* is *hairesis*. This describes a dissenting faction who causes *disunion* by favoring their opinion as opposed to the *established doctrine* (see Jude 3). Based on those descriptions, like it or not, Paul is evidently saying that God *has allowed* such divisions and heresies to exist *so that His True Church can be revealed*. How? Can you understand from these references the problems presented by such spiritual confusion?

Jesus said in Matthew 12:33 that a tree is known by its fruit. What did He mean by that? In Luke 6:46, He asked some so-called “followers” why they would call Him *Lord* and not *obey* Him. In John 14:15, He said: “If you love me, *keep my commandments*” (emphasis added). John wrote: “He that *keeps His commandments* dwells in Him, and He in him. And **by this we know** that He abides in us: *by the Spirit*

*which He has given us*” (compare 1 John 3:24; to Galatians 5:22-26; emphases added).

Those who are *in Jesus Christ* will be obedient to God’s commandments just as Jesus Himself was. Those *commandments* do not apply only to the 10 Commandments. In Matthew 11:30, He explained that the things that He requires His true disciples to do *are neither beyond reason nor too difficult for them to accomplish*.

Consider the following example from 2 Kings 5. Naaman, a gentile captain of some soldiers of the Syrian army, had contracted leprosy. A captive Israelite girl who served Naaman’s wife told her about Israel’s God and a renowned prophet who could help Naaman recover from his disease. Naaman sent lots of gold and silver to the king of Israel to induce him to send that prophet to heal him. Israel’s king thought that it was a trap to start a war with Israel. Hearing of the king’s plight, the Lord God’s prophet, Elisha, went to the King and accepted the challenge posed by Naaman ... in order to prove to Naaman that there was such a prophet in Israel.

Answer this question: What thing did the Lord God’s prophet Elisha require of Naaman in order for his leprosy to be healed? Did he accept Elisha’s instruction? Was that an *impossible* task for Naaman to undertake? Did Naaman think that Elisha should come to him and perform some magical hand-waving over his body? Was the Jordan River any better to wash in than the two rivers of Damascus, Syria? What did Naaman’s servants advise him to do? Why? Was there anything in Elisha’s instructions that was too difficult or unreasonable to do? Was Naaman being unreasonable about the “cure”?

The servants explained to Naaman that he probably would have done some fantastic something to be healed. Consider this ridiculous example: What if Elisha had told him to take a dead black cat to a cemetery during the dark of

a new moon, strip himself naked and paint his body with smut from an oak wood fire, swing the dead cat by its tail over his head as he chanted a certain phrase 10 times each to the east, south, west, and north (in that order) – then sacrifice the dead cat over a cow-pie fire? Naaman would have probably agreed to do *that* because it smacks of something *mystical* and *magical*. But *bathing* seven times in the Jordan River in Israel was a bit beneath his dignity! What Elisha told him to do was simple and easily accomplished – even if the trip to the Jordan might have been a bit inconvenient. The question was simple: Was Naaman *willing to obey*?

Would you conclude, then, that part of the problem stems from an *unwillingness* to be *obedient* to some of the simple things that God *requires* of us? Many times, in spite of how plain the instruction is or how simple it is to accomplish?

Now read 1 Samuel 15:1-23. What was Saul instructed to do? Did he do it just as God's prophet had instructed him? What went wrong? With what did Samuel equate Saul's *rebellion*? It is difficult to the modern mind to equate *rebellion* with *witchcraft*. We may sing about taking pleasure in the simple things that the good life brings, but when we are confronted by God with simple answers to our requests, we get a bit suspicious and try to second-guess Him.

Now read vv. 24-26. Is there still a penalty to suffer even if you admit your sin and ask for forgiveness? Sometimes the penalty for disobedience is better than having God completely abandon us. Read Hebrews 10:26-31. What do we have to look forward to if we choose to *rebel* against God's instructions? Is "falling into the hands of the living God" something that we should take lightly? What does this tell you about God as a *loving* God? Is that word *love* apparently misunderstood and overly emotionalized? What should we understand about the times we feel like we are being chastised by God?

## Chastening in Measure

Read Hebrews 12. Why does God *chasten* His children? What do you show yourself to be if you will not submit to God's *chastening*? What does v. 10 reveal will be the result of our *chastening*? Is it worth it? Ecclesiastes 3:1 says that there is a season and a time for every purpose under the heaven. We must learn to be spiritually aware of the seasons, times, and heavenly purposes ... especially with regard to the *discipline* and *training* intended in chastisement.

Some translate the word *chastening* in Hebrews 12 to read *train* or *discipline*. If understood in that light, we are talking about our receiving some type of *training* from God that is necessary for us to fulfill some purpose He has in mind (see Eph. 2:10). Hebrews 12 is not saying that God is going to *beat you into submission*. He's not. He is going to *train* us and *discipline* us as any good father would do.

What does the term *discipline* mean? It means *training* that is given to mold, direct, and bring one to *maturity*. If they wander down a wrong path, then *corrective measures* are taken to get them back on the right path. *Discipline* is intended to *teach* someone how to bring their minds and hearts under control – how to avoid the ways of chaos, confusion, self-will, and self-destruction. If you will not submit yourself to God for His *disciplinary* measures, then you are no better than a wild, unruly, illegitimate child. *It stands to reason that the degree of discipline applied should be in measure to the amount needed to cause the desired change to take place.*

The Lord God shows this characteristic in Jeremiah 30:11 when He tells Jeremiah to proclaim to wayward Israel that He will *chastise* them *in measure* – in relationship to their sins – but they *will* be punished. He tells them the same thing in 46:28. David even confesses in Psalm 103:10 that God has not dealt with us as our sins *really* require, and he

shows how great God’s grace and mercy are toward us. ***But*** – and this is an exception full of meaning – David showed in verse 9 that “He will not always speak disapprovingly to us nor hold back His anger for ever [that is: too long].” If you prove to be incorrigible, then you will be *no child* of His. That is the true meaning and force of Proverbs 13:24; 19:18; 22:15, and Revelation 19:15.

By all means, pray the way David did in Psalm 6:1: “O Lord, rebuke me not in your anger, neither chasten me in your hot displeasure.” But ... you should also be willing to be that way when it is your turn to discipline others (read Ephesians 6:1-4). Does that mean that there should be no *physical* punishment? No. It means that if such punishment is required, it should *not* be administered when you are very angry and wrathful, but with love as a necessary object lesson to change the undesirable behavior. It should be administered in relationship to the seriousness of the transgression. And, where there is room for grace and mercy, mix them in with self-control. Think seriously about this. Be deeply concerned about your need for training and correction – about your obedience.

Re-read Romans 1:18-32 with this in mind. Pay attention to vv. 24, 26, 28 where God ultimately steps aside to allow them to suffer the ultimate consequences of their sins. Think about the results. Think about the saying that some learn the easy way and some learn the hard way. The point seems to be that, either way, the necessary learning is accomplished ... but one takes less time and affords the individual to move along more quickly in the educational process.

In Matthew 3:13-15, Jesus Christ set us an example by being baptized. What reason did He give to John for being baptized? Read v. 15: “...It is appropriate for us to fulfill all righteousness.” What shall we say to such an affirmation by Jesus Christ? He is ***God in the flesh***. Why does He have a responsibility to “...fulfill all righteousness”? He became a

human being (Heb. 2:14-18).

## The Example of Jesus Christ

Second Corinthians 5:21 and Ephesians 1:6 give a window of opportunity to witness the greatness of God's thoughts and ways. What does Paul say there? He gives us a witness about the humanity of Jesus Christ and the grace of God:

[God the Father] made [Jesus Christ] to become sin for us, [although] He knew no sin, so that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him (2 Cor. 5:21).

To the praise of the glory of [God the Father], He has made us acceptable to Himself through Jesus Christ, His beloved Son (Eph. 1:6).

Jesus Christ, having come in human form, was subject to the pulls of the flesh and had to exercise great control over human tendencies in order to remain sinless (see also Heb. 2:6-18). He also had an emerging understanding that He was not an ordinary human being. This is made apparent in Luke's account in Luke 2:40-52. The most interesting thing about this account comes in v. 51 where Luke records that, that realization notwithstanding, Jesus was subject to His parents. That is: He submitted Himself to their authority and control.

Would you agree that there is a *Babel* of confusion that confronts those who want to know God's truth? About what it means to be under the authority and control of God's Holy Spirit? Surrendered to God and Jesus Christ in spirit and in truth?

From this point on, we are going to investigate what Je-

sus meant by saying that *baptism is necessary in order for us “to fulfill all that righteousness demands”* (*The Jerusalem Bible*). We will begin with a brief discussion about salvation and its requirements.

Before we do that, consider the following review questions and write down the best answers for them. This gives you an opportunity to review the material for better understanding.

### Review Questions

1. Why did Jesus Christ warn us in Matthew 24:4, 5 about imposters coming to claim that they represent Him in one way or another?
2. In Matthew 7:21-23, Jesus Christ says that He will reject some religious people who do all manner of religious things in His name. Why? How is this different from the common claim that all we have to do to be saved is call upon the name of Jesus Christ?
3. Mark 7:6-9 – What information does Jesus give us in this scripture that helps us to understand His rejection of the bogus religious actions of some so-called “Christians”? What is the difference between the traditions of men and the commandments of God? Does He tell us that some prefer the traditions of men over the commandments of God? (See also Matthew 15:1-9.) Why give us that warning? Explain Matthew 7:13, 14 using this information as the basis for your conclusion.
4. Do Matthew 7 and Matthew 24 indicate that the many would be guilty of this? Does that leave us with the few who would be faithful to God? What does that mean to you when you consider the existence of 32,000+ “Christian” denom-

inations? Would that suggest that many *bogus* baptisms have taken place – among other things? Why?

5. 1 Corinthians 11:18, 19 – Why does Paul say that God allows divisions or heresies to exist?

6. 2 Kings 5:1-14 – What thing did God’s prophet Elisha require of Naaman in order for his leprosy to be healed? Did he accept Elisha’s instruction? Was that an impossible task? Did Naaman think that Elisha should come to him and perform some magical handwaving over his body? Was the Jordan River any better to wash in than the two rivers of Damascus, Syria? What did Naaman’s servants advise him to do? Why?

7. Would you conclude, then, that part of the problem stems from an unwillingness to be obedient to some of the simple things that God requires of us? Many times, in spite of how plain the instruction is or how simple it is to accomplish?

8. 1 Samuel 15:1-23 – What was Saul instructed to do? Did he do it just as God’s prophet had instructed him? What went wrong? With what did Samuel equate Saul’s rebellion?

9. Verses 24-26 – Is there still a penalty to suffer even if you admit your sin and ask for forgiveness? Why/why not?

10. Compare that incident to Hebrews 10:26-31. To what do we have to look forward if we choose to rebel against God’s instructions? Is “falling into the hands of the living God” something that we should take lightly? What does this tell you about God as a *loving* God? Is that word *love* apparently misunderstood and overly emotionalized? Explain your answer.

11. Hebrews 12 – Why does God chasten His children? What do you show yourself to be if you will not submit to God's chastening? What does v. 10 reveal will be the result of our chastening? Is it worth it? Explain your answer.

12. Matthew 3:13-15 – Did Jesus Christ set us an example by being baptized? What reason did He give to John for being baptized? Would you agree that there is a Babel of confusion that confronts those who want to know God's truth?

13. What is the value of the lesson taught in Luke 2:51, 52? How would you use Philippians 2:5 and Romans 12:1, 2 to achieve the purpose of that lesson?

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# Chapter Two

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## Salvation is a *Process*

It is not commonly understood that salvation is a *process*. In other words, it is a phenomenon characterized by gradual changes that lead from point A to point Z. Those changes are part of a *way of life* that must be pursued all the days of our lives. Many believe that merely professing faith in Jesus Christ (sometimes said to be “calling on the name of Jesus Christ”) will bring about your *immediate* salvation. However, we are going to see that *salvation* actually occurs at a specific point in time at the *end* of a *required process of spiritual education* in righteousness.

### Elements of the Process

Let’s begin with the basic elements of the salvation process. In Acts 1:1-5, Luke proposes to give a historical account of the activities of Christ’s Apostles after the ascension of Jesus Christ into heaven. Jesus told His Apostles that they would soon be *baptized with Holy Spirit*. Consider the discussions we have already had about what *Holy Spirit* is. Why would such a baptism be necessary? (Look in John 14 and John 16.)

Not many days after this parting conversation with His disciples, the Jews were observing the Feast of Weeks (commanded in Lev. 23:15, 16) ... also called *Pentecost* because they counted 50 days (seven weekly Sabbaths plus one day) from a Sabbath during the Feast of Unleavened Bread to determine when this “Pentecost” feast occurs. Luke covers this momentous day in Acts 2.

The people who attended this feast in Jerusalem experienced an overwhelming *power* of God that allowed all the attendees to understand one another very clearly (vv. 5-11). You might very well understand that they were extraordinarily curious about what was happening (v. 12). This is when Peter stood before them to give the meaning of the extraordinary occasion (vv. 14-36). Once he completed his explanation, they wanted to know what to do (v. 37). This is often the question that follows God’s revelation of His truth about sin and forgiveness to the individual.

Acts 2:38 is where Peter gave the inspired explanation. And ... you should note that Peter’s *inspired* answer was the fulfillment of Jesus Christ’s earlier prophecy in Acts 1. Here is what Peter told the people about what God expected them to do: (1) repent, (2) be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ, (3) receive the remission of their sins (that is: forgiveness, pardon, release from), and (4) receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. Why? All of these actions are *necessary* in one’s quest for salvation through Jesus Christ. Notice the order that Peter emphasized: repentance, baptism, remission, receipt. The first three specifically *required* actions *precede* the gift of the Holy Spirit.

When you read John 14:15-18, 26, Jesus Christ is even more specific about what a person must do. Please note that this is prior to Acts 2. The first thing He mentions is *obedience to His commandments*. Many people do not relate this statement to the 10 Commandments ... basically because they think that His sermon on the mount *replaced* the 10

Commandments (Matt. 5-7). In fact, that sermon was a magnification of the law bound up in the 10 Commandments (see Isa. 42:21). Matthew 22:34-40 is a confirmation of that truth. Those Commandments are part of God's requirements (see also 1 John 1:6-10; 2:3-5; and 3:4). That obedience to His commandments is not confined to one moment in time. It is a lifelong process.

Notice in John 14:17 and 16:13 that Jesus Christ refers to this "spirit" as the Spirit of Truth. John 17:17 says that God sets us aside for holy purposes through His word of truth (that is: holy scriptures). What is God's purpose for giving us this Spirit of Truth? Read John 4:23, 24. What do you find in Jesus Christ's statement relative to worshipping God? What do the terms spirit and truth tell you about worshipping God?

Now read John 8:31, 32. Do you understand the connection between continuing in God's word and knowing the truth? How about knowing the truth and being set free from falsehoods – religious and otherwise? Would you agree that all of this amounts to a very special education in God's thoughts and ways in which the true Christian will be actively involved? That special education will enable the true Christian to worship God in spirit and in truth and to become free of the ways of sin.

Now read John 14:26 and 16:13-15. What kinds of things will be included in this education? Will it improve your memory regarding the things of God? Does John 16:12 tell us that we cannot understand everything in one fell swoop? Does it suggest that this education will take time to develop our minds toward spiritual maturity?

Now read 1 Corinthians 3, Hebrews 5:11-6:4, and 1 Corinthians 2:6-16. What do these references teach you about the education God will give you through Jesus Christ? Do you get even the slightest indication that those who do not want to follow God's revelation and process will not be

granted more than a *superficial* access to His thoughts and ways? That the most they will achieve is a childish, immature concept of God's thoughts and ways? Such is the danger of not doing things *according to God's will* (see Rom. 12:1, 2 and Matt. 7:21-23). It is best to know the process and faithfully follow it.

What I have demonstrated is the simple, plain revelation of God's *truth*. He *requires* our acceptance of Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior. He *requires* our repentance – our willing change of heart and mind to be in conformity with God's revealed truth. He *requires* our *baptism* by water and by His Spirit so our sins can be remitted – forgiven/pardoned – so their penalties will not be exacted from us. The Spirit of Truth will open up our hearts and minds to God's *gradual* revelation of His truth so we can be *educated* in *righteousness* and *holiness* – which has to do with having right relationships between us and God and our fellow man. In that way, we develop a *holy spirit* in our minds and hearts (Eph. 1:4; 1 Cor. 2:16).

We should not assume that God is going to “zap” us with a sudden, concentrated wad of “holy spirit.” He does have the spiritual power to open our minds and hearts to His truth. It is called “revelation.” That “revelation” can be *instantaneous* or *gradual* ... whichever path suits the need of the individual. God knows when and how to apply His revelations.

Read Romans 7:7-12. Paul reveals to us how the process works. Make note of the benefits we receive by *obeying* God's law:

1. Sin is more specifically defined by the law of God ... which enables us to better understand both the “letter” (the specific law at face value) and the “spirit” (the “life principles” of the laws involved). See Matthew 5:17-19; 21-48 for examples of “letter” and

“spirit” given by Jesus Christ. This fulfills the principle involved in Isaiah 42:21 regarding magnifying the law (that is: enlarging the range or extent of the meaning and intent of the law).

2. Because the law/commandment is holy, just, and good, obeying the “letter” and “spirit” involved in it amounts to a spiritual experience by which you become holy, righteous, and good. Your mind and “heart” (deep-seated emotions) become more like God’s and His Christ’s (see John 6:63; Gal. 5:13-25; and Jer. 31:31-34).

### Being Connected to the “True Vine”

Read John 15:1-4 and consider this question: Can you be a “Christian” if you are not connected to the *True Vine*? (That could just as easily read *Vine of Truth*.) What happens to those who *were connected* to the vine but pruned off because of being unfruitful? Does this give us a huge lesson about “walking the walk”? It should be apparent that being “connected” to the True Vine is more than a mere claim of being a “Christian.” It has to include all of the functions that the branches of the vine perform. The most important elements are: (1) receiving the “spirit” from the main vine and (2) producing the specific fruit that the vine is supposed to produce. It is more than leaves and shade – the superficial appearances of the qualities of a vine.

Notice what the husbandman has to do in order get the vine to be as fruitful as possible: (1) he prunes out the unproductive vines, and (2) he cleanses the vines of their impurities and weaknesses in order to make them more productive. This also assumes that he makes sure they are properly fer-

tilized and watered. He has to make sure that the environ-ment around the vine is conducive to fruit production. Tending the vines to make them more productive is His specific function as the Husbandman (see Eph. 1:3-7).

Now read vv. 5-14. How does the expression “abide in me” suggest a continuing process? What does the expression “continue in my love” mean? It means that you are to expectantly remain and endure in a specific relationship with God through Jesus Christ. Does it suggest that you are not allowed to quit? Yes, because He expects that you, as part of the True Vine, will serve the purpose for which you were created and called into His truth.

What is meant by the expression that: “God is glorified when you bear much fruit? You will show yourselves to be my disciples by doing so” (emphases added)? Do verses 2 and 4 suggest that God will prepare you for bearing much fruit? How? What happens if it is not produced? Are pruning and purging disciplinary measures used to increase the production of fruit? Is it part of a process of education? Explain that to yourself in your notes

Water baptism, then, is one of the required steps in God’s Plan of Salvation. It comes as a demonstration that you have repented and accepted Jesus Christ as your personal Lord and Savior. It is not mere ritualism that helps you to join a particular religious group. It is the beginning of a change from the human approach to life’s relationships to God’s holy and loving approach to life’s relationships from God’s perspective (see Eph. 1:4 re: holiness, blamelessness, and love).

*Once this relationship is entered into, it is a life-long process of spiritual education (read Hebrews 6:4-8; 12:1-29). **God expects growth and evidence of change (fruit) throughout your lifetime. If you quit, or if God prunes you out due to a lack of growth and fruit, then you will have lost your chance to be “saved.”***

I hope this has been made abundantly clear to you. Once you have truly complied with these initial steps, then God stands bound by His *immutable* promise to give you greater access to His Holy Spirit that will enable you to produce the spiritual fruit listed in Galatians 5:22-26. This *Holy Spirit* is the *power* of which John spoke of in John 1:12 that gives us the *power* to become the sons of God. As Paul revealed in 1 Corinthians 2:9-16 and Romans 8:14-17, this *Holy Spirit* is the *power* that God uses to *educate* us in the way God thinks – and the way He expects us to think.

You should be understanding this more fully by now. If not, go back through it and ask God to help your understanding. Remember that John 4:23, 24 reveals that God must be worshipped in *spirit* and *truth*. You cannot accomplish either without the other. Also remember that our freedom from *false* religious concepts depends upon studying God’s word on a daily basis because it represents the *education* that we need for *learning* God’s truth. It is God’s way of providing us the *required spiritual education* we need to fulfill John 4:23, 24. It gives us *spiritual discipline* and *training*.

Finally, we need to deeply understand Hebrews 6:4-8. This is best understood in the context of Hebrews 5:1 through 6:3. Paul had dedicated the letter to the Hebrews, whomever they represent, to teach them some very important concepts about God, Jesus Christ, their plans for the “children” of God, the difference between Moses and Jesus Christ, the “Sabbath rest” that true Christians will enjoy in the future, and the priesthood of Jesus Christ.

But ... Paul gets to Hebrews 5:11 and *abruptly* halts his instruction because he knows that some of the Hebrews were not spiritually mature enough to grasp his instruction. Hebrews 6:4-8 is based on what he says in Hebrews 5:12-6:3: The Hebrews had been taught much about the basic principles of the doctrine of Jesus Christ, but ... they seemed to

have gotten to a point where they had to be taught those principles over and over again.

To Paul, this was a signal that they had not taken seriously the nature of the required process of their spiritual education. They had gotten proficient in the easier, primary things of the introduction of God's spirit and truth, but they began to treat it as though they had accomplished all that God required of them. So, Paul became concerned that they could get into a spiritual condition that would cause them to "fall away" from God's spirit and truth and "wither on the vine" That would be eternally disastrous!

With that background information, read Hebrews 6:4-8. What does Paul tell us here? It is very simple: Those of us who have been enlightened about God's spirit and truth, been baptized, received the Holy Spirit, and learned about what lies in store for us in eternity have a special duty to remain faithful and keep learning and living the spirit and truth God shares with us. Otherwise, we put ourselves in danger of being burned to ashes and wiped out of God's memory (see Job 7:8-10; Psa. 88:5, 12; Eccle. 8:10; 9:5; Isa. 26:14; 65:17; Mal. 4:1; Luke 9:62; Heb. 10:26, 27, 31; Rev. 20:14, 15).

With that instruction in mind, we should now understand that salvation is not accomplished in one brief moment of time based on a confession of faith in Jesus Christ. That confession begins a process by which you become more thoroughly educated in God's truth and His thoughts and ways. Ultimately, our salvation is not fully realized until we are changed from flesh to spirit.

Now download and study our free book: *There's More to Salvation than Meets the Eye* from our website: Go to the "Publications" menu to find it. This book is a thorough study of the process involved in our salvation. It is a companion study of the contents of this lesson.

## Review Questions

1. Acts 1:1-5 – What is Luke’s purpose for writing the Book of the Acts of the Apostles? With what does Jesus say the Apostles will be *baptized*? Read through John 14-16 and explain why such a baptism would be necessary.
2. Acts 2:38 – List four things Peter told the people to do. Are these actions connected to one’s quest for salvation through Jesus Christ? Which three things *precede* the gift of the Holy Spirit? Are they *required*?
3. John 14:15-18, 26 – As part of our obedience to God’s requirements, what special assistance did Jesus say would be provided? What kind of Spirit is it (do not answer “holy”)? What will be the reason for giving us this Spirit? Does Jesus suggest that the Christian will be given an *education* through this Spirit? In what?
4. John 16:7-15 – What kinds of things will be included in this education? List several things spoken of by Jesus.
5. Does John 16:12 show us that we cannot understand everything in one fell swoop? Does it suggest that this education will take time to *develop* toward spiritual *maturity*?
6. How does this suggest that those who do not follow these steps will not have access to God’s revelation of His *truth*?
7. John 4:23, 24 – Does God *require* us to worship Him in *spirit* and in *truth*? Can you accomplish *true worship* without one or the other? Why?
8. John 8:31, 32 – On what does your knowledge of God’s truth and your true *spiritual* freedom depend? What does the

expression “*continue* in my word” mean? Does it suggest a *process of required* education? Discipline and training?

9. Hebrews 6:4-8 – What happens to those who do not consider that education worth pursuing once they have begun it? Why would that also be the lesson of Hebrews 10:22-27? (See also Luke 9:62.)

10. Explain Peter’s statement in 2 Peter 3:17, 18 in light of this instruction.

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## Chapter Three

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# What Does Baptism *Mean?*

**I**s baptism merely some meaningless ritual initiation into a local church group? Or, is there very meaningful symbolism attached to it that God expects us to understand and adhere to? What is the *real* purpose of baptism? What does the *symbolism* mean with regard to the *salvation* process? Sadly, many who have been baptized – even by complete immersion – really do not understand. Let’s get God’s answer from His word.

### Why was Jesus sent into the World?

First, let’s consider why Jesus Christ was sent into the world of mankind. Read Romans 8:3, 4. The term *law* that Paul uses in vv. 2, 3 is not speaking of the *commandments*; it is speaking of a certain “pattern” or “principle” that must be followed relative to *our* “life in Christ.” God intended that the death of Jesus Christ and the subsequent gift of “holy spirit” would enable true Christians to walk according to God’s thoughts and ways instead of the ways of the human’s

carnal mind (see Isa. 55:6-13).

It should be evident, therefore, that God has opened a pathway out of sin and death through Jesus Christ so that the righteousness demanded by Him (Greek = *dikaioma* – that is: that which God has deemed to be right and proper under the force of His law, ordinances, judgments, and requirements) can be ultimately fulfilled in us as it was in Jesus Christ. You can see the sense of this in Deuteronomy 6:25: “It shall be our righteousness, if we observe to do all of these commandments before the Lord our God, as He has commanded us.”

Second, understanding that, of course, should lead us to understand Hebrew 4:15: Jesus Christ was tempted in all ways like all humans are tempted. He was fully immersed in the human condition; yet, He did not sin. In 1 Peter 2:21, Peter admonishes us to follow the example of Jesus Christ. Peter says that such is the basis for our being called out of the sinful world: Jesus Christ set the example for us to follow in His steps and to be obedient unto death ... thereby fulfilling the correct pattern and principle of God’s righteousness that is made known to us through God’s law, ordinances, judgments, and requirements. Christ set us an example by living that kind of life. Now read Isaiah 55:6-11. Note especially v. 11. How does that relate to Matthew 5:17-19?

The example of Jesus Christ was to live a sinless life through the power of the Holy Spirit. In doing this, He condemned sin – which means that He could not have been condemned to eternal death because of sin. If you take that power away from sin, then you, in effect, condemn sin. too.

God, however, made Jesus to be sin for us (see 2 Corinthians 5:21 and Isaiah 53). In God’s plan, Christ will ultimately destroy sin in order to destroy death (see Romans 6:23 re: the wages of sin). Hebrews 2:14 says that He took the human form to do just that. God laid upon Him all of our sins (like the innocent scapegoat on the Day of Atonement).

ment – see Leviticus 16:20-22 and Psalm 103:8-12) so He could die in our place and *destroy death*. What should be the result of the destruction of *death*? Two things: (a) the destruction of sin and death *forever* and (b) the giving of eter-nal life to mankind.

You need to pay attention to the importance laid upon the condemnation of sin, the death of sin, and the restoration of Jesus Christ to eternal life. They are important parts of the baptism experience. After three days and nights, Jesus was made alive again by the Spirit of God that had dwelt in Him while He was alive. That is the meaning of Romans 8:11. Verse 10 calls this Spirit “Christ in you.” This is another example that Christ has set for us. This is one of the main reasons Jesus Christ was sent into the world. This is why it was most important for Him to live the human life among humans.

### For what did Jesus die?

First Corinthians 15:3, 4 tells us that Old Testament scriptures foretold the death of Jesus Christ. Why? He was to die for the sins committed by humans. In these two verses, we see that He was also buried. He was placed into a borrowed tomb and sealed in by a huge rock. You can read the scriptural account in Matthew 27.

You also can read part of the prophecy about His death in Isaiah 53. You can see the imagery of His death acted out in the Atonement rituals of Leviticus 16 ... especially the “sin-bearing” goat that took away the sins of the people. You can go back farther in time to Exodus 12 to see the prophetic “passover” enactment of His future death and how His blood covers the sinner as a protective agent. You can go back also to Genesis 3:15, 21 and find the pronouncement regarding His future death and the first animal sacrifice that pictured it.

Most importantly, you can go to Philippians 2:5-11 and 1 Peter 1:18-21 and see that His death was planned before the creation of the orderly universe ... long before the first human was even created. God foresaw that human beings might not always live holy, blameless, and loving lives (see Eph. 1:3-14). Why? Because He planned to give them minds that could operate by independent choice ... and, as a result of that independence, could act against His will. His objective from the moment the Lord God (the one who became Jesus Christ) created the first human was to train mankind in His thoughts and ways (see Gen. 1:26-28; 2:15-17; Rom. 12:1, 2; Heb. 12).

Read Romans 8:3, 4. There are four important words in this instruction/explanation: law, condemnation, righteousness, and fulfilled. Combine that with Ephesians 1:4 where we see God's stated purpose for the creation of mankind: "...that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love." Combining this with Philippians 2:5-11 and 1 Peter 1:18-25 (and the scriptures above), you should be able to see that God had in place ... before the creation of the orderly universe ... a plan to deal with a possible contingency (in this case, an undesirable possibility). Developing the thoughts and ways of God has always been God's will for the human (Matt. 6:9-13).

God's law would set the proper boundaries and limitations of human behavior relative to holiness, blamelessness, and lovingkindness. Those three basic characteristics of holy behavior give rise to interdependent variables (i.e.: law, spirit, grace, etc.) that are judged by letter and spirit (see Matt. 5-7 where Jesus addresses the spirit of the Law; see also Rom. 8:1-4 where Paul addresses the righteousness of the Law). If one determines to go outside of, or astray from, those boundaries, limitations, and interdependent variables and become self-righteous, then s/he will be under God's condemnation to death. God considers that to be sin ... not

righteousness (that is: just, upright, virtuous, moral).

One thing that is different about the creation of the human is this: Even though God made a comment about all of the creation being “good” or “very good” (see v. 31), man had control over whether or not s/he will ultimately remain “good” or “very good.” Why? That will be determined by the choices mankind will make as they receive the training they need in holiness, blamelessness, and love (Heb. 12). Man’s life will, in effect, “unfold” before God in the process of salvation and be judged accordingly.

Here is where we have to understand Hebrews 9:27. Generally speaking, man will suffer one physical death. Once that death occurs, man is to lie in his/her grave to await God’s judgment (Job 14:1-5). God’s law presently judges man worthy of death if s/he commits sin against God (see 1 John 3:4; Ezek. 18:4, 20; Isa. 53:6; Rom. 3:23; 6:23). That is the answer to the question: For what did Jesus die?

If you are searching out God’s plan of salvation in scripture, then you should note the particulars of 1 Peter 1:18-25 relative to Philippians 2:5-11, Romans 5:1-11, and Hebrews 10:1-15. Make sure that you understand that “all have sinned and come short of the glory of God” (Rom. 3:23; 5:12; 11:32; Gal. 3:22). You must be personally involved in this knowledge and the process by which you can be saved out of your own participation in sin.

The symbolism of baptism is *dual*: (a) it pictures the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ, and (b) it pictures the death and burial of the sinner and his rising up to begin living a *Christian* (Christ-like) life (read Romans 6:3-6).

Baptism also shows our willingness to *bury* sin and the old sinful man (read Romans 6:11, 12) and to walk in newness of life by being obedient to God and His laws through the power of the Holy Spirit – which He promises to give us *after* our baptism. It is a matter of personal choice.

Baptism also shows our willingness to *totally surrender* our lives to God through Jesus Christ (read Romans 6:16-22). God demands unconditional surrender to His rule and His authority over our lives (see 1 Corinthians 6:19, 20). By acting out in *symbolic* form your own death, burial, and resurrection, you demonstrate your willingness to make that surrender – as well as your desire to obey God in all matters of faith and holiness. The question you need to confront at this point is simple: *Have you done this?* If not, *when will you do it?* Your determination to persevere in your new life in Christ is vitally necessary in making Christ's advocacy with the Father meaningful and successful.

### Review Questions

1. Romans 8:3, 4 – Why did God send Jesus Christ into the world?
2. Hebrews 4:15 – What kind of life did Jesus Christ live?
3. 1 Corinthians 15:3, 4 – For what reason did Jesus Christ die? Was He *buried*? Did He come back to life after 3 days and three nights (compare this to Matthew 12:38-40)?
4. Romans 8:11 – Of what importance is God's Spirit to the believer?
5. Ezekiel 18:4, 20; Romans 6:23 – Does sin *require* the death of the sinner? (See also Genesis 2:15-17.) Since "...*all* have sinned..." (Romans 3:23), would you expect that requirement to apply to *you* and *your sins*? So, your *death* is a *required consequence* of your sins? How do you react to such knowledge?

6. Colossians 2:12, 13; Romans 6:1-13 – How is baptism *symbolic* of one's *death*, *burial*, and *resurrection* from a "grave"?

7. So, in baptism you *symbolically die*?

8. If you emerge from the "watery grave" – which is a symbol of your *future* resurrection (1 Cor. 15:50-54) – to a *newness* of life, does that imply that *sin in your life has been condemned*?

9. Should you, once you have been released from the *death* brought by sin, continue to sin? Explain.

10. We know that it is nearly humanly impossible not to commit sin. First John 2:1-6 gives us information about what happens if we should sin after baptism and receipt of the Holy Spirit: (1) Jesus Christ intervenes for us with the Father to plead on our behalf for His grace, mercy, and forgiveness; (2) if, however, we *willfully* sin and *continue* to live a sinful life after baptism, we put our eternal life into grave danger. What does the term *advocate* (*KJV*; v. 1) mean? Explain how this situation demands a *spirit of repentance* on our part?

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## Chapter Four

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# Old Testament *Types* of Baptism

**I***mager*y, in the sense intended for this discussion, is *figurative* language that stands for something *abstract* that cannot be *actually* represented or visualized. Jesus' use of the *wind* in John 3:8 is just such *figurative* language. Because *spirit* life is very difficult for the human to comprehend or visualize in *reality*, Jesus used the *imagery* of the *wind* to make what He was saying more concrete. In this sense, we can say that the "wind" imagery is a *type* or *figure* or *symbol* that demonstrates certain features of the *reality* of spirit-life.

The *Old* Testament contains significant *types* – *foreshadows* is another accurate term – of *New* Testament water baptism that are important for you to understand. A *foreshadow* gives a hint or suggestion about something *before it occurs*. The sacrifice of the unblemished lamb, for example, is both a *type* – a *symbol* – and a *foreshadow* of the sacrifice of the Lamb of God (see Gen. 3:15, 21, John 1:29, 1 Cor. 5:7, and Rev. 6). Let's understand how this works. Be aware that this discussion will not be limited to baptism.

## Noah and the Flood

Peter refers to Noah, his wife, and their three sons and their wives as “...eight living beings saved by water” (1 Peter 3:20; Gen. 6-9). Now, notice what he says as he follows up that comment in v. 21: “The like figure whereunto even baptism also now saves us ... by the resurrection of Jesus Christ” (*KJV*; emphases added). Please pay attention to how Peter uses the “water” imagery relative to baptism and resurrection from the dead.

The *KJV* term figure is from the Greek term antitupon, which is our English word antitype. This term means “something that corresponds to or is foreshadowed in a type.” Thus, Peter intended to teach us that baptism by water is a necessary part of the salvation process ... just as the ark upon the flood waters provided salvation for Noah and his family. Therefore, we should understand antitype as follows: Something that is foreshadowed by a type or symbol, as a New Testament event prefigured in the Old Testament.

I like the *Revised Standard Version* translation of this verse: “Baptism, which corresponds to this, now saves you, not as a removal of dirt from the body but *as an appeal to God for a clear conscience*, through the resurrection of Jesus Christ” (emphases added). The *RSV* used the word corresponds to show the similarity between the act of salvation in the Flood story and the act of salvation embodied in Christian baptism. It was not saying that you could take a boat ride on a body of water and consider that to have been your baptism. It was saying that the ark and the flood of the Old Testament (the type) gave us a “heads-up” about New Testament baptism as part of our salvation process (the antitype). Given that example cited by Peter, let’s study through a few more appropriate examples from the Old Testament.

Genesis 6:5, 11, 12 tell us that Adam’s and Eve’s sin affected mankind as they multiplied upon the earth. Realize,

of course, that these were the *descendants* of Adam and Eve. Also, this is how the fruit of the knowledge of good and evil manifested itself and was *multiplied* among mankind: great wickedness in which everything they thought and did was persistently *evil* (even though there was some *good* mixed in with it). The human population was *corrupt* and *violent*. God's thoughts and ways made very little, if any, impression upon them. It appears from the description given that no one was willingly obedient toward God and His thoughts and ways. What was His reaction toward this situation? Jesus Christ warns us in Matthew 24:36-39 that the generation of man at the return of Jesus Christ will have degenerated to the same mindset as the human population just before the flood of Noah's time.

Genesis 6:6, 7, and 17 reveals that God *deeply regretted* ever having created mankind because "every purpose and desire of [mankind's] heart was set only on evil throughout every hour of the day" (alternate translation of *KJV* based on marginal notes). It should be plainly understood that *evil* constituted a great *pleasure* for mankind. So, God (Yahweh Elohim – who became Jesus Christ), suffered intense emotional grief because, at this point, He had suffered through over 1,600 *years* of mankind's *spiritual degeneration*. So, He decided that the best remedy was to *destroy everything He had created* by means of a great, universal *flood*. Although it was long in coming, the Lord God had to be consistent with His original warning to Adam that "...the wages of sin is *death*" (Gen. 2:17; Rom. 6:23).

It would be a natural question to ask: "Was there *any human being* who could have been good enough to be allowed to survive ... to escape ... such a fate? Genesis 6:8 tells us: "But *Noah* found *grace* in the eyes of the Lord" (emphases added). Why? Verse 9 tells us that "Noah was a just and perfect man in his generations, and Noah walked with God." That makes Noah a *type* of people in the future who

will be given God's grace in order to survive a similar destruction that is coming upon a very sinful world (see Matt. 24:21, 22, and 36-51). Notice the type and antitype relationship here between the Old Testament and the New Testament.

## In What Did Noah Have Faith?

The Apostle Peter tells us that Noah was a “preacher of righteousness” (2 Pet. 2:5). What does that mean? Righteousness is basically defined as “acting or being in accordance with what is just: honorable, and free from guilt or wrong.” Psalm 119:172 gives us a biblical definition: “All your commandments are righteousness.” We get the idea from this that Noah was obedient at least to God's 10 Commandments even before they were given to Israel at Mt. Sinai – if not other types of laws, statutes, ordinances, and so on that might have also existed at the time. And ... these were the things that Noah attempted to teach the wicked people around him before and during the 120 years it took him to build the ark. *They would not listen!*

We can know this by what we are told in 2 Peter 2:9: Noah was upright, just, and walked with God “...perfect in his generations.” What does that mean? Here is a teachable moment about letting the Bible interpret the Bible (BSC 1, pp. 94-96). In order to discover what Genesis 6:9 means, you can find references in scripture to Noah, what kind of man he was, how God used him, and what he did. Note the following examples:

1. Matthew 24:37, 38: Jesus Christ tells us the conditions of the world's population during Noah's day ... and warns that the generation during which Jesus Christ will return will be just like it. Genesis 6:1-5 gives the details about those conditions: (a)

“sons of God” became more and more worldly and violated God’s marriage laws; (b) the offspring of these degenerate “marriage” relationships produced men of great renown (“giants” among men); and (c) civilization subsequently degenerated into a quagmire of every sin imaginable ... instead of rising to the demands of holiness demanded of the “sons of God.” *Noah* and his family did not join this degeneracy.

2. Hebrews 11:7: Noah was a man of *faith* ... which presupposes that he believed in the coming “Savior Seed” who is to come to set up God’s Kingdom and bring salvation to those who are of that same faith (see Jude 3 re: “...the faith once delivered unto the saints”). That *faith* was rewarded by the Lord God (who later became Jesus Christ ... the “Savior Seed” among mankind) so that Noah and his family (eight people total) could perpetuate that “good news” beyond the destruction that came to the world through the universal flood. The term *perfect* in this sense has to do with being spiritually mature (see 1 Cor. 2:6 re: those to whom God’s *mysteries* are revealed).

So, Noah’s faith is an example to all who are faced with all manner of evil in our present world. *Noah was a preacher of righteousness in service to the Lord God. Through the inspiration of the Lord God ... who later became Jesus Christ in the flesh ... Noah preached a message of salvation for about 120 years before the flood actually came upon that generation of mankind. They did not listen to him (compare Gen. 6:11-13 to Matt. 24:36-51).*

3. 1 Peter 3:18-22: Peter gives us an interesting point-of-view in his account of the flood. Verses 18-20 should, by no means, be crafted (by guile or sleight-of-hand; see Eph. 4:11-16) to teach that Jesus Christ, *in the spirit* (while His dead human body hung on the Roman cross), went into Hell, Hades, or Sheol to preach to all sinners who had died between the Garden of Eden and Jesus Christ's time ... or, to rescue the souls of the Old Testament saints who had died during that same time so He could transfer them to Paradise/Heaven. Those who teach such a concept borrow heavily from Jewish religious traditions about Hell, Hades, and Sheol that they adopted from paganism through the Greeks and Romans.

*The Jewish Encyclopedia* reports that the concept of the immortal soul was borrowed from the Greeks, who got it from the Egyptians, who got it from the Eleusinian Mysteries, who got it from the Chaldeans and Babylonians. The Pharisees invested heavily in that concept. When the Jews made that religious decision, they violated an ages-old commandment of the Lord God against borrowing theological concepts and practices from the heathen religions (Deut. 12:29-32; Jer. 10:2). "Going to heaven" went hand-in-hand with the concept of the immortality of the soul (vol. VI, pp. 564-566).

Too much of God's truth stands as a bold and reliable witness against such trivial and nonsensical theological fuss (folderol): (a) there is no immortal soul, (b) heaven is not the reward of the "saved," (c) the judgment regarding the eternal welfare of humans has not yet come (see Matt. 25:31-34;

Rev. 20:7-15), and (d...) et cetera, et cetera, ad infinitum. *God's truth sets you free* from that kind of religious thought and practice (John 8:31, 32).

Who, then, were the *spirits in prison* spoken of in 1 Peter 3:19? BAG proposes a choice between the *immortal soul* concept and the *fallen angels*. We should already know that the immortal soul concept is *not viable*. Does that leave us only a concept regarding the fallen angels? No ... not if you can mentally and spiritually grasp a third option to be explained below.

We find in 2 Peter 2:4 that God has imprisoned and restrained all rebellious, sinful angels in a *prison* called in the Greek language *Tartarus*. Peter uses that term, *not to adopt a pagan religious concept*, but to speak of a place not unlike that which John uses in Revelation 20:1-3: the *bottomless pit* (or ... the *great abyss*). John shows that Satan, in the future, is also to be restrained/imprisoned in such a condition for 1,000 years, released for a short while, and then thrown into the Lake of Fire to be consumed and burned to ashes (vv. 7-10; Mal. 4:1; Rom. 16:20).

The rebellion by the archangel Lucifer (who became Satan the Devil) and one-third of the angelic forces occurred *before* the creation of mankind and continued afterward (see Gen. 3:1-7; Isa. 14:12-15; Ezek. 28:12-19; Rev. 12:7-9). Has Yahweh Elohim/the Lord God/Jesus Christ not had adequate opportunity to *preach* to such enemies and attempt to recover them as the servants of God and the ministering spirits to the heirs to salvation (Heb. 1:5, 13, 14)? Does 1 Peter 3:19, 20 *require* that such preachments occurred *only* during the approximate 120 years it took Noah to build the ark? *No*. That was a quick and simple answer for such a question. If that answer is true ... and solves that question about 1 Peter 3:18, 19 ... then what *other* argument can be put forth to answer the question?

After having read several commentaries regarding this

matter, I have been led to a reasonable conclusion that puts the focus on the work of the *Holy Spirit* during those troublesome times. Pay attention to how this unfolds. The primary source from which I gathered the following information was *Adam Clarke's Commentary* (pp. 1306, 1307). His conclusion, I think, is the most reasonable by *scriptural* standards:

...[I]t was by this [Holy] Spirit that Noah became a “preacher of righteousness,” and condemned that ungodly world, Heb. xi. 7, who would not believe until wrath, divine punishment, came upon them to the uttermost. ... There is *no ground* to believe that the text speaks of Christ's going to hell to preach the gospel to the damned, or of His going to some feigned [imaginary] place where the souls of the patriarchs were detained, to whom He preached, and whom He delivered from that place and took with Him to paradise.

Noah believed in God, walked uprightly before Him, and found grace in His sight; he obeyed Him in building the ark, and God made it the means of his salvation from the waters of the deluge. *Baptism* implies a consecration and dedication of the soul [that is: the deep, inner recesses of the mind and heart] and body to God, Son, and Holy Spirit. He who is faithful to his baptismal covenant, taking God through Christ, by the eternal Spirit, for his Portion, is saved here from his sins; and through the resurrection of Christ from the dead has the well-grounded hope of eternal glory (emphases added).

What follows is the conclusion that I have drawn from Clarke's summation of this event. Consider Colossians 1:27 as our first clue. What does Paul mean when he speaks of

“Christ in you....”? Go to the following references for more clarity: Romans 8:1-17; 1 Corinthians 2:16; Galatians 2:20; and Philippians 2:5. All of these references refer to the same concept: “Christ in you.” All of these references from Paul’s pen tell us that as “Christians” we are taking into our minds and hearts the thoughts and ways of Jesus Christ relative to the will of God the Father. So what?

Now read Hebrews 11:39, 40. What does Paul tell us here? If you read the book of Hebrews correctly, then you will see that much of the focus is on the relationship between the Old Testament symbols and the New Testament realities. Hebrews 11 is such a chapter in this book. Paul goes back to Abel (v. 4) and discusses the various trials and tribulations of Old Testament people of true faith. However, he draws his conclusion about this “faith” chapter in vv. 38, 39.

He implies that there were people in what we might call the “Old Testament” period who were godly people who, apparently, believed in and looked forward to the coming of the CHRIST – the “Savior Seed” of Genesis 3:15 (see John 5:46). Read Hebrews 6:13-20 regarding the “promise” that the Lord God made to Abraham. Note how Paul relates it to Jesus Christ (v. 20). How can we be sure that this is true? Notice the words immutable and immutability in reference to the promise and oath. It means that they not only will not be changed, but that they cannot be changed.

Read Hebrews 11:40. Notice how Paul mingles “them” (the Old Testament saints) and “us” (the New Testament saints) in his conclusion: “God having provided some better thing for us, that they without us should not be made perfect.” The Greek word for perfect is teleioo, which means: “complete, brought to an end, finish, accomplish.” What does that mean? It means, on the surface, that whatever “we” are supposed to receive in Jesus Christ, “they” also are supposed to receive in Him ... and all of us will receive it at the same time! They are not already enjoying their eternal re-

ward without *us!* **They are not presently in heaven waiting on us to get there!**

What has to be brought to completion? Ephesians 1:1-14. Hebrews 2:5-18. Genesis 1:26-28. Job 14:1-15. Psalm 17:15. 1 Corinthians 15:50-54. 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18. 1 John 3:1-3. When God, through Jesus Christ, finishes – brings to its end – the process of creating us in His image, we will have become full-blown members of the God Family with spirit bodies – born again. All of the Old Testament saints will experience this marvelous transformation at the same time that the New Testament saints experience it. **No one has presently achieved it except Jesus Christ** (John 3:13; Acts 26:22, 23; 1 Cor. 15:20). *Let the word of God set you free from the confusion brought by man's religious traditions!*

So, the conclusion that I have reached through this research is that the Lord God/Yahweh Elohim/Jesus Christ **inspired** Noah to preach a witness and a warning to the sinful people **before** the flood. It took Noah 100+ years to build the ark. Every day he was confronted with wicked people who mocked him. Every day he had a righteous reply and a message about how they could be saved from that impending death. Every day the spirit of Christ worked in him to deliver that message and to confront their sinful ways. Remember that the Lord God had already tolerated over 1,600 years of their wickedness and self-righteousness. **It most certainly was in this man Noah that Jesus Christ confronted the wickedness of that day in an effort to “save” as many as would listen and repent.**

Building an ark in an area where there was no sea or ocean big enough to accommodate it must have caused Noah to become the butt of these people's ridicule. Comparing Genesis 5:32 to 7:11, you can calculate that it took *at least* 100 years to build the ark. Some believe that the 120 years

mentioned in Genesis 6:3 is the amount of time God gave Noah to build the ark.

If Noah's son Shem was 100 years old two years *after* the Flood, then he would have been 98 years old when they entered the ark. Noah would have been building the ark 20+ years before Shem, his oldest son, was born. God had tolerated this evil for 1,650+ years after Adam's and Eve's sin. Noah tolerated for 100+ years the ridicule that surely came from the evil people who were still being affected by the fruit of the knowledge of good and evil.

Here is the simplicity of this figure/type: Noah was a righteous man who obeyed God's instructions. He *demonstrated* his faith and trust by exhibiting the same kind of *active* faith that God expects of us today – if we want to be *saved* from the penalty of our sins. *Symbolically speaking*, Noah and his family were put into the water and brought up out of it – a *type/symbol of the resurrection from the dead* (*Jesus Christ being our example*; see Rom. 6:1-13)!

If we accept Christ as our Lord and Savior, repent of our sins, allow those sins to be *buried* in the watery grave, then come up out of that watery grave to live a *new life* in obedience to God, then we are promised that we *shall be resurrected* to a *new life* (born *again*) like Jesus Christ was – being changed from *flesh* to *spirit*. *That future change from flesh to spirit is when our salvation will truly come*. Take time to read Romans 6 thoroughly so you can spiritually grasp this concept of *baptism* and why God requires it as part of the process toward salvation. Read 1 Corinthians 15:35-58 very carefully and compare it to John 3:3-8. Now read Hebrews 6:1-4 and 10:26, 27. Can you tell by those verses when we are truly *saved*?

## Israel and the Exodus from Egypt

Now, let's look at another interesting *type* from the *Old*

Testament that points to New Testament baptism: the exodus of Israel from Egypt through the Red Sea to the Promised Land. While the children of Israel were in Egypt, they were the victims of some deceitful practices. When they first came there, because of famine in their own land, they were welcomed – and even benefitted Egypt largely because of Israel’s next-to-youngest son, Joseph (read Genesis 37 and 39-50).

After Joseph died, and the Israelites multiplied in number and prospered, the Egyptians forgot Joseph and began to systematically enslave them (see Ex. 1:7-14). This is typically the practice of Satan the Devil (read 2 Corinthians 11:3, 4, 13-15). So, Egypt is a type of sin. Pharaoh and his army are types of Satan and his demonic forces who constantly strive to bring us into captivity to sin. What did God command Israel to do? Come out of sin and go to the Promised Land (read Exodus chapters 3-14). The Israelite exodus out of Egypt is a type (a perfect example or model) of the Christian’s exodus out of sin toward God’s promised destination through Jesus Christ.

The first thing the Israelites had to do was to determine to obey God. Once they had made that decision, the next move was to act upon it. God gave them specific instructions about what to do. Embedded in those instructions are several types, figures, symbols, and foreshadows.

Now read 1 Corinthians 10:1-12. What do vv. 6 and 11 tell us that Israel represents to Christians? Whatever translation you read this from, the King James Version translation of examples in v. 6 and ensamples in v. 11 comes from the Greek term tupos – types, figures, examples, warnings, lessons, object lessons. Some versions translate tupos to read lessons and warnings.

The Bauer-Arndt-Gingrich Greek/English Lexicon adds that it also means “a symbol/foreshadowing of the tribulation to come.” So, there are not only present-day warnings

for Christians, but there are also *warnings about the future* to which we must pay attention.

This is the importance of Old Testament *types*, *figures*, and *symbols*. In other words, there are warnings embedded in these *examples* that *Christians* could also face some type of *enslavement* by malevolent forces (for example: see Eph. 6:10-20). Israel's *example* should teach us that we should have faith in God's promise of ultimate deliverance and be obedient to His commands and instructions through His servants.

Read 1 Corinthians 10:1, 2. Notice that Paul compares Israel's passing through the Red Sea to a *baptism*. He includes in that *type* their having the constant presence of the *cloud* that followed them. This is found in Exodus 14. You should understand that clouds are made up of *water*. Let's understand what led up to the presence of the *cloud* and Israel's passage through the Red Sea.

First, you need to read Genesis 37 through Exodus 1 in order to get the basic history about what led up to Israel's problem. Connect that reading to Genesis 15 ... especially vv. 13-16 ... because you will understand the Lord God's *prophecy* about the *exodus* situation from His covenant with Abraham. Also, read Paul's commentary in Hebrews 6:13-20 to understand why this is still important for God's *true people* today. Once you have read that history, then go to Exodus 12. You should practice getting grounded in all of the connected elements involved in proper interpretation of scripture. (Isa. 28:9, 10).

The time had come for the Lord God to fulfill His prophecy in Genesis 15:13-16. Let's examine Exodus 12:1-13 as the *beginning* of the fulfillment. This entire chapter is about *Passover* instructions; so, we can rightly conclude that *v. 2* is information about the time of the year in which this instruction is given: "*This month* shall be unto you the *beginning* of months: it shall be the *first month of the year* to

you” (emphases added). The Lord God gave no instructions here about having two different calendars: a religious calendar and a different civil calendar. Based on that premise, we can conclude that God’s calendar begins around the Spring equinox.

You can acquaint yourself with that by studying the material that we have made available in our website materials. See especially Lessons 11 and 12 in the Bible Study Course; pp. 30-41 in our A Statement of Beliefs; the “Holy Day Calendar” tab; and our Publications section under the “Online Magazine”: 2014 – “God’s Holy Days” (parts 1 and 2); and 2016 – “Special Edition: Constructing a Holy Day Calendar.” All of this will teach you how to understand more thoroughly Exodus 12:2 regarding the beginning of the year principle.

What instructions did the Lord God give Moses about the Passover lambs (vv. 3-6)? Were the Israelites supposed to *kill and eat* the lambs (vv. 6, 8-10)? What did they do with the blood of the lambs (v. 7)? Why (vv. 12, 13)? What would happen to those who did not follow the instructions? *It should be self-explanatory that those who did not follow the instructions would suffer at the hands of the Angel of Death.*

Why did God require them to eat it in the fashion described? Read v. 11. Can you see that this is an emergency situation in which the Lord God is about to lead Israel out of Egyptian slavery? The blood is a signal to the Angel of Death to pass over the houses marked by the blood (vv. 12, 13). As v. 11 describes it: It is the Lord’s passover. This is the incident from which the name of the holy day Passover is derived (see v. 14; Lev. 23:2, 4, 5). It is also the source from which we derive the meaning for our being “saved” by the power of the blood of Jesus Christ, the passover Lamb of God (John 1:29; Mark 14:24; Heb. 9:22-28; 1 Cor. 5:7; Rev. 5).

We see in Exodus 12:14-17 that the Lord God (the one

who later became Jesus Christ – see John 1:1-3, 14 and Heb. 10) requires the Israelites to mark the occasion with a yearly religious convocation. It is to be a constant reminder that the Lord God led them out of Egypt with the intent that they would never be enslaved again. The unleavened bread they ate was also memorialized with a yearly holy week (see Lev. 23:6-8; Rom. 6; 1 Cor. 5:6-8). The unleavened bread symbolizes the goal of the true believer to become sinless before God and mankind ... as one whose spiritual goal is to come out of slavery to sin (Rom 6:16-18).

The combination of Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread is to be a constant reminder of how the Lord God led Israel out of Egyptian slavery – a type of the Christian's journey out of sin through Jesus Christ. Yes, that implies that true Christians will observe all of the holy days of Leviticus 23 (see Matt. 5:17-19; 1 Cor. 10:14-22; 11:20-30).

Read Exodus 12:11. Notice the immediacy of the Lord God's instructions: be prepared to travel at a moment's notice ... even eating the passover meal in haste. You can see a similar prophetic statement in Matthew 24:15-22. It should be apparent to the thoughtful reader that the Lord God has the expectation that those who will be His people will follow His instructions and be ready and willing to “come out of sin [Egypt]” without confusion and indecision. God does not desire that His people should be slaves to anything or anybody. You should be convinced enough about the penalty for sin (Gen. 2:17; Ezek. 18:4, 20; Rom. 6:23) that you will desire to be set free from it. After all, that decision can make the difference between eternal life and eternal death (see Deut. 30:15-20; I John 3:4).

Also, of utmost importance is the matter discussed in Exodus 12:14-17. Pay attention to how the Lord God commands Israel to memorialize this event with regular religious observances of the Passover event and the days of eating unleavened bread when they fled Egypt. He did that so that the

*true believers* among Israel would *perpetually remember* that the Lord God led them out of Egypt to the Promised Land – first, through the *blood* and then, through the *water*. That is the prime and sacred purpose of this commanded memorial. Also make note of v. 17 where the Lord God designates the *longevity* of this memorial: “... therefore shall you observe this day in your generations by an ordinance *forever*” (emphases added). This observance comes *once a year*.

In the Book of the Law that the Lord God gave to Moses at Mt. Sinai during that trek, He specifically included that *memorial* and other laws regarding *holy days* (Leviticus 23). Notice how Leviticus 23:1-14 is summed up in v. 14: “... it shall be a statute *forever* in all your dwellings.”

Now read vv. 15-21. How does the Lord God sum up His instructions about observing *Pentecost*? Does He use the term *forever* again? Again, read vv. 22-32. What instruction do you find about observing the *Day of Atonement*? Does He stipulate *forever* again? How about vv. 33-44? Does He *again* stipulate *forever* with regard to the *Feast of Tabernacles* (see Zech. 14:16-19)? Does v. 43 imply that *all of these holy days* represent a *memorial* of Israel being led by the Lord God out of Egypt? Who is the *creator* of these holy days (Heb. 5:9; 12:2)? Were they created by *Moses* or the *Lord God* (see also Lev. 23:4)? *Why would this instruction be important to anyone who is supposed to worship God in spirit and truth* (John 4:23, 24; Num. 23:19; Mal. 3:6; Heb. 13:8; James 1:17)?

Read Paul’s instructions to *Christians* in 1 Corinthians 5:7, 8. What does the blood of the lambs *typify* for Christians? What does the *leavening* represent? Does it appear that Paul calls upon *Christians* to observe the holy days *memorialized* by the Lord God’s commands? Why would you suppose Paul would take *that* course of instruction and action? Read closely v. 8 where Paul says: “Let us keep the

feast [of Passover and Unleavened Bread].” Why? Also read 1 Corinthians 10:15-21 and 11:23-29. What Paul is addressing in these scriptures is the Christian observance of Leviticus 23:4-8.

The Passover lambs represent the crucified Christ, who shed His *blood* for our sins (see Isa. 53, John 1:29, and Rev. 5:6-13; 6:1, 16, 17). The unleavened bread (see Exodus 12:34) represents *the sinless body* of Jesus Christ that was sacrificed for all of humanity. Eating the lamb and being covered by the lamb’s blood were required for God’s protection as Israel departed from Egypt.

Paul’s encouragement to observe Passover and Unleavened Bread (see also Leviticus 23:5, 6) was not a Jewish thing because these holy days were required by the Lord God – not Moses (a Levite), and not the Jews – in perpetuity. They are constant reminders of God’s involvement in the salvation of mankind. Now read John 6:47-69. Note that this is instruction by Jesus Christ about the same idea that we have been studying.

Here is an interesting thought: Picture the process involved: (1) acceptance of the “body” and “blood” of Jesus Christ (the repentance part of the salvation process) precedes (2) the “baptism” part (the “washing away” of your sins) of the process. All of this was typified in the Old Testament for Christians under the New Testament. Now read Isaiah 55:10, 11 and Jeremiah 31:31-34.

Now go to Matthew 26:1-28. Here you see Jesus Christ telling His disciples to prepare for the observance of Passover (Lev. 23:5). The expression in v. 2 (“*feast of the pass-over*”) also involves the seven days of unleavened bread (Lev. 23:6-8). You should be able to tell by the context of Leviticus 23:5-8, as well Exodus 12:11-17, that this feast is eight days in duration. The Jews generally observe Unleavened Bread as the Feast of Passover for seven days.

Read John 19:14, 31. This was the day after Jesus Christ

and His disciples observed the Passover on the night of the Passover event. Genesis 1:5, 8, 13, 19, 23, and 31 show that the day begins with the evening. All who observe the seventh day Sabbath – including the Jews – begin their observance at sundown on Friday. So, Passover will go from the evening beginning the 14<sup>th</sup> day of the first month until the sundown that ends the 14<sup>th</sup> day and begins the 15<sup>th</sup> day. Exodus 12:6, 11, 14 define only Passover. The definition of Unleavened Bread is the sense of Exodus 12:11-15. How does that work?

Exodus 12:16-20 shows that the Feast of Unleavened Bread begins at the close of the 14<sup>th</sup> day and lasts until the close of the 21<sup>st</sup> day (v. 18) – in effect, the 15<sup>th</sup> day through the 21<sup>st</sup> day. The term Moses uses in Exodus 12:18 is at even. That term is translated from the Hebrew term ba erev. It is different from the Hebrew term ben ha arbayim in Leviticus 23:5. If you understand the difference, then you know the truth about the difference between Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread. What is the difference?

In Exodus 12:5-6, the Lord God tells Moses to sacrifice the Passover lambs at ben ha arbayim: “*between the two lights*” – that is: at twilight. The definition is this: The time period between sunset and dark is ben ha arbayim. Dark (ba erev) is the beginning of the following day. Ba erev does not include any of the time between sunset and dark. It is the precise moment that the day begins. It is as Genesis 1 defines the day as consisting of evening and morning.

It is in this manner that Leviticus 23:5-8 reveals that Passover and Unleavened Bread are two separate but contiguous observances ... that is: they combine for an eight-day period of religious observances that includes two yearly Sabbaths during the Feast of Unleavened Bread (Lev. 23:6-8). Read Leviticus 23:26-32 with that in mind ... noting in v. 32 that the expression “...in the ninth day of the month at even...” is not a contradiction of v. 27 (“Also on the tenth day of the seventh month there shall be a day of atone-

ment...” (emphases added). Why? Verse 32 tells us that the Day of Atonement begins after ben ha arbayim of the ninth day at ba erev that begins the tenth day. It will continue until the ben ha arbayim that ends the tenth day.

Traditional Christianity disposed of these holy days after the death of the Apostle John, the last living Apostle at the time. Over about 100 years after his death, many other changes were made in the “faith once [and for all time] delivered to the saints of God.”

Because of Roman persecution of the Jews, the Gentiles divorced themselves from Judaism and reconstructed “Christian” theology so they would not be persecuted with the Jews. Acts 2:1-13 shows that many Gentile converts to Judaism went to Jerusalem to observe the Leviticus 23 holy days with the Jews. Galatians 2:7, 8 shows that Paul’s specific ministry was to preach the gospel to the Gentiles, but Peter and others were to go to the Israelites ... primarily to the House of Judah (see James 1:1). By reading Acts 15:5; 24:5; and 28:22, you can easily conclude that Christianity began as a Jewish sect. You also should be able to figure out that Rome was greatly prejudiced against the Jews ... regardless of the sectarian nature of Judaism.

The ultimate outcome of this action by the Gentiles is that Christianity thereafter became totally different from the Apostolic New Testament Church. That includes the attitude about God’s Law, the manner of repentance, baptism, process of salvation, and the “holy days” observed among the 32,000+ “Christian” denominations extant today. We should realize that many things relative to Israel serve as types for the New Testament Church ... including baptism.

## Review Questions

1. Genesis 6:5, 11, 12 – As mankind multiplied on the earth, what kind of effect did Adam and Eve’s sin have upon them?

Were they willingly obedient toward God? Or, did they only seek to do those things that brought them *physical* pleasure? Does scripture provide us with any information about Noah's life that can be used as justification for his having survived the universal flood? Explain.

2. Verses 6, 7, 17 – What two reactions did God have about this overwhelming problem with mankind? What did He decide to do about it? By what means? Was this consistent with God's attitude that "...the wages of sin is death..." (Romans 6:23)?

3. Verses 8, 9 – Was there anyone who was selected to survive the destruction? Why? Did his *obedience* play a role in God's favor toward him? If so, in what way? If not, why not?

4. 2 Peter 2:5 – What kind of man was Noah? What is a *preacher of righteousness*?

5. Genesis 6:14-22 – What did God *command* Noah to do in order to be "saved"? Was he expected to do exactly what God revealed to him? Did he, in fact, do it?

6. Based on what you have read, would you conclude that Noah *believed* God? That he *obeyed* God? Therefore, that he had *saving faith*?

7. 1 Peter 3:20, 21 – Does the Flood *typify* a *watery grave* for that sinful world of Noah's day? Does Peter say that it also *typifies* our own *deliverance* from sin's penalty through the *symbolic* meaning of *water baptism* – like Noah and his family were delivered? To what does Peter liken that deliverance?

8. What was Moses' instruction about in Exodus 12? What

does it reveal to us about God's calendar?

9. Exodus 12:11 – Why did God *require* them to eat their passover meal in the fashion described? Were they to expect that they would be *leaving* Egypt?

10. Verses 14-17 – Did the Lord God *require* the Israelites to mark this occasion with a yearly religious convocation? For how long? Was it to be a constant reminder of how God led them out of Egypt? Why would that yearly reminder be important to them – or anyone else? What part does the *unleavened bread* play? (You will study these holy days more indepth in Lesson 12.)

11. Exodus 14 – Even after telling the Israelites to leave Egypt, were the Egyptians willing to let them go? When it appeared that they had trapped the Israelites at the Red Sea, what did God tell the Israelites to do? In vv. 19, 20, what was the role of the cloud? In effect, do you have a cloud and a sea as Paul disclosed in 1 Corinthians 10:1, 2? What was the cloud? Could it also represent the *Spirit of God*? Explain your answer.

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## Chapter Five

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# Baptism is A New Testament Command

**W**hat does all of this have to do with Israel serving as a *type* for the New Testament Church? It strongly implies that we must be solidly attuned to God's revelations in His word – following *God's revelations* as opposed to what later “Christian” groups have done in *adding* to them or *diminishing* from them (Deut. 12:29-32; Dan. 7:25; Rom. 1:25). It also strongly implies that we need to pay attention to *apostolic* examples (see Matt. 5:17-19; 26:17-28; Luke 16:29, 31; Acts 2:1; 13:14, 42, 44; 19:8, 10; 20:6, 16; Rom. 3:31; 1 Cor. 5:6-8; 10:16, 17, 21; 11:23-29).

### Paul's Use of the Exodus of Israel

For example: 1 Corinthians 5:7, 8 shows that the sacrificial Passover lambs *typify* the *sacrificed body* of Jesus Christ. The blood of the sacrificial lambs *typifies* the shed blood of Jesus Christ. Notice Paul's conclusion in v. 8:

“...Let us [true Christians] keep the feast...” He even typifies the unleavened bread that is consumed during Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread: “...with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.” Clearly, that unleavened bread typifies the sinless nature of Jesus Christ. Read what He says about this in John 6:44-58.

It is plain that Paul is not advocating doing away with Leviticus 23:5-8. He is demonstrating that the Old Testament saints believed in the coming sacrifice of the Christ. Each blood sacrifice of a bull or a goat or sheep was a symbolic slaughter of the future Christ for our sins. Was the Law of sacrifice done away with when Jesus Christ suffered His scourging and crucifixion? No! After all, the Old Testament (in whatever form he had it) was the only scripture Paul had (see 2 Tim. 3:16, 17).

Read Hebrews 10:1-17. Note especially v. 9: “...He takes away the first [manner of sacrifice], that He may establish the second [manner of sacrifice; that is: His own body and blood] ...” (emphases added). The second manner of sacrifice (the body of Jesus Christ) is a perpetual sacrifice forever (vv. 10, 14).

The Law of God demands a sacrifice for our sins (see 1 John 3:4; Ezek. 18:4,20; and Rom. 6:23). You are your own sacrifice for your sins. However, Jesus Christ came to be the eternal sacrifice for your sins so that you might survive, be converted to God’s truth instead of Satan’s lies, and have a pathway to salvation that ensures that you will have the eternal life that God originally planned for humans to have through Jesus Christ.

Mainstream “Christianity” does away with the Old Testament Law of God and claims that the apostles changed it to distinguish Christianity from Judaism. Some of the “early Church Fathers” even claimed that God gave the Jews the Law to mark them as reprobates. Why? To ward off Roman persecution against the Jews. Why? Because Christianity

was originally a *Jewish* sect (Acts 15:5; 24:5; 28:22) ... and the later Gentile-dominated “Church” in Rome did not want to be persecuted by the Romans for appearing to be *Jewish*.

That claim by the “early Church Fathers” flies in the face of Paul’s statement in Romans 3:31 about God’s Law being *established* through *faith* in Jesus Christ. The Greek term translated as *establish/established* is *histemi*, which means: “to confirm; to make or consider valid.”

Who were the “early Church Fathers” that they could wipe out God’s Law from Christian observance if the true Christian *faith* makes or considers that Law as being valid? See Daniel 7:25, Romans 7:11-14, and Colossians 2:16, 17. How does Paul defend the maintenance of God’s Law in Christian faith? Why has traditional “Christianity” turned a blind eye and deaf ear to it? What do they *not* understand about Matthew 5:17-19 and Luke 24:44, 45?

Notice what Jesus did relative to the Passover symbolism (Matthew 26:26-28). He and His disciples ate the Passover lamb, unleavened bread, and bitter herbs *as a celebration of the original Exodus requirements*. However, to what did He compare the *wine* and *unleavened bread*? Read John 6:51-58. Do you understand that Jesus Christ was preparing His disciples for that *change* in *symbolism* prior to the last Passover they celebrated with Him? After all, **He** was about to fulfill the symbolism of the *slain lamb* (see John 1:29; Rev. 5:1-14).

Now read 1 Corinthians 11:23-29. From whom did the Apostle Paul receive the same instructions? Please understand that Paul’s comment in v. 26 is *not* instruction to take the wine and unleavened bread *anytime* one chooses. *It has to be done relative to the observance of Passover according to God’s Holy Day calendar.*

The crucifixion of Jesus Christ is a *memorial* observance (see Ex. 13:9). As Paul points out in v. 23, Jesus invoked these symbols during “...the same night in which He was be-

trayed...” – that is, during the Passover that He and His disciples were observing (read Matthew 26:17-28; Mark 14:12-25; Luke 22:7-20; and John 13:1).

Passover occurs on the 14<sup>th</sup> day of the month of Abib (also called Nisan) and Unleavened Bread (later also called the Feast of Passover – that is, the feast that occurs in relationship to Passover) occurs between the 15<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> of Abib. Jesus was betrayed on the night of the Passover observance, which comes only ***once a year***. It is in ***this sense*** that Paul intended us to understand his expression “...as often [that is: when] you drink it...” I suspect that the “as oft as you drink/eat” translation in most Bibles is driven by the traditions established by the “early Church Fathers” ... who had a gross anti-Semitic bias.

The Eucharist, Lord’s Supper, Communion, and the like are the religious contrivances of men like the “early Church Fathers” so they could dissociate themselves from anything “Jewish” in order to avoid being persecuted with the Jews by the Romans. Read Matthew 15:1-9 so that you can understand the difference between the commandments of God and the commandments and traditions of man. Also include Matthew 7:12-23, 24:4, 5, and Romans 1:25. These observances among mainstream “Christianity” are observed differently: during the morning or evening, every Sunday (called the “Sunday Passover”), monthly, quarterly, biannually, and annually. The point being made here is that Paul was observing Passover and giving instructions to the Corinthians (Gentile Christians) relative to Passover as defined by Leviticus 23:5-8. Refer back to Romans 3:31.

Now you have to put together the symbolism of Passover and Unleavened Bread with the symbolism of leaving Egypt via a journey through the Red Sea ... as opposed to going by an easier, more northern route. You must also factor in the symbolism of the “cloud” that followed them. Note the following reference.

In Exodus 13:21, Moses reveals that the Lord God (the One who eventually became Jesus Christ):

“...went before [the Israelites] by day *in a pillar of cloud*, to lead them the way; and by night *in a pillar of fire*, to give them light: to go by day and night. He took not away the *pillar of cloud* by day, nor the *pillar of fire* by night, from before the people” (emphases added).

Those references to the “cloud” and “fire” are actual accounts of the leadership of the Lord God’s *presence* in this most important exodus (see Dan. 7:13,14, Matt. 24:29, 30, and Rev. 14:14).

The *baptism* symbolism involved is also connected with Jesus Christ’s statement in Acts 1:5 where He juxtaposes *water* with *Spirit*. He did the same thing in John 3:5: “Except a person is born of water and Spirit, s/he cannot enter the Kingdom of God.” In that, He raises His instruction to a higher level of understanding that breathes “life” into the concept of being baptized and having hands laid upon the repentant individual after baptism for the receipt of the Holy Spirit.

The *cloud* and the *sea* are also the *symbols* that Paul equates with the *baptizo* (baptism) of the Israelites. This particular account shows how Jesus Christ is our great protector as we make *our* exodus from sin toward the Promised Land. Once they were “baptized,” they should not have worried about the Egyptians any more – but ... you will find that *sin* was still in their midst even after they had left it. Why/how? When they encountered difficulties in their trek toward the Promised Land, *they failed to trust the Lord God to take care of them*, and they longed for their former security (?) in Egypt (see Exodus 16:1-3). That’s tantamount to a

false conversion if that longing to return to slavery persists and blocks the way of true faith.

In this instance, you have the mixture of “water and Spirit” (see John 3:5 again) working toward their exodus from sin toward the Promised Land. Notice, too, that they could have marched day and night when it was necessary because God was with them 24/7.

Remember that this is symbolism that points toward New Testament baptism. The Pharaoh and his army represent the sin of Egypt that enslaved the Israelites – and ... the Egyptians were destroyed in a watery grave. Israel, according to Paul, was symbolically baptized as a result of this action by the Lord God. And ... all of this has spiritual implications for New Testament Christians. Read Romans 6 in its entirety.

### The Baptism unto Repentance: Was it Sufficient?

John the Baptist was commissioned by God to proclaim the coming of the long-awaited Christ and to prepare for His appearance among His people. He was also commissioned to administer a special type of baptism called the baptism of repentance. This was a pivotal moment in the history of that nation and the history of the world.

The Apostle John gives us a startling piece of information in John 1:10, 11 that lends significance to this pivotal moment:

He [Jesus Christ] was in the world, and the world was made by Him, and the world did not know Him. He came to His own people, but they did not agree with Him, approve of Him, or accept Him for what He was (author’s paraphrase; see vv. 1-3, 14; Col. 1:13-20; Heb. 11-4).

So, it should be obvious that this was a pivotal moment in the history of the world, as well as the history of Israel.

In Luke 1:5-17, we see that John the Baptist's parents, Zacharias and Elizabeth, were told, in advance of Elizabeth's pregnancy, that it would occur. This is significant because v. 7 tells us that Elizabeth was *barren*; so, this was going to be a *miraculous* birth. The male child was to be named *John* ("the grace and mercy of God"). He would have a *prophetic* ministry among the Jewish Israelites that would be in the "spirit and power" of the prophet Elijah (v. 17). Why?

The "why" of the matter can be found by reading Luke 1:17 and paying close attention to what it says:

To turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just; *to make ready a people prepared for the Lord* (emphases added).

In other words, John's divinely appointed task was to make the Jewish people *mentally* and *spiritually* ready to meet and deal with Jesus Christ when He came. It would be a clarion call for them to return to a proper, *true covenant* with God ... instead of maintaining the status quo of mixing and mingling God's truth with paganism and the governments of the world. Why? Because Jesus Christ came as an emissary of God to proclaim the coming of the *Kingdom of God*. A major part of that proclamation includes the prophecy found in Jeremiah 31:27-34 – the prophesied *restoration* of the nation of Israel to her covenant relationship with the Lord God (see Hos. 2; Ezek. 37; Amos 9:6-15). In that role, *John was a figure of the prophet Elijah*.

Luke 1:77 clearly states that John was sent "To give *knowledge of salvation* unto [God's] people *by the remission of their sins*" (emphasis added). By doing this, John was preparing a people to repent of their sins and receive and obey

*Jesus Christ* when He came. This is what is meant by the expression *prepare the way for Christ's coming*. John witnessed to the people that Jesus was actually the Christ.

In 1 Kings 18:21, you can find Elijah's commission regarding Israel: *Bring the House of Israel out of their religious and social relationships with paganism and back into a proper covenant relationship with the Lord God* (compare Ex. 20 to Deut. 4:1-13, 12:29-32, and 32:1-19). They had *flagrantly* ignored the Lord God's warning about worshipping other "gods" and getting entangled with pagan governments. Pay close attention to Deuteronomy 12:29-32.

In John's case, the House of Judah (consisting of the Israelite tribes of Judah, Benjamin, and Levi) had broken up into various religious denominations that were not in spiritual unity with one another ... even though they all claimed to worship the same God. On Israel's smaller scale, that is not unlike modern "Christianity" with its 32,000+ denominations that do not agree with one another in doctrine, tradition, or theology.

The 10 Commandments had been given to all of Israel as a means by which they could be of the same "spirit" and be "one body" who believed and spoke the same things (compare Eph. 4:1-16 to 2 Cor. 1-4, 13-15). In fact, their subjugation to the Roman Empire was a direct result of their fractured religious beliefs and traditions ... their persistent rebellion against God's truth (see John 4:23, 24). That is the warning of Jesus Christ in Matthew 12:25: "Every kingdom divided against itself is brought to desolation; and every city or house divided against itself shall not stand" (emphases added).

So, we can see that God commissioned John the Baptist to be a prophet who would prepare the House of Judah for the coming of Jesus Christ ... the prophesied Messiah born into the House of Judah of that day and time (see Gen. 49:8-12, Isa. 7:11-16, and Matt. 1:18-23). Jesus Christ would

magnify God's law to them so they could eventually become citizens of the coming Kingdom of God (see Isa. 42:21; Mark 1:14, 15). It was an opportunity for the Israelite House of Judah to lead the effort to restore the divided nation of Israel to a proper covenant relationship with the Lord God.

How significant do you think it is that a man whose name means "the grace and mercy of God" would be the forerunner (a person who tells or warns about something to come) of God's Saviour ... especially when that baptism was a baptism of repentance? Read this in Matthew 3:1-12. Pay attention to the factionalism among the Jews. Also, notice in v. 11 that there is a difference between John's baptism and the baptisms (plural: water and spirit) that Jesus Christ brings.

That does not mean in any way whatsoever that repentance is not required in the Christian baptism (see Acts 2:38). Also make note of Acts 1:5-8 ... which shows that baptism in water also requires baptism with the Holy Spirit of God. In both cases, being fully immersed and thoroughly drenched in water and holy spirit is part and parcel to entrance into the true Christian faith and practice and the Kingdom of God (read Acts 19:1-6).

Ask yourself how sprinkling and pouring with water represent a burial and resurrection (Rom. 6:1-12). We must follow the dictates of the imagery involved. Overlooking or ignoring that imagery in favor of your own ideas and interpretations leads more to divisions, factionalisms, and schisms than to unity of spirit. It is what has given rise to 32,000+ "Christian" denominations who are not in spiritual unity in doctrines, traditions, and practices. Most people do not spend very much time sorting out who is right and wrong.

Now read John 1:19-36. You should see that the religious establishment (the priests and other Levites) went out to interrogate John the Baptist about who he was and what he was up to. He told them without any denial ... but they

must have thought he was claiming to be the Christ. He denied that he was. Then they asked him if he was the expected, prophesied Elijah. He denied that, as well. He also denied that he was any kind of prophet (v. 21). However, he did admit that he was to fulfill Isaiah's prophecy in Isaiah 40:3 about being the "voice that cries out in the wilderness: 'Prepare the way of the Lord, make straight in the desert a highway for our God.'"

Then came the question about his practice of baptizing people: "If you are neither the Christ, Elijah, or a prophet, why are you baptizing people?" John's answer was simple: "I baptize with water, but the Christ who will follow me will have a much greater mission than to demand mere repentance because He will take away the sins of the world." John infers in that statement that repentance is a necessary step, but by no means the last and final step in acquiring salvation. Baptism unto repentance (to be merely forgiven of the sins committed), therefore, is not sufficient enough for salvation. Why? When John the Baptist reveals that the Christ will take away the sins of the world, he reveals a most important factor in the salvation process. This involves the atonement for sins.

## The Atonement Ritual

The comment about sins being taken away is a reference to the Atonement ritual given to Israel by the Lord God in Leviticus 16. Read the entire chapter and find these three most important components involved:

1. Two goats are used in the ritual: one is for a blood sacrifice (vv. 5-10). It will die on behalf of the people. The other goat is used for a scapegoat – one who bears the blame for the mistakes (that is: sins, transgressions) of others. In actual fact, both goats

are scapegoats because the people did not have to suffer the fate that the two goats suffered.

2. The live scapegoat is selected by lots (v. 8), and the high priest lays hands upon its head, confesses the sins of the people over it, and it is taken to a wilderness precipice, thrown down it, and killed so that the sins it bears cannot return upon the people (vv. 20-22). That is the sense in which our sins are “taken away” (see Isa. 65:11-17).

3. That ceremonial ritual was understood to represent a spiritual cleansing of all the sins the people had committed (v. 30). The people had not suffered that fate. The innocent goat that pictured the “Savior” had actually suffered it in their place (see Isa. 53).

The problem with this figurative sacrifice was simple: It was a repetitive, yearly religious practice that did not accomplish the eternal effect needed (see Heb. 10:1-18). The sacrifice of Jesus Christ as God’s true sacrificial “lamb” was once for all who truly repent, and it is eternal. There is no need for Him to be sacrificed over and over again, year after year. The first manner of sacrifice has been replaced by the second manner of sacrifice (v. 9). This is all represented as a legal death sentence (remember 1 John 3:4 and Rom. 6:23).

All of this information should be sufficient to answer the question about whether or not the baptism unto repentance is sufficient for salvation. Would the process toward salvation be completed if you merely made a statement that you will quit sinning? Would it be completed if you thereafter got immersed into a body of water? Would it help if you did that about the same time every year? What if you read Romans 10:13 and acted only upon that information? Would that

fulfill the salvation process without your repentance and full immersion in water? These are important questions because people pick and choose which parts of God's word are convenient for their *personal* religious beliefs and practices. They believe that saying "I believe in Jesus Christ" is sufficient for them to receive salvation and the eternal reward promised. Read Acts 2:36-38 and Romans 6. Do they answer those questions for you?

Here is another question that must be satisfied: How do you thereafter receive the Holy Spirit? Read the following scriptures: Acts 8:14-17; 9:1-18; 19:1-6; and Hebrews 6:2. Are you convinced at this point that the baptism unto repentance is not enough ... that other steps must take place in the salvation process? We will discuss this in more depth in the rest of this study.

### Review Questions

1. What have you learned in this lesson about relationships between the Old Testament and the New Testament?
2. What have you learned about how God uses *types* to teach us His truth?
3. Does it appear to you that God has been intent on *doing away with* the Old Testament and its laws and prophecies? Explain your answer based on Matthew 5:17-19 and Romans 3:31; 7:12.
4. Does any of this information change your attitude about what is commonly taught in traditional "Christianity"? Explain your answer.
5. Matthew 3:1-6; Luke 1:63, 76 – Did God commission John as a prophet? Was he, indeed, sent to prepare the way

for Jesus Christ? What do you think that means?

6. John 1:19-42 – How does this scripture reveal that John prepared the way for Jesus Christ? Write down the specific comments given. How was John to know when he had actually met the Christ? By what special, identifying name did he call Christ?

7. Luke 3:2, 3 and Matthew 21:23-27 – What kind of baptism did John practice? By whose authority did he practice this baptism?

**Comment:** These religious leaders recognized the fact that John was a prophet sent by God – but they would not *openly* admit it because doing so would have meant that they would have had to admit that Jesus was also sent by God. But ... they *refused* to admit that about Jesus.

8. Matthew 3:11 and Mark 1:4, 5 – What message did John preach in order to convince people to be baptized?

**Comment:** John's message was exactly as stated: *a baptism of repentance*. Those who were baptized by John had truly repented of their past sins – and were forgiven by God. Since the Holy Spirit had not yet been given (see John 7:38, 39), those who were thus baptized did not receive the Spirit of God to become sons of God (see John 1:6-13 to see the difference).

9. What do you think is significant about the *sectarian* divisions of ancient Judaism and the *denominationalism* of modern “Christianity”? How does either “division” of religious beliefs fulfill Christ's warning in Matthew 12:25? Does it fulfill God's intentions in Ephesians 4:1-16? Why or why not?

10. Look up the definition of the word *magnify* and explain from Matthew 5, 6, and 7 how Jesus Christ *magnified* the Law given to Israel in the Old Testament. Also, explain how that supports the argument that God's Law has not been revoked.

11. Explain the significance of the *salvation process*. Include in your explanation of why no *single element* (e.g.: repentance, baptism, laying on of hands for receipt of the Holy Spirit, etc.) is complete in and of itself.

12. What is the result of leaving out any of the steps in the salvation process?

13. Read Acts 1:5-8 and explain two necessary *baptisms* revealed by Jesus Christ. Do sprinkling or pouring satisfy the intended requirement for *baptism*?

14. What does the expression "take away the sins of the world" mean relative to mankind's sins? What does this have to do with *atonement*?

15. According to Leviticus 16 and Hebrews 10:1-14, what is significant about Jesus Christ's crucifixion? What are the three components in Leviticus 16 that are involved in His *taking away* our sins? You can use Isaiah 53 to help your explanation.

16. What is the problem with the *figurative sacrifice*?

17. Explain Hebrews 10:8-10.

18. What is the significance of the *laying on of hands* in the salvation process?

19. Did any of the disciples *invalidate* John's baptism in favor of that of the Apostles? Why/why not? If so, how?

20. What does that tell you about the wide variety of "baptisms" offered among 32,000+ Christian groups?

21. John the Baptist made a peculiar statement about water and fire in Matthew 3:11, 12 that is relevant to the "cloud" and "fire" in Exodus 13:21. With what you have studied in mind, what might that relevance be? How might someone be "baptized" with "fire"? Use Revelation 20:14, 15 as one source for your answer. You can also use Acts 2:1-4 as another source.

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# Chapter Six

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## *Complete Immersion*

**A**cting out religious rituals whose symbolisms are to be realized in the future was a method God used with many of His Old Testament prophets (read 1 Kings 11:28-40, Ezekiel 4:1-17, and Ezekiel 5:1-4). This is the case with *baptism*: God requires those who sincerely want the blood of Jesus Christ to blot out their past sins to undergo the physical act of being buried in the watery grave as a symbol of their death to sin and their old life.

This is to impress upon them the absolute meaning and seriousness of their decision: *that they have truly repented, accepted the sacrifice of Jesus Christ for their sins, and determined to live a new life indicative of the life we will have when we are, in fact, raised from the dead to life eternal like Christ was. **It is prophetic symbolism to its core!** We dare not ignore it or change it to mean anything other than what God has revealed to us. It is righteousness to those who worship God in spirit and in truth (John 4:23, 24; Rom. 1:16, 17; Deut. 4:1-9).*

Let's study God's symbolism that is wrapped up in this concept of baptism. You have to also remember what Jesus Christ taught His disciples in Act 1:5 about another type of complete immersion. According to Paul, Israel's passing through the Red Sea symbolizes the New Testament water

baptism by which our “old man” (our past life of sin) is put to death so we can emerge from the “watery grave” to a new life (1 Cor. 10:1, 2).

The drowning and destruction of the Pharaoh and his army in a watery “grave” is also symbolic of God’s future destruction of the evil forces that constantly attempt to keep us in slavery to sin (see Rev. 20:10—the expression “day and night for ever and ever” is regarding the finality of Satan’s death ... not the longevity of his punishment; compare Rom. 16:20 to Gen. 3:15 and Mal. 4:1).

### The Old Testament Reference Point

In Exodus 14:1-4, we see that the Lord God brought Israel to the Red Sea and had them camp in a manner that suggested to the Egyptians that Israel was hemmed in and unable to escape an Egyptian onslaught to punish them and return them to Egyptian captivity. Verse 4 shows what the Lord God’s strategy was: Because He had the power and plan to part the Red Sea and close it back up in a moment of time, He was laying a trap for the Egyptians. They did not know the nature of the God against whom they were fighting (see John 4:10, 22). That is a common problem in our world today.

Exodus 14:5-9 shows how easily and confidently the Egyptians fell into that trap. The Pharaoh amassed the greatest military force on the earth at that time and fell into a hellish pace to overtake the Israelites before they figured out that they were trapped and could not change course. “Hellish” in that comment means that it was as if Satan had released the mythological “hounds of Hell,” at all costs to life and limb, to overtake and subdue the Israelites.

Verses 10-12 show how quickly the faith of Israel melted when they learned that the Egyptians were closing in on them. Their minds and hearts quickly turned to the “survival

mode,” and they lashed out at the Lord God and His leaders ... accusing them of *intentionally* bringing them to the wilderness to *kill them*. At that moment, they would have walked meekly right back into the arms of the Egyptians without so much as an ounce of resistance. You should know that God was not requiring *them* to fight the Egyptians. He was telling them to trust *His* power to deliver them.

Moses stood boldly before the Israelites and encouraged them to “...stand still, fear not, and witness the salvation of the Lord” (v. 13). Then he delivered a powerful message in v. 14: “The Lord shall fight for you, and you shall hold your peace.” What did Moses mean regarding holding their “peace”?

The word “peace” is often replaced with a word that sounds like it: *piece*. Speaking one’s *piece* refers to the *piece* of advice, argument, et cetera that one is going to offer. Speaking one’s *peace*, on the other hand, refers to saying something that might be offered to make *peace*. “Speak now, or forever hold your peace” is an expression that can be interpreted either way, but ... the middle ground meaning can be “hold your tongue [so that peace can prevail]” ... or “keep your opinion[s] and/or advice to yourself [so peace can prevail].” So, Moses was telling them to be at *peace* with what was happening and not allow their emotions and fears to get the better of them. Or ... he was telling them to quit mouthing off about why the Lord God had delivered them from Egyptian slavery and ... let the Lord God’s will prevail.

Now read vv. 15-18. What does the Lord God reveal to Moses about His *trap*? It was simple: Moses would hold up his staff/rod in the air toward the Red Sea in order to cause the sea to split in two ... thereby, causing a space wide enough for 3 million people (plus or minus), with animals and belongings, walking five-abreast (see Ex. 12:52: *armies* = “formed like soldiers marching five abreast”; *KJV*), to march on dry ground to the other side of an eight-mile (more

or less) stretch from one shore to the other. If there is any doubt about the comment regarding *armies*, one has to understand that there is a reason why Yahweh Elohim (the Lord God) refers to Himself, relative to Israel and His angels, as *Yahweh Sabaoth* – The Lord of Hosts/Armies (Ex. 12:41; Psa. 103:21; 108:11; 148:2-14; Rev. 19:11-16). Even Christians sing the song “Onward Christian Soldiers” as a reference to that name and command of holy forces.

Verse 21 shows that Moses did this *all that night* – that is, from just after sundown to just before daybreak. Some are of the opinion that the Israelites marched forward all night as sections of the Red Sea rolled back and the floor of the sea was dried. I agree that the logistics (the moving of people and materiel) would have demanded all night for 3+ million people to move their animals and belongings *eight miles*. But ... that does not mean that the Lord God *needed* all night to divide the Red Sea and dry the sea bottom.

Read Exodus 14:13-16 very carefully. Does it seem to you that the Lord God told Moses to quit losing time by crying out to Him to save them ... that they should get underway as soon as possible? In vv. 19, 20, you see a change of positions: the angel of God and the pillar of cloud (see Dan. 7:13; Rev. 14:14) that had been leading the Israelites went to the *rear* of the group and assumed a protective position between them and the Egyptians. That move caused the Egyptians to lose sight of the Israelites while it provided light for the Israelites to move forward. The Egyptians were prevented from gaining ground on the Israelites.

Verses 21 and 22 show the order of the division of the Red Sea: Moses raised his staff toward the sea, and the Lord God caused the sea to form two high walls on either side of the Israelites as a strong east wind drove the sea apart and dried the sea floor ... *all night long* (v. 21). Because they had the *light* of the Lord to illuminate their path, the Israelites were able to make haste without stumbling along or getting

confused.

And ... vv. 17, 18 show that the Lord God caused the Pharaoh to become more and more determined to catch the Israelites ... and be confident that he could and would. In vv. 23-28, we learn how the Lord God sprang His trap on the Egyptians when their entire army followed the Israelites into the sea bed. As morning broke and the Israelites had safely reached the east coast of the Red Sea, the Lord began to disassemble the Egyptian chariots and bog them down in the sea bed (v. 25). The Lord God commanded Moses to stretch out his rod over the sea and cause the walls of water to collapse on the Egyptians and drown them. Not one of them survived (vv. 26-28).

It is from this historical event that Paul drew the analogy (the inference that certain resemblances imply further similarity) of Israel having been “baptized” in the “cloud” (the presence of the Lord God) and the sea (1 Cor. 10:1, 2).

We see in Romans 6:1-16 that Paul taught them about true Christian baptism and how it represents the individual’s death, burial, and resurrection through Jesus Christ ... and how it affords the baptized person the opportunity of a new life freed from slavery to sin (vv. 4-14; see also 2 Cor. 5:17). In other words, one’s sins and transgressions against God are wiped out completely through the sacrifice of Jesus Christ. As he describes it in 2 Corinthians 5:17, it is as though they are newly created beings like Adam and Eve were. It is as though they have no past life of sin and shame. They have been brought out of the “Egypt” that held them as slaves and are put on the path to the eternal life promised by God through Jesus Christ. In the history before us, Jesus Christ will ultimately defeat sin and death and destroy them forever thereafter (see Mal. 4:1; 1 Cor. 15:24-28; Rev. 20:14, 15) ... just as He did the Egyptians in the Red Sea.

In 1 Corinthians 10:1, 2, Paul uses the Red Sea incident to show how Israel was supposed to have had a symbolic

spiritual renewal ... a type of “death” to their old life in Egypt and a “new life” in the Promised Land ... as a result of being covered with the “cloud” and sea. Peter employed the same method in 1 Peter 3:21 when he said that his comments were used as a figure (an illustration) of baptism. Both Apostles used their analogies from the Old Testament as types, examples, figures, and/or analogies of baptism.

All of the baptism figures picture complete immersion. The baptism with the Holy Spirit spoken of by Jesus Christ in Acts 1:5 also pictures complete immersion. Paul alludes to this in 1 Corinthians 13:9, 10. He frankly tells us that, as humans, we will know only in part (see Isa. 55:8, 9) until we are completely immersed in Holy Spirit when we are changed from flesh to spirit (John 3:1-8; 1 Cor. 15:50-54; 1 John 3:1-3). He reveals this in his comment in v. 10:

...When that which is perfect is come [that is: when humans are changed from flesh to spirit], then that which is in part [that is: the human mind and fleshly composition] shall be done away.

What we at present know only in part will be fully revealed when we complete the adoption process into the God Family (Heb. 2:9, 10). It should also be understood that the partial nature of the types, examples, shadows, *et cetera* will also be done away with because their fulfillment will amount to the full knowledge of what they represented. The redemption of which Paul speaks in Romans 8:23 and Ephesians 1:14 is the culmination of that full revelation. The Greek term is apolutrosis, which means that we will be released from the penalties of all of our sins ... as well as the limitations of the flesh-and-blood body (see 1 Cor. 15:52-58; 1 Thes. 4:16-17). We should not at all be complacent about this marvelous revelation!

## *Complete Immersion* is the New Testament's Commanded Form of Baptism

What is the *authority* of Paul's statement in Ephesians 4:4-6 about the *unity* of the Spirit that is supposed to be in God's True Church? Remember that all scripture is *inspired by God*. In that statement, Paul says that there should be *one baptism* (*baptisma* from *baptizo*). Yet, many do not baptize in any form, while others *sprinkle* or *pour* and call it *baptism*.

The term *sprinkle* occurs only seven times in the New Testament – but it is always in reference to the blood of Christ ... *never* referring to baptism. What is the connection between the sprinkling of the blood of Christ and the New Testament Church? We can find the answer in Hebrews 9:14-28. Paul makes three important points: (a) *both* the Old Covenant and the New Covenant were *sealed* with blood, (b) by God's law, almost all things are *purged* (cleansed) with blood, and (c) without the shedding of blood, there is no remission of sins. Read Exodus 24:4-8 to understand the *sprinkling of blood* to seal the Old Covenant (v. 8).

Re-read some of this from Lesson Four. Also, read various translations of Matthew 26:28 where some render it: "...this is my blood, which *seals* God's covenant..." (*Good News for Modern Man*; emphasis added). So, the *sprinkling* of Christ's blood *sealed* the New Covenant like the *sprinkling* of the blood of sacrificial animals *sealed* the Old Covenant. *It is not a reference to baptism*.

The term *pouring* is also mentioned several times in the New Testament. For example, the *Good News for Modern Man* translation of Matthew 26:28 says that Christ's blood was *poured out*. The *KJV* says it was *shed*. That notwithstanding, *pouring* is never used to mean *baptism*. The *Catholic Encyclopedia* admits that the most ancient form of baptism was *complete immersion*, which was the principal form of baptism until the 12th Century A.D. Gradually, from the

12th Century until the 16th Century, the practice of pouring and sprinkling became more and more prominent until they ultimately prevailed in the Roman Church – called the “Western Church” – above immersion.

One could logically conclude that this was done regardless of the teachings of God’s inspired word – the late innovations of *men*. Jesus warned in Matthew 15:9 against accepting the commandments of men above those of God.

The first recorded case of sprinkling occurred in the middle of the 3rd Century. Eusebius, a Catholic historian, identified him as Novatian, a citizen of Rome. The way Eusebius recorded this event shows that he was not willing to admit that it was an acceptable form of baptism at that time: “And being *supposed* at the point of death [Novatian] was baptized by sprinkling, in the bed on which he lay; *if indeed it be proper to say that one like him* [presumably, on his death bed] *did receive baptism*” (*Ecclesiastical History*, Book VI, Chapter 43; emphases added). In that same account, we see that the Catholic Church had ruled that: “It was unlawful that one who had been sprinkled ... should enter into any order of the clergy....”

God inspired the use of the term *baptizo*, which means to “plunge into” or “put into.” It is not pouring (*cheo*) or sprinkling (*rantidzo*) – which terms, plainly, are not forms of baptism.

Complete immersion symbolizes the *burial* of the old carnal self (see Romans 6:3-6). Let’s notice what the Bible teaches about the proper mode or method of baptism. Take a look at John 3:23. Why was John baptizing in the Aenon near Jerusalem? Did it have anything to do with *how much water* he would need to properly baptize the repentant? It should be apparent that John’s baptism was *complete submersion*. He needed plenty of water to accomplish that, and he needed an area large enough to accommodate the large crowds who followed him. Otherwise, he could have splashed, poured or

sprinkled people at the city water fountain.

How else can we know that complete submersion is the required form of baptism? The first way we can know is by finding the definition of the Greek term for baptism. One of the first mentions of this is found in Matthew 3:6. It is used again in vv. 11, 13, 14, 16 ... all in reference to what John the *Baptist* was doing at the Jordan River when Jesus Christ appeared among the crowd to also be *baptized* by John. You should note that the baptism with the Holy Spirit and with fire (v. 11) carry the same definition. So, what is this Greek word and what does it mean?

The word used by Matthew is *baptizo*, which in Christian usage means to *immerse* a person or thing completely. In non-Christian usage, it means to plunge, sink, drench, or overwhelm. So, if this is the word Matthew uses to describe Jesus Christ's baptism, would it make sense to you that Jesus was *completely immersed* in the water of the Jordan River?

In Matthew 3:16, how does this scripture prove that Jesus was *fully immersed* when He was baptized? The expression "...went up straightway out of the water..." does not necessarily prove that He was immersed. It could mean that He simply left the river where He was baptized. However, you specifically find the proof in the word *baptized*, that is, "plunged into" or "put into" – both indicating that He was fully submerged beneath the surface of the water. This was one of the examples of Jesus Christ that we should follow (1 Peter 2:21).

This incident raises another question: John the Baptist's baptism was a baptism of *repentance of one's sins* (if there were any). Because of that fact, John raised the question about why Jesus wanted to be baptized. Even though Jesus Christ was *completely* sinless, He still claimed the right to participate in those things that *humans* should do to "*fulfill all righteousness*" (Matt. 3:15). Read Hebrews 2:14-18. After the information given in vv. 14-17, what conclusion

does the writer draw from it? *Jesus Christ was totally human and experienced the same kinds of temptations that all humans experience.* The writer follows up this thought by showing that Jesus Christ had great sympathy for the typical human's experiences with infirmities and temptations without Himself giving in to them and committing sin. As a human, He fully understood the total human condition.

Now let's consider Acts 8:27-39. After the eunuch had received the knowledge of salvation through Jesus Christ from Philip, what did he ask Philip to do? What do you think it means when it says "...they went down into the water..."? Do you suppose that there was enough water there for Philip to "plunge" the eunuch completely under for his *baptizma*?

If Philip were going to *sprinkle* or *pour*, he did not have to go into the water – nor did the eunuch. He could have simply scooped up enough in his hand to take care of that business.

So, it should be evident from these examples that the "...*one baptism...*" inspired by God (Eph. 4:5) is *complete immersion.* There has never been the necessity for man to concoct his own mode of baptism. If God had not made it abundantly clear by *divine revelation* which method He expected, ***man would not have been required to baptize in any mode!*** Since God has revealed that there is only *one* mode that He requires, all other man-devised modes are *contrary* to God's revelation.

God's word, the Greek language, and the admissions of Catholic historians demonstrate that *complete immersion* was the only method of baptism practiced by the *original, inspired Church of God.* We should pay attention to God's revelation and quit pursuing our own ways.

## Review Questions

1. 1 Corinthians 5:7, 8 – What does the blood of the lambs

*typify* for Christians? What does the *leaven* represent?

2. Does it appear that Paul calls upon the *Gentile* Corinthians to observe the holy days associated with this Exodus? Why do you suppose that he would do that?

3. 1 Corinthians 10:1, 2 – To what does Paul compare the Israelites’ passing through the Red Sea and the “cloud”? What led up to this situation?

4. Matthew 26:26-28 – With what does Jesus compare the unleavened bread and the wine during His last Passover meal with His disciples? In effect, did He *change* the Passover symbols from the lamb, bitter herbs, and unleavened bread to unleavened bread and red wine? Why would He do that? (Read John 6:48-58.)

5. 1 Corinthians 11:23-29 – Of what does Paul say this is a reminder? Can a person take this wine and unleavened bread in an unworthy manner? Why/why not?

6. Do Passover and Unleavened Bread occur *weekly, monthly, quarterly, biannually, or once a year* (see Leviticus 23:5-8)? Does that help you to understand the expression “*as often as you drink it*” – also translated “*whenever you drink it*”? When do you do this by God’s calendar?

7. Romans 6:6 – What is supposed to happen to our “old man” (our *sinful, carnal self*) in the baptism ritual? What does the term crucified imply? With whom do we participate in this *death*? What is supposed to happen to the *body of sin*? Why is this necessary?

8. Explain the significance of John 3:23 relative to baptism.

9. Matthew 3:16 – How does this scripture prove that Jesus was fully immersed when He was baptized?
10. Acts 8:27-39 – After the eunuch received the knowledge of salvation through Jesus Christ from Philip, what did he ask Philip to do? What do you think it means when it says “...they went down into the water...”? How does this support the meaning of the Greek term *baptisma*?
11. Explain the significance of 1 Peter 2:21 relative to the question about proper New Testament baptism.
12. Explain the difference of meanings among sprinkling, pouring, and baptism.
13. What does the Catholic Encyclopedia admit about the most ancient practice? When did they change their practice? How long did it take to make the changes? Did this establish a difference between the “Western Church” in Rome and the “Eastern Church” in Jerusalem? What does this teach you about Ephesians 4:5?
14. When was the first incidence of *sprinkling* recorded in so-called “Church history”? On what basis was it administered? Was the historian who recorded the incident convinced that it was an acceptable practice? How did he express his doubt? What is your response to this “history”?
15. Can you now argue effectively about what God has revealed about *baptism*? Is Ephesians 4:3-16 helpful to you in understanding more fully God’s revelation? Explain.

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## Chapter Seven

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# Baptized “In/Into the Name of Jesus Christ”

**A**s with many things in scripture, there is controversy over something as simple as the words that should be used when someone is baptized. Some go to Matthew 28:19 where *Jesus Christ* said that His disciples were to be “...baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit...” Others go to Acts 2:38 where *Peter* said they should be “...baptized ... in the name of Jesus Christ...”

What is not generally understood is simple: If it is a contest between what *Jesus* said and what *Peter* said, then *Jesus* is to be followed because He is the Christ. *But ... it is not a contest, and the problem is not in choosing sides over which phrase should be uttered over the candidate for baptism.*

The answer to the problem is found in the meaning of the phrase “*in/into the name of.*” This is where your school language lessons can assist your understanding. You should have learned that *in* basically means “within certain boundaries.”

If you are *in* a room, then you are within the boundaries of a space called a “room.” If you are dressed *in fur*, then you are dressed within a boundary called *fur* ... instead of clothing made of *denim* or *tweed*.

However, *into* primarily suggests that you are not *within* the boundaries of the room, but you have to enter from outside those boundaries in order to be “in” the room. From the *outside* you go *into* the room. Let’s understand fully how this affects your relationship to the *name* of Jesus Christ.

### What does “in/into the *name* of” mean?

In the “olden days,” it was customary for the law enforcement officials of some nations to tell fleeing law-breakers to “stop in the *name* of the law.” While one could argue that the “*name* of the law” had to do with the name of the specific law that was being broken, the command was more broadly intended to inform the offender that the official pursuers had the *legal authority* to issue to them such a command and expect it to be heeded. In that sense, *name* represents the very *nature* of the entity to whom it belongs and the qualities of the power and authority that entity possesses and represents. Is that what Jesus Christ and Peter intended to convey to those who are candidates for baptism?

In that example, we can understand that the *name* is inseparable from the One to whom it belongs. That means that the *name* of *Jesus Christ* has specific personal character, power, and authority that are brought to bear in the baptismal setting because He presently represents the ultimate power and authority of the Godhead (see Phil. 2:5-13; Col. 1:19; Matt. 28:19).

That means that one’s confession of faith in the sacrifice of Jesus Christ, one’s admission that s/he has sinned against God and stands condemned to death before Him (Rom. 6:23), and one’s request to be symbolically “buried in a

watery grave” in order to be raised to a new life demonstrate that the individual is surrendered to the power and authority of Jesus Christ for His ultimate judgment (Acts 2:38; Rom. 6:1-14).

However, that is not all that is involved in this process. Once baptized, the truly repentant individual is also given a name that is above every name (Phil. 2:9, 10): Christian. That done, that individual is then tasked with being a representative of the same Godhead ... of being a tangible manifestation of His holy nature, which is an asset that has real substance that is able to be appraised for real value (2 Cor. 5:17-21; Eph. 1:4; Gal. 5:22-25).

So, the expression *in the name of* generally means *by the authority of*. When one has the authority to conduct business for someone, s/he has been given the power and freedom to do it according to the dictates of the authorizing power. In essence, it is considered the same as if s/he were the authorizing power! When the disciples baptized *in the name of Jesus Christ*, it was as good as having been baptized by Jesus Christ Himself. Read the rest of Acts 2:38-42 and concentrate on the implication that power and authority were given to the Apostles (and subsequently to God’s ministers) to conduct religious requirements on behalf of God and His Christ.

Colossians 3:17, 23 are two important parts of Paul’s message about the expectations of Christian conduct after baptism. While some are given positions of authority over the membership of the Church (apostle and minister being two of them; see Eph. 4:11-16), the entire body of “Christ” is expected to work in spiritual unity with them to spread God’s truth to others. Second Corinthians 5:17-20 is Paul’s summarization of that responsibility: We become Ambassadors of Jesus Christ to whom the ministry of reconciliation has been committed.

Are true Christians commanded to do *all things in the name of* Jesus Christ? Are they given *authority* to act on

God's behalf through Jesus Christ? Does 2 Corinthians 5:20 support this idea? What is the role of an *ambassador*?

An *ambassador* is one who acts on behalf of someone else. S/He does not pursue her/his own agenda; rather, s/he represents the agenda of the authorizing party. In fact, s/he would not be named an ambassador if s/he could not be trusted to act in the best interests of the authorizing party.

Jesus Christ gave to His ministers the authority to baptize—and, they must faithfully represent Him in carrying out that and other ministerial duties. They must not pursue their own agendas. In this sense, God's true ministers baptize *by the divine authority* given to them by Jesus Christ. Non-ministers have the responsibility of assisting in this through their constant, faithful witness of God's truth and power among them as they become faithful, living sacrifices in God's service (Rom. 12:1, 2).

Therefore, an *ambassador* is one who acts on behalf of someone else. S/He does not pursue his/her own agenda; rather; s/he represents the agenda of the authorizing party. In fact, s/he would not be named an ambassador if s/he could not be trusted to act in the best interests of the authorizing party. Jesus Christ gave the authority to baptize to His ministers – and, they must represent Him in carrying out their duty. They must not pursue their own agendas. In this sense, God's ministers baptize *by the divine authority* given to them by Jesus Christ.

### *The Anchor Bible and the The Living Bible*

Matthew 28:18 and Acts 2:38 are translated by *The Anchor Bible* and *The Living Bible* (and others) like this: “baptizing them into the name of”—which necessitates another look at what happens during baptism. What this reveals to us is simple: this verse is not simply a liturgical formula to be pronounced over the baptismal candidate. *It is a description*

of what that baptism has accomplished. What does that mean?

The Greek preposition *en* (in, into—among many other meanings), in some situations, is used where one might anticipate the preposition *eis* (into—among many other meanings). It appears that *TAB* and *TLB* have anticipated *eis* (into). So, is there a difference between being baptized *by the authority of Jesus Christ* and being baptized *into the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit*?

*The Anchor Bible* commentary notes give us an interesting answer. They explain that *in the name of* expresses the individual's confession of faith in Jesus Christ as Lord—as well as his/her faith that the baptism is accepted by God as an expression of that faith. *Into the name of*, however, means that the one who is baptized pledges his/her allegiance to Jesus as Christ and Lord—with the faith that s/he is now accepted into *fellowship* with God and His Christ through the empowerment of the Holy Spirit. It now becomes *a family affair*.

The net effect is that the individual has been *identified* and *sealed* as a *child* of God (Eph. 1:5, 13)—an action that can ultimately result in being added to the Elohim family through a resurrection from the dead (being “born again”). If that *seal* is broken through faithlessness, then the *child* status can be revoked (see Heb. 6:4-8).

According to *The Interpreter's Bible*, the individual is baptized into the *possession* and *protection* of the God Family, and a vital spiritual union is established between them (vol. 7, p. 624). Simply put, then, to become a “Christian” means that you have been given the Lord God's own name (“Christian” = “little Christ”). Another way to understand it is this: we are baptized or immersed *into* the *divine family name*, called “God,” by the authority of Jesus Christ ... with the expectation of that being *actualized* (that is: brought to reality) in the future when we are released from the *finite*

nature into the infinite nature.

According to Ephesians 1:13, 14, the Holy Spirit is given as a down payment of that commitment until God is ready to change us from flesh to spirit in order to complete the process by which we become actual family members (see Eph. 1:3-14; John 3:1-8; Rom. 8:14-18; 1 Cor. 15:50-54). This is called redemption (Greek = apolutrosis; which is our release from: (1) the consequences of our sins and (2) from finiteness into eternal life (Rom. 8:23; 1 Cor. 15:50-54; Gal. 3:26-29; Eph. 1:14:). This is the point at which we are actually born again from flesh to spirit.

### The Plain Truth about Becoming a Member of the God Family

Because of the doctrine of the immortal soul, the truth of John 3:1-8 has been largely lost among mainstream Christianity. The following discussion is based on a mainstream denominational definition of what mankind is. This definition is initially based on Genesis 1:27 and 2:7. Genesis 1:27 says that man was created in God's own image, and Genesis 2:7 gives the manner in which the Lord God created man from the dust of the earth.

Genesis 1:27 speaks of God creating man as a representation of the God-kind (Elohim). In that case, the Hebrew word for image is tselem. An idol is included in that definition because it is also a representative image. Why would God make mankind to be a representative image of God? This is not generally understood by the masses; so, it will take a bit of explanation to make the point clear. Read v. 26 very carefully and make note of what responsibilities the Lord God was going to bestow upon mankind: dominion/rulership over the earth and its plant and animal life. What does that mean?

Oddly enough, the Apostle Paul gives us a brief indica-

tion in Romans 5:14. Read the end of that verse where he indicates that Adam was “the figure of Him that was to come.” There Paul tells us two things: (1) Adam was to be the ruler over the earth as a type of the position held by Jesus Christ, which implies that (2) Adam was going to be the “God” of this world—the planet and all that occupies it (see Psa. 24:1).

Adam was not created in “spirit” form; he was created from the dust of the earth (Gen. 2:7). When the Lord God finished His work of fashioning this “clay” model (see Job 10:9; Jer. 18:1-12; 2 Cor. 4:7-5:10), He breathed the breath of life into him and caused that wad of clay to turn into flesh and blood capable of dying (Gen. 2:17). There was no “spirit” component involved in that creation. Many believe that the expression that man “became a living soul” has something to do with an immortal soul being housed in Adam’s body ... and representing the “real person.” We shall see if that is true.

So, Paul says that Adam was a “figure of Him that shall come.” That indicates that Adam was placed into a seat of authority over the earth to keep it from going to wreck and ruin (Gen. 2:15). Exodus 4:16 and 7:1 also help us to understand this concept. Notice in 4:16 how the Lord God, in the context of this statement, tells Moses that he will be “as God” to Aaron. Notice in 7:1 that He tells Moses that He had made him to be “as God” over the Pharaoh and Aaron. The Lord God says the same thing about Himself relative to Israel in Exodus 6:7. This has to do with being a divine representative.

The Hebrew word “God” is elohim and is used numerous times in the Old Testament with regard to rulers, judges, and divine representatives. That being the case, Adam was created to be a divine representative of the Lord God in charge of keeping the earth from going to wreck and ruin (compare Isa. 45:18 to Gen. 1). In effect, Adam was to be the “God”

of *this* world: the earth.

Read John 10:30-35. Jesus is speaking of the rulers and judges of Israel as being “gods” over Israel (Psa. 82:6). That being the case, how do we know that Adam was not, nor did he have, an *immortal soul*?

Read Genesis 2:7, 15-17. The dust of the earth has no *immortality* component. *Dust* is not a living, breathing being in and of itself. It was created to last forever, but it is not *immortal* in the sense of being a living, breathing being. Notice in v. 2 that the Lord God ***breathed*** the breath of *life* into Adam ... which indicates that the immortal being (God) has life and breath. *The Lord God did **not** breathe an immortal soul into Adam ... nor did one enter him then or later.*

Notice v. 17 where the Lord God tells Adam to avoid eating the fruit of the knowledge of good and evil. Why? Because the consumption of that fruit will result in his *death*—the Hebrew word means that he would *cease to live* ... ***be dead***. The Lord God does not mean that he would *immediately* die, only that his life would be *permanently* terminated at some point in the future. Adam was created as a *mortal*, that is: a living, breathing being capable of dying. Read 1 Corinthians 15:46: the natural body came first. The spirit body is the *ultimate* goal (vv. 53, 54). Adam was not originally created as an *immortal* being.

You can understand this also from Genesis 3:19 after Adam and Eve violated Genesis 2:17:

In the sweat of your brow, you will eat bread *until you return to the ground because you were created from it: you were created from the dust, so you will return to the dust* (emphases added).

This is information that helps us to understand that the goal of creating the human was to *eventually* add them to the Elohim family by changing them from flesh to spirit (see

John 3:1-8; Eph. 1:3-14; 1 Cor. 15:50-54). Being *born again* is more than a spiritual reformation; it is a *literal* change of body type from flesh to spirit. The Lord God did not begin with the ultimate goal and reduce it because of sin. However, sin would now impede the progress toward the ultimate goal. How can we know that to be true?

Now read Genesis 3:22. Why did the Lord God prevent Adam and Eve from eating from the *Tree of Life* after they had sinned? The last part of that verse shows that the Lord God was *preventing* them from *living forever* as a penalty for their sin. That information begs this question: Why has mankind *added* to God's word by saying that the human is or has an immortal soul?

Let me offer the following example from a mainstream Christian source:

Three things may be noted about man. [1] His body is akin to [that is: a relative of] the natural elements [Gen. 3:19]. [2] His physical life is akin to [that is: a relative of] all animal life [see Ecc. 3:18-22]. [3] But as a *living soul* he is made in God's image and likeness. It should be noted that *man was made to live forever*. It was after he had sinned that he became subject to death. However, for that reason man's animal principle of life [that is: his body of flesh] shall cease; his body shall return to the ground (Gen. 3:19). **But his soul, the real person, is immortal. It will never cease to be.**

Man is twofold in nature. He is both spirit and body. Man is not a body and has a soul. **He is a soul and has a body.** The body is mortal; the soul is immortal. (Herschel H. Hobbs, *The Baptist Faith and Message*; Convention Press, Nashville, TN; 1971; p. 53; bracketed comments and emphases added)

Do you spot the problem with that definition? Hobbs assumes that Adam was created **immortal as an immortal soul wrapped in flesh, bones, and blood**. He assumes that the **body** has no immortal value like the immortal soul (the real person). He states that the **body** dies, but the **soul is incapable of dying like the body**. The **immortal soul** is the **real person** and is incapable of dying. Then how does the **real person** die?

He defines that “death” as the loss of fellowship with God. Read the following:

When man sinned he was *separated from God*. The *fellowship* was broken; the image was *destroyed* [see Gen 1:26-28 as his reference point]. Adam and Eve died *physically* many years later. However, the moment they chose Satan’s will instead of God’s will, they **died spiritually**. They were no longer innocent. Certainly they were not righteous. They were sinners lost from God. (Ibid., p. 54; emphases added)

By this definition, the sinful **real** person (the immortal soul) is punished **forever** in hell if s/he is not “saved” through Jesus Christ. Those who believe in and teach the doctrine of the immortal soul teach that *the loss of fellowship with God* is the immortal soul’s **death**. However, that is still **eternal life** for the real person, not **death**. That definition postulates that the body of flesh is merely a **vehicle** in which the **immortal** soul is imprisoned until the mortal body dies and decomposes. The faithful immortal soul will go to heaven when the fleshly body dies. Why should there be any disagreement with mainstream Christianity in this matter?

*The Interpreter’s Bible* gives a basic reason why the concept is **bogus**. Pay close attention to both of the following commentators’ reasoning because they are Protestants in

mainstream Christianity:

There is not one single instance in the Old Testament where the word “soul” should be thought of as that which survives death. ...If, therefore, the belief in the immortality of the human soul is held to be a *Christian* doctrine, then it should be realized that it is **not** a *biblical* doctrine. The biblical doctrine is of a *resurrection life* for those who have the “Spirit” [of God] and are in “Christ” .... (Norman H. Snaith, “The Language of the Old Testament,” *The Interpreter’s Bible*, New York: Abingdon Press; vol. 1; p. 230; 1952; emphases added)

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The Christian doctrine is not one of *immortality* but of *resurrection* [Psa. 6:5; 17:15; Dan. 12:2, 3; John 3:3-8; 5:28, 29; 1 Cor. 15:50-54]. We shall do well to get this point clear. As expounded by the Apostle Paul ... man’s hope for survival [from death] depends **not** on the *inherent* [a natural and inseparable quality] *immortality of his soul*, but on the act of God. His immortality is involved in his *resurrection* [from the dead], not his resurrection in his immortality. *There is **nothing** in Paul’s writings nor in the N.T. to suggest that the soul is **inherently immortal***. (John Short; *Ibid.*, vol. 10; p. 253; bracketed references and emphases added)

The word “soul” in Genesis 2:17 is translated from the Hebrew word *nephesh*. Both Snaith and Short know that it means “a living, breathing being.” Read Ezekiel 18:4, 20. Use that definition. It tells you that the “soul” can **die**. Now read Ecclesiastes 3:18-22; 9:4-10; 12:1-7; and Job 14:1-15. Use that definition. These references tell you that the “living, breathing being returns to its **dust** (Gen. 3:19; 22).

Remember this: Romans 6:1-14 is where baptism is shown to be a symbol of our resurrection from the dead. If you read 1 Corinthians 15:53 carefully, you will note that immortality and incorruptibility are things that come from being resurrected from the dead, not things that you presently have. John 3:3-8 shows that being like the wind is the result of being born again from flesh to spirit. Paul says in 1 Corinthians 15:53, 54 that immortality and incorruption have to be put on. That means that we do not already have immortality or incorruption. Baptism is a symbol of that process bound up in the resurrection from the dead. All of that is part and parcel of being baptized into the name of God.

Read the entirety of Job 14 with that in mind. I want you to focus on the following information about what man is:

Vv. 1-9: Humans are temporary beings with an uncertain lifespan that is controlled by God. Yet, that death is not the end of the human because there is the expectation of a resurrection from that death.

Vv. 10-15: Even though the human will return to the dust out of which it was created after it dies, there is a time in the future when God will raise the human back to life of some type. Verse 13 suggests that there will be an appointed time for that resurrection to occur (read 1 Cor. 15:22, 23). Note also in Job 14:14, 15 that there is a change that will take place by which God will continue the work of His hands to complete the creation of the human in His image (see Gen. 1:26-28; 1 Cor. 15:12-54; 2 Cor. 4:7- 5:11).

V. 22: The word soul (*KJV*) comes from the Hebrew word nephesh. In this case, it is defined as being “the inner being of man.” That has to do with

his deep-seated thoughts and emotions. It is not indicative of an immortal soul.

Read Job 32:8 regarding the spirit in man. The Hebrew word here is ruwach, which is translated as breath, wind, and spirit. Spirit has nothing to do with an immortal soul. With regard to the human, it can mean: spirit (like the mind), animation, vivacity, and vigour. The ruwach in Genesis 2:7 is what the Lord God breathed into Adam to make him a living, breathing being. Linguistically speaking, immortal soul cannot be inferred. That is a line that is crossed because of religious tradition borrowed from the pagans (see Deut. 12:29-32). Hobbs uses that pagan religious tradition to frame his argument ... whether or not he knows it or admits it.

### The “Born Again” Process

In Romans 8:14 and 1 John 3:1, True Christians are plainly called the *sons of God*. The question is whether or not they were called “sons of God” before they became True Christians. There are at least two ways by which one becomes a “son”: natural birth and adoption. Generally speaking, the adopted child is legally treated as though s/he is a natural-born child. We know that God does not have a female spirit consort with whom He can naturally produce His own kind. So, this begs the question about how one becomes a “child” or “son” of God.

Before we get into the finer details of this discussion, we have to consider John 8:31-45. Very simply put, Jesus Christ told the scribes and Pharisees that those who do the works of God are the “sons” of God, but those who do the works of Satan are the “sons” of Satan. Therefore, He makes it rather plain that one must be converted to God’s thoughts and ways

in order to have any basis to claim any measure of “sonship.” In v. 44, He makes it plain that the “children” do the works of their “parentage”—the origin and source of the thoughts and ways of the “parent.” In neither case was the individual a ***natural-born*** child. This is a discussion about *spiritual* relationships. Satan is also incapable of impregnating anything by ***natural*** means.

Genesis 1:26-28 is an afterthought of Ephesians 1:4, 5. In Ephesians 1:4, 5, Paul is explaining action taken by *Elohim (the Father and the Son)* prior to the creation of the orderly universe. Just so you will understand the following instruction, please note that the Word God and His divine partner (John 1:1-3) did not originally exist as “Father” and “Son” (see also Phil. 2:5-11 re: their *equality*). As the “Son” of God, Jesus Christ was not His ***natural-born*** “son.” He and His divine partner were originally separate, ***self***-existent spirit partners. How did He become the “Father’s” “Son”?

In John 5:26, Jesus Christ tells us that the Father would be giving Him (a *human* at the time) that self-existent life through *a future resurrection from the dead*. Paul subsequently reveals to us that He did, in fact, become the “Son” of God *by the resurrection from the dead* that followed His crucifixion (Rom. 1:3, 4).

In Acts 26:22, 23 and 1 Corinthians 15:20, Paul shows that Jesus Christ was the ***first*** human to have experienced being “born again” from flesh to spirit by a *resurrection from the dead*. Never in prior history or since that event, has any other human had that experience (John 3:13). Not Enoch; not Elijah. Use that information to understand the following discussion. Had Jesus Christ not been raised from the dead, He would have eventually turned into dust like every other dead human being. This demonstrates that the *adoption* is finalized/completed at the resurrection of the dead to eternal spirit life (John 3:1-8; 1 Cor. 15:50)

Hebrews 2:10 calls Jesus Christ the *captain* of our salva-

tion. It is translated from the Greek term *archegos*, which means that He was the “pioneer” that was the *first* in a long procession that will follow His trail. Through the ages, True Christians have made up that “long line” that will follow Jesus Christ in this journey. It is as if the Word became the “guinea pig” for this experience. Elohim’s success in this venture has opened the door for the full plan of Elohim in Ephesians 1:3-14 to be a magnificent success!

Hebrews 12:2 calls Him the *author and finisher of our faith*. This is also derived from the Greek term *archegos*, but it is given a secondary definition: the originator/founder. When we understand Philippians 2:5-11 correctly, we see that the Word (Jesus Christ) volunteered to give up His equality with His divine partner in order to become the sin sacrifice that would make it possible for all humans (yet uncreated) to follow in that long procession of being changed from flesh to spirit. Giving *archegos* that secondary definition presupposes that it was *His* idea to develop such a plan for adopting mankind into the Elohim family.

The “us” in Genesis 1:26 represents the Word God and the One who became God the Father (John 1:1-3; 17:1-5, 11, 17-21; Eph. 1:3-7). These two decided, before the creation of the orderly universe, to create mankind for the expressed purpose of *adopting* them (Eph. 1:5) into the *Elohim* Family through Jesus Christ (the Word God; see John 1:1-3, 14). This “adoption” is made possible by *redemption* (Eph. 1:7, 14; Rom. 8:23).

*Redemption* (Greek = *apolutrosis*) forgives all sins committed by the individual (thus erasing their “sonship” to Satan the Devil) and frees the individual from the limitations of the flesh (thus transferring them into the Elohim Family). Remember that for the later discussion about John 3:1-13. Adoption in the Roman world provided similar benefits: (a) all of the adoptee’s debts and past life were wiped out, (b) s/he was given a new name for the family into which s/he

entered, and (c) s/he was given rights of inheritance equal to that of any natural-born children of the family. In effect, they were “born again” ... but not *conceived* again.

Let God’s word explain the process by which this will be done for the True Christian. Please note in Ephesians 1:4 that this idea began as an abstract notion or idea *before* the creation of the orderly universe: “before the foundation of the world.” For what purpose? In order to *adopt* mankind (yet to be created) into the God Family (v. 5; *KJV*). The Greek term for *adopt* is *huiothesia* (see Gen. 1:26-28 for the *beginning* of its fulfilment).

*Adoption*, in this sense, is driven by the *choice* of the ones pursuing the adoption: the adopters and the adoptee. In such cases, it is a *legal* matter by which that *choice* is driven by the desire to make the adoptee a legal member of the *adopters’* family with all of the legal rights and privileges of a *natural-born* child. If the *adopters* have any natural-born children, then they are not allowed to treat the *adoptee* any differently from the natural-born children. It is as though the adoptee is a *natural-born* child. And ... *one would also assume that the adoptee would be expected to conform to the thoughts and ways of the family s/he is joining* (see Isa. 55:6-11). Otherwise, the adoption would prove to be harmful to the health and well-being of the family.

Prior investigation and consideration are also part of the process involved in *choice* (1 Cor. 1:27, 28; 2 Thes. 2:13, 14; James 2:5; Rev. 17:14). *Adoption* ultimately will be *offered* to all of mankind, but, for very good reason, not all of mankind will ultimately be *chosen* (Matt. 7:12-23; 20:1-16; John 6:44, 65). Why? Those chosen must also choose to cooperate fully with all elements of the adoption process.

If chosen, what then? In John 3:3, Jesus says that those seeking to enter the Elohim Family have to be “born again” (see also 1 Cor. 15:50). By what means is man to be “born again”? That begs the question about how man was *origin-*

ally “born.” Genesis 2:7 shows that the first male human was created from the dust of the earth. Genesis 2:20-25 shows that his mate was created from his rib.

Such discussion demonstrates that humans were not the natural-born offspring of Elohim. They were made in the image of Elohim (Job 33:7; Isa. 51:1; 29:16; Rom. 9:21; 2 Cor. 4:7; 5:1-8) ... but not as spirit-beings with self-sustaining life like Elohim. When Adam and Eve became man and wife, they had been created to produce their own natural-born children. So, the Lord God did not create their children from the dust of the earth. *Each human child has only one natural birth.*

So, what did Jesus mean by the expression “born again?” The idea suggests that the human must go through a spiritual process by which to be changed from flesh to spirit in order to conform to the body composition of the “God-kind.” That spiritual process is called conversion. It is the means by which God, through Jesus Christ, spiritually educates the chosen individual to be holy as God is holy ... to change the way s/he thinks and acts in order to learn how to act as the “God-kind” acts and thinks (Isa. 55:8-11; Psa. 19; Matt. 18:1-6; Rom. 8:1-14; 12:1, 2; 1 Cor. 1:26-31; Gal. 2:24-29; Heb. 12). This is the process by which the human family experience is gradually “erased” and the thoughts and ways of God replace them.

At God’s appointed time, He will cause that change from flesh to spirit to occur. Job 14:1-15 gives a condensed explanation of the process. Make note that Job does not include in this scenario any comments about an immortal soul going immediately upon death to heaven or hell. Job concludes in vv. 10-12 that he will waste away in the grave and wait for his appointed time to be raised from the dead and experience this change (v. 14).

Paul echoes this thought in 1 Corinthians 15:20 when he speaks of every human ultimately being raised from the dead

“in his own order.” He gives us a hint about this “order” when he calls Jesus Christ “the firstfruits” of the dead (v. 20; see also Acts 26:22, 23). “First” is an ordinal number that signals that “second” must follow ... not necessarily “third,” “fourth,” *et cetera* ... but it also does not eliminate the possibility of ad infinitum—an endless line of such participants in the process (see also Rev. 20:5, 6, 11-15 re: a second resurrection 1,000 years after the first resurrection when Christ returns). What is this process?

Nicodemus grasps that Jesus is speaking of being born again – experiencing a second birth of some kind. The Greek word following "born" in vv. 3 and 7 is anōthen—translated in the Bible as "again," "anew," or "from above". This word magnifies Nicodemus’s puzzlement. It is this word that he questions when he asks, "How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter a second time into his mother's womb and be born?" (John 3:4; emphases added).

When anōthen is combined with gennaō, the phrase most strongly indicates a second birth, not a second conception. Nicodemus is perplexed by the second occasion of being born. His reply indicates that he is not contemplating being conceived again and afterward entering his mother's womb. He is thinking of the end of the pregnancy: exiting the birth canal. He obviously does not understand man’s need to be changed from flesh to spirit in order to enter the God Family. How can we tell?

He immediately relates Jesus' words to a literal, physical, fleshly birth. Because of this, his thoughts focus in the wrong direction because Jesus is not focused on a second physical birth of a human being. So, Nicodemus' spiritual misunderstanding turns Jesus' words into an absurdity for Nicodemus, illustrating how disconnected he is from Jesus' spiritual intent.

The Greek term gennaō underlying "born" can be confusing because it broadly means "to procreate" or "to father,"

and *figuratively*, "to regenerate." It can also be used as "to bear," "to beget," "to be born," "to bring forth," "to conceive," "to be delivered of," "to engender," and "to make." The Greeks used the term for both conception and birth, for *the entire gestation process*. Therefore, other parts of Jesus' and the apostle's instruction must be sought to reveal more clearly what Jesus means.

The *Interpreter's Bible* (vol. 8, p. 505) states this: "Birth can be considered either from the father's side, in which the verb is to 'beget,' or from the mother's side, in which the verb is to 'bear.' The Johannine metaphor uses the former verb, with the meaning 'beget' (verses 3, 5, 6, 8)." Thus, it is translated grammatically correct in English language Bibles as "born," not "begotten."

The *American Heritage College Dictionary* defines the English word *born* as "brought into life; brought into existence; created and resulting or arising." In brief, it indicates a *beginning*, whether or not that beginning is an *actual* birth of a human [or] animal. It can be the *beginning* of a concept, circumstance, process, or organization. The expression "birth of a nation" is an example of this usage possibility.

When *anthen* is combined with *gennao*, the phrase most strongly indicates a second *birth*, not a second *conception*. This is why Nicodemus responds by saying in verse 4: "How . . . can he enter a *second time* into his mother's *womb* and be *born*?" He does not say, "How can he enter a second time into his mother's *womb* and be *begotten* [that is, conceived]?" Jesus evidently did not intend His comment to be understood in the "begotten" context.

Another term that needs further thought is "regeneration," Greek = *paliggenesia*, which is a synonym for *gennao anthen*. The prefix *palin* means "again," while the root word is *genesis*, meaning "beginning" or "start." That is the context of the name for the first book of the Bible: *Genesis*. However, in this context, it means "spiritual *rebirth*" or "spi-

ritual *renovation*."

A person who converts from heathenism to Christianity has had a spiritual *rebirth*. An old house that has been remodeled has undergone a *renovation*. The term is used twice in the New Testament: once by Jesus in Matthew 19:28 and once by Paul in Titus 3:5. *Regeneration* ("generated again") stresses the inception of a *new* state of things in contrast with the *old*.

When Jesus uses it in Matthew 29:28, the setting is when He "sits on the throne of His glory." Pay attention to the sentence construction. It can be rewritten as follows:

In the *regeneration* [that is: "the renewal"], when the Son of man shall sit upon His throne of glory, you who have followed me shall sit upon twelve thrones as judges over the twelve tribes of Israel.

The basis for this comment is predicated on Ezekiel 37 where the "dry bones" are *regenerated* back into flesh-and-blood humans (Israelites) who will be ruled over by the previously *regenerated* Jewish king, David (see Psa. 17:15; Acts 2:25-35). Jesus Christ is telling His twelve disciples that they will also be *regenerated* as spirit beings who will rule over the 12 tribes of Israel in order that each of them can rule under David over their own single tribes.

In Paul's usage, the occasion is the *beginning* of a person's salvation. Both settings indicate *new beginnings*. The *American Heritage College Dictionary* states that the English meaning of *regeneration* is "to reform spiritually or morally; to form, construct, or create anew, especially in an improved state; to give new life or energy to; revitalize"—which is almost perfectly synonymous with *paliggenesia*. It describes a new beginning, a new birth. Note how Paul uses this concept in 2 Corinthians 5:17:

If any man [person] is in Jesus Christ, [s/he] is a new creation: old things are passed away; behold *all things are become new*. (Modern Language; RSV = “*behold, the new has come*”; emphases added)

If we remember that this is an educational process of converting one’s mind to become like that of the adopting Family, we will remember that, at this point in the adoption process, God treats us as though we have never sinned. We are as newly created as Adam. We now have the opportunity to learn to think and act like the family into which we are being adopted. That is the reason for making Holy Spirit available to us. We are not going back to the impregnation state. We are entering the process whereby we can be moved from flesh to spirit in order to enter the Family of God (see John 3:3: “delivered in birth a second time;” 1 Cor. 15:50-54: “putting on incorruption and immortality” is that re-birth—note John 3:6-8).

We have already, as humans, been through the impregnation process ... and we were born as flesh and blood. We are not, nor do we have, immortal souls. Immortality and incorruption have to be put on (read Gen. 3:19, 22 ... especially noting the last part of v. 22 re: living forever).

You must understand from this discussion that our salvation is a process. As such, its ultimate goal is the final product. At present, we are being trained in the thoughts and ways of God—being prepared for the point at which our adoption into the Elohim Family can be finalized. Hebrews 6:4-8 teaches very plainly that it is possible for the potential adoptee to be rejected. How so? By the description, it seems that those who are rejected will not choose to conform to the Elohim Family’s thoughts and ways.

Hebrews 12:1-8 covers some of the minutiae involved. The *KJV* and *Luther* word “chastisement” is also translated

to read: discipline (*Modern Language; RSV; Moffatt*); punishment (*Living Bible*); correction/training (*Jerusalem Bible*). You should be able to distinguish nuances of meaning from the various translations. It would be reasonable to conclude that training, correction, and discipline are the best definitions because the process is not all corporal punishment. If the adoptees do not have it in their minds and hearts to conform to the thoughts and ways of Elohim, they would be an eternal threat to the eternal life and well-being of the Family. That must be safeguarded/prevented.

The regeneration, therefore, is also a process by which we are being created anew. We are being brought into true life ... eternal life. In our present human condition, we are still subject to death and corruptibility. In 1 Corinthians 15:53, 54, Paul shows the ultimate goal of the regeneration process: putting on immortality and incorruption. In effect, we are in the process of being born again—the point at which we will be thoroughly and irrevocably saved.

Jesus validates this concept in Luke 21:27, 28 by tying together His return and the completion of the regeneration process for the “firstfruit” saints. This is the true meaning of “once saved, always saved.” Once we have put on immortality and incorruptibility, it will be irrevocable throughout the ensuing eternity. We will be self-existent children in the Elohim Family (see John 5:26).

How did Jesus Christ become the “Son” of His divine partner (John 1:1-3)? His life in the flesh marked a “new beginning” for Him. He was born through the impregnation of Mary (Matt. 1:18; Luke 1:26-33). In some mysterious way, God the Father had a means by which He changed the Word from spirit to a spermatozoon and placed it into her ovum in her uterus. That was the begettal of Jesus Christ as a human. He became the “guinea pig” for the reverse process by which a human can be reborn from flesh to spirit into the Elohim Family (Acts 26:22, 23; 1 Cor. 15:20; Heb. 2:10; 5:9; 12:2).

Hebrews 10:5 says that a “new body” was prepared for Him so that He could be the ultimate human sacrifice for our sins (Isa. 53; Rom. 3:10-31). Once that sacrifice was made, circumstances required that He had to be changed from flesh to spirit in order to fulfill the ultimate destiny of the righteous human being: His sacrifice had to have an eternal effect. Sin had been committed by the human; so, the human body was prepared for Him so that the human sin could be expiated. God-in-the-flesh was a combined effort to eradicate sin forever.

When humans are ultimately changed from flesh to spirit by putting on immortality and incorruptibility, they will become born-again, self-existent spirit beings (see John 3:3-8; 5:26-29; 1 Cor. 15:50-54) who are members of God’s Family through Jesus Christ. That is what is meant by having “life in yourself.” To believe and teach otherwise is to teach against the truth of God’s holy word.

When Jesus uses it, the setting is when He "sits on the throne of His glory." In Paul's usage, the occasion is the beginning of a person's ultimate salvation. Both settings indicate new beginnings. The *American Heritage College Dictionary* states the English meaning of regeneration as: "to reform spiritually or morally; to form, construct, or create anew, especially in an improved state; to give new life or energy to; revitalize"—which is almost perfectly synonymous with paliggenesia. It describes a new beginning, a new birth (see Rom. 12:1, 2). It was by His resurrection from the dead that Jesus Christ Himself had a new beginning ... a new birth.

## Humans will exist for Eternity

An extra piece of biblical information that is little known and/or understood in mainstream Christianity is found in Isaiah 65:17-25. It concerns the “new heavens and new

earth” that are to be created *after* the 1,000-year period following Jesus Christ’s return (compare Isa. 65:17-25 to Rev. 20:4-22:21). You can see another mention of this in Isaiah 66:22, 23).

Focus your attention on Isaiah 65:17-25 and the discussion of *humans* who will also occupy the earth at that time over *1,000 years* after Jesus Christ’s return. There is no sin or vanity/bondage of corruption among them. You can tell by the context that humans are still *procreating* and living healthy, productive lives ... blessed by God in so many ways.

Why is this important to us? Read Isaiah 9:6, 7. Verse 7 contains an important piece of information: “Of the *increase* of His government and peace, there shall be no end.” The word *increase* is of great importance in this matter. It is the Hebrew word *marbiyth*, which means “a great increase in number and greatness.” Definition 1a specifically defines it as: “of family.” The importance of this lies in the Lord God’s covenant with Abraham as expressed in Genesis 12:3; 13:15, 16; 15:5; 17:1-8; 19-21; 22:17; 32:12.

Think of the immense multitude of “*seed*” (family; descendants)—both *physical* and *spiritual*—that will be needed to fulfill the comments about Abraham’s “seed” being as plentiful as the dust of the earth, the sand of the seas, and the stars of the heavens! Also, consider the implications of Galatians 3:26-29. Even those not of the *family* lineage of Abraham become the “seed” of Abraham through Jesus Christ. *That is the incredible importance of Isaiah 9:6, 7 relative to Isaiah 65:17-25!*

Throughout the endless ages of eternity, *humans* will continue to be produced, trained, and regenerated in order to continue the *multiplication* of the Elohim Family through Jesus Christ. Reflect back on Isaiah 55:10, 11. What does the Lord God *guarantee* about the words that go out of His mouth? God’s government over these multitudes will, of ne-

cessity, increase in size and scope. Isaiah 9:6, 7 were uttered by the Lord God ... who became Jesus Christ (John 1:1-3, 14). Remember this most important scriptural principle: "All scripture is given by inspiration of God..." (2 Timothy 3:16). If that is true, then you must understand that the *authority of God* is behind what these scriptures reveal.

### Following Christ's Example

In 1 Peter 2:21-25, the Apostle Peter says that Jesus Christ left us an example to follow. In fact, he says that we are called into the true faith for that specific purpose. In vv. 22-25, he gives explicit examples of what Jesus Christ did for our salvation. In that vein, it is a discussion about the life He lived and the reason we need to be brought to salvation. Although baptism is not specifically mentioned in 1 Peter 2:21-25, your understanding of the importance of the example of Jesus Christ should not be so narrow as to make you think that those few short verses in 1 Peter 1:21-25 are the only things with which we must concern ourselves. Why? It is because there are many other situations in scripture in which Christ's words and deeds are revealed to us as examples of proper Christian thoughts and ways.

For example: Consider the admonition given by the Apostle John in 1 John 2:21: There is no lie in God's truth. All that Jesus Christ said and did in His role as God's representative of His truth is worthy of imitation by those whose primary goal is to think and act like God and His Savior. That is the essence of Isaiah 55:8-13. The advantage of thinking and acting like God and Jesus Christ lies in the ultimate results derived from such thoughts and actions: holiness, blamelessness, and lovingkindness (Eph. 1:4).

Also, consider an expression that the Apostle Paul used in admonishing various groups to whom he preached and taught about Jesus Christ. In Colossians 1:27, he speaks of

the ultimate outcome of learning God's thoughts and ways: You will be developing the *mind of Jesus Christ*. Similarly, he shows in 1 Corinthians 2:6-16 how growing to spiritual maturity opens a great panorama of mature spiritual thought that is unknown to those who struggle with the basic fundamentals of Christian thoughts and ways. He shows that your spiritual development is contingent upon moving away from the thoughts and ways of the world. As you do that, you will receive more knowledge and understanding of the deep things of God that are not known among mankind ... until you finally grow and mature to the point of having the *mind of Jesus Christ*. Read the following scriptures for extra emphasis: Romans 11:34; 12:1, 2; Philippians 2:5; Hebrews 8:10; Jeremiah 31:31-34.

What lesson would you learn from Matthew 3:13-16 about following Christ's example? Was He baptized? Why? Pay very close attention to His comment in v. 15: "Allow this to be done because it serves a given, appropriate purpose for us to fulfill all righteousness."

Please make note of these words from the mouth of the only perfect human being who has ever lived. The idea here is that even the *perfect* person (if there is one) should submit to God's righteousness. Jesus Christ did this at the inauguration of His earthly ministry. It is apparent in Luke 2:40-50 that Jesus Christ, at 12 years old, when Jewish boys reach the lower level of manhood, that He had a sense of His earthly ministry and showed this by the assertion that He should now be about His father's business. One could extrapolate from this situation that He knew that He needed to acquire the requisite knowledge He would need to do so (see also vv. 51, 52). Yet, He was about 30 years old when He was baptized by John the Baptist and entered His ministry (Luke 3:21-23a). And ... Paul says in Hebrews 4:14, 15 that Jesus Christ was *without sin*; however, He was tempted in the same way we are, but ... He *did not sin*.

Some might wonder why He needed to be baptized if baptism “washes away” our sins. We have to remember that He became a descendant of Adam and Eve through His mother, Mary. The rationale of Romans 5:12-18 is that Jesus Christ entered the human environment and was counted as being eligible for the same condemnation should He go astray as a human. Even though He was actually sinless, He became sin for us (2 Cor. 5:17-21). Hebrews 2:16-18 says that He chose to become a human being in order to defeat Satan the Devil and to deliver us from our sins. It is evident that He knew the danger involved in His mission (see 1 Pet. 1:18-21).

Read Hebrews 2:18 very carefully: “Because He suffered being tempted like all humans, He is able to help those who are tempted.” His experience in the human body helped Him to understand the human mind and condition more comprehensively. Experiencing the human condition gave Him greater insight into how to help humanity to overcome Satan.

If Christ sets the example, then He teaches us that following that example makes it easier for us to be successful in learning the thoughts and ways of God (Isa. 55:8, 9). So, even though Jesus had committed no sins of which to repent, He was baptized *as an example for us to follow!*

## The Great Commission

Read Matthew 28:19, 20. You can tell by the manner in which it is stated by Jesus Christ that it is a command. In the sense of grammatical construction, it is an imperative sentence. In essence, it is something of vital importance that is used to issue a command or instruction, make a request, or offer advice. Basically, an imperative tells people what to do. What did Jesus command His disciples to do?

There are three basic commands here: (1) Go to the nations of the world; (2) baptize them in the name of the Father,

Son, and Holy Spirit; and (3) teach them to observe all that He had taught them. Notice that *baptism* is one of the things commanded. Because that is an *imperative* stated by Jesus Christ, there is no room left for someone to come along later and say that mere belief in Jesus Christ is enough to satisfy the salvation issue. Then there is another “technical” part of this Great Commission.

Read Mark 16:15, 16. Notice the connection that Mark’s version makes between *baptism* and *salvation*. You must understand that the second part of v. 16 *does not exclude* baptism: “...but he that does not believe shall be damned.” Why? Because *belief* and *baptism* go hand-in-hand. They are not mutually exclusive. What do I mean by that?

Read Romans 10:9. Can Paul come along several years after the ascension of Jesus Christ to the Father’s right hand and teach Romans 10:9 and leave out *baptism*? Some use this verse to *dogmatically* state that baptism is *not* necessary for salvation. Was that what Paul taught? No. Read what he has already said in Romans 6. Can you say that Romans 6 and Romans 10:9 are mutually exclusive? That Romans 10:9 *negates* Romans 6? No. That is ludicrous.

In His Great Commission, Jesus used a term that has been translated into the Greek language term *baptizo*, not *cheo* or *rantidzo*. Why? Because He was commanding *complete immersion* in water, not *pouring* (*cheo*) or *sprinkling* (*rantidzo*).

Read Paul’s explanation in Romans 6:4, 5. Notice the term *buried* in v. 4 and the term *planted* in v. 5. Also notice that this also symbolizes the *resurrection* of Jesus Christ from His tomb.

Now read 1 Corinthians 15:35-44. Here, Paul uses the *symbolism* of *burying* a “seed.” He likens the appearance of the plant that is produced by the seed to a *resurrection* from the *dead*. All of this is preparatory to his commentary in vv. 50-54. The purpose of Paul’s *analogy* (the inference that cer-

tain resemblances imply further similarity) *infers* (concludes by reasoning from something known: that is: the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ) that our *symbolic* death, burial, and resurrection in the waters of baptism represents the future *reality* of our placement into the “God” Family in order to *consummate* the adoption process.

If you connect Romans 6 with 1 Corinthians 15:35-54, then you can understand the consistency with which Paul pictures *baptism* as a death, burial, and resurrection of the believer. All of that is an *imperative* from the lips of Jesus Christ.

What about the imperative to baptize them *in* the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit? Admittedly, the preposition *in* can present a puzzling language problem. For example, it can mean that Jesus Christ gave His disciples a command to do the baptisms *by the holy authority of Jesus Christ*. There is no doubt that such authority is used in Christ’s true ministry because the Disciples were His duly trained, ordained, and commissioned representatives. It is also obvious that *any* command from Jesus Christ carries with it the expectation that the party to whom it is given, ordained or not, will carry out its directions. Colossians 3:17 confirms this as a general responsibility of all true Christians. Second Corinthians 5:20 suggests that all true Christians are *ambassadors* of Jesus Christ.

Now for the not-so-obvious “turning point” in the language problem. Most dictionaries define words by a specific definition, as well as by popular language usage. For example, the Webster’s New World [Pocket] Dictionary gives definitions for usage in noun, verb, preposition, adjective, and adverb *usage*. One example shows *in* being used to indicate *moving from the outside to the inside*. *Strong’s* has no dictionary definition for *in*; so, the inquirer has no directions for understanding the specific intention of its usage.

If Jesus Christ actually meant for His disciples to baptize

people in order to move them from the outside of true faith into the inside of true faith ... then you have a totally different meaning attached to the instruction. So, a more appropriate word to use for this would be into. Why? Popular usage says: “He went in the house to get something to drink.” Grammatically correct usage would say: “He went into the house [from the outside] to get something to drink.” Therefore, Jesus could have meant that the baptized person would be moved from the outside of the Family of God to the inside of the Family of God by adoption into the “God” Family.

Because baptism is part and parcel to the born again experience, such a conclusion does not violate the ultimate intention of Jesus Christ in this matter. In this matter, the entire adoption process (death, burial, resurrection) is one in which one’s past “family” relationship is expunged (blotted out; erased ... as though a death has occurred, and new family relationship has begun) so the adoptee can be given a totally new life: born again.

## Review Questions

1. John 3:22 – Were people baptized as a result of Jesus’ teachings?
2. John 4:1, 2 – Did Jesus make and baptize more disciples than John the Baptist? Who did the actual baptizing – Jesus, or His disciples?
3. What does this expression mean: “*In the name* of the law of \_\_\_\_\_, you are under arrest”? Is the arresting officer attaching a person’s *name* to that statement? Or, is the arresting officer referencing the *name of the authority* (city, county, state, or nation) by which he is *empowered* to make the arrest?

4. Acts 2:37-42 – Is it apparent by this description that the disciples were acting by the *authority* given to them by Jesus Christ to continue to baptize disciples for Him? In His name?

5. Colossians 3:17 – Are True Christians commanded to do *all things in the name of* Jesus Christ? Are they given *authority* to act on God’s behalf through Jesus Christ? Does 2 Corinthians 5:20 support this idea? What is the role of an *ambassador*?

6. Matthew 28:19 – Let’s look closer at this scripture to see if there is a conflict between it and Acts 2:38. We will focus on the term *in*. What do you find? Explain.

7. Romans 8:14; 1 John 3:1 – Are spirit-*begotten* Christians plainly called *sons of God*?

8. 1 Peter 2:21 – Why should we follow in the steps of Jesus Christ?

9. 1 John 2:6 – If you claim to be a *Christian*, what kind of life should you live? Would that include following the example of Jesus Christ? What does the example of Jesus Christ include?

10. Matthew 3:13-16 – Was Jesus baptized? Why?

11. Hebrews 4:14, 15 – Did Jesus *need* to be baptized *because of His sins*? Explain.

12. Matthew 28:19, 20 – Was the *Great Commission* given by Jesus Christ a *command*? What three things did He expect His disciples to do? Was *baptism* part of that commission?

13. Mark 16:15, 16 – Does this appear to be Mark’s version

of Matthew 28:19, 20? What is the ultimate fate of those who do not follow this command? So, would you conclude that Jesus plainly *commanded baptism*?

14. Acts 2:37, 38 – On the Day of Pentecost, what was included in Peter’s answer to those who wanted to know what they ***had to do*** to correct the situation in which they found themselves? Was Peter following the example and command of Jesus Christ?

15. Acts 2:41; 8:5, 12 – What seems to be the biblical revelation of what people did when they repented? See if you can find other examples that support your answer.

16. Acts 10 – Read the entire chapter. What happened to these Gentiles as Peter preached to them? What did Peter immediately conclude as a result of this event? What did Peter ***do*** in v. 48?

17. Acts 11:17, 18 – Did Peter use this event as *proof* that God intended to bring salvation to the Gentiles?

**Comment:** Ten years after the Day of Pentecost event, God sent Peter to the *devout* Gentile Cornelius. However, Cornelius did not have *adequate knowledge of salvation through Jesus Christ*. It was Peter’s job to preach the forgiveness of sins through Christ to him and his family. During this sermon, God did an unusual thing to *prove* to Peter and the other apostles that He intended the Gentiles to be *baptized*: *He gave them the Holy Spirit before they were baptized*. Ordinarily, baptism comes first (Acts 2:38).

18. Mark 1:14, 15 – Which *gospel* are you to believe prior to baptism? Pay close attention to the expression *Kingdom of God*.

**Comment:** The gospel preached by Jesus Christ includes believing in Him as our personal Savior (since He is going to be the King of Kings who reigns over that Kingdom), repentance of our sins, baptism, and receipt of the Holy Spirit. Galatians 1:10-2:10 is one of several places where Paul shows that he preached the same gospel of the Kingdom of God as Peter and the other Apostles – what he calls “...the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation...” in Ephesians 1:13 (see also Galatians 5:21 and Ephesians 5:5).

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## Chapter Eight

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# Is Baptism Really Necessary?

**M**any radio and television preachers tell you that all you have to do to be saved is to name the name of Jesus on your lips. *Really?* Is that all? I have heard many of them say that all you have to do is pray the sinner's prayer (see Luke 18:13). If that is true, then why is so much emphasis placed upon being baptized and also *receiving the Holy Spirit*? Let's look at God's inspired word of revelation and understand what *God* says about it.

Read Acts 1:5. Of what kind of baptism is Jesus speaking? The disciples had already had a water baptism. John recorded this in John 4:1, 2 by showing that a claim was made that Jesus had baptized more disciples (followers) than did John the Baptist. The Apostle John rejects that rumor by saying that Jesus baptized only His 12 Disciples. John does not tell at which point during Christ's ministry they were baptized. But ... one can rightly conclude from later scriptural accounts that He did not immediately give them the gift of the Holy Spirit upon their baptisms. How so?

Luke 24:45 shows that He opened their understanding of the scriptures *after His resurrection*. Is that the gift of the Holy Spirit? If you connect v. 45 with v. 44, it appears that He helped them to understand the scriptures mentioned in v. 44: Moses, the prophets, and the psalms ... all of which reveal the coming of the Christ and His death for our sins. Is that when they received the Holy Spirit? Let's follow the reasoning.

John 14 is an example that being with Jesus did not automatically bestow upon them the Holy Spirit. There are several examples in the gospels that show that they did not readily understand the things He taught them (see also Matthew 13). The flip side of that argument is found in 1 Corinthians 2:6-16: becoming *perfect* (spiritually mature after baptism and receipt of the Holy Spirit) is a spiritual growth *process* (2 Pet. 3:18).

However, Luke 24:49 seems imply that the gift of the Holy Spirit was to be a *future* event from that meeting. Acts 1:5 indicates that it would be *after His second* ascension to the Father's right hand (see John 20:11-17). Acts 2 appears to have been the point at which it actually occurred: the holy day Pentecost ... which was fifty (50) days after the day Jesus Christ was resurrected from the dead and ascended to the Father's right hand as the Wave Sheaf offering of firstfruits (see Lev. 23:9-21; Acts 26:22-23; 1 Cor. 15:20; James 1:18).

Note in Acts 2 how the gift of the Holy Spirit is related to the holy day *Pentecost* (the 50<sup>th</sup> day from the wave sheaf offering – the firstfruits of the first harvest of the year; see Ex. 34:22). Jesus Christ puts it in the context of a *baptism* – a *full immersion* in the gift of the Holy Spirit. Verse 6 shows that the Disciples still did not understand some of His teachings. But, vv. 7-8 bring our focus back to Pentecost as being the time when they would actually be *baptized* – completely immersed – with the *Holy Spirit*.

When you read the account in Acts 2, you can see the

spiritual power with which the Disciples were imbued with spiritual understanding as they began to teach the huge crowd lessons from Moses, the prophets, and the psalms (see especially vv. 16-18). And ... it appears that many in that crowd had their own understanding of those scriptures opened. The Disciples immediately began to understand the meanings of the lessons Jesus Christ taught them before the crucifixion.

That understanding provoked a question among the newly enlightened crowd: “What shall we do?” (v. 37). Peter did not hesitate with the answer. He did not walk around wringing his hands in desperation for an answer. He offered a short, swift course of action: (1) repent of your sins; (2) be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ; and (3) receive the Holy Spirit. The prophecy in Joel 2:28-32 was a witness to them that God intends to make His Holy Spirit available to the truly repentant who accept true baptism and allow the Holy Spirit to direct their lives.

This Day of Pentecost (see Leviticus 23:9-21 regarding the way the Day of Pentecost is calculated in God’s Holy Day Calendar) in A.D. 31 was the inauguration of the time of fulfillment for the symbolism contained in it. We will study God’s Holy Days in a later lesson, but suffice it to say that it pictures God calling out an *early harvest of firstfruits* for His Family – Jesus Christ is pictured in the wave-sheaf offering as the *first* of the *firstfruits* (see Acts 26:22, 23 and 1 Corinthians 15:20-23).

This day in A.D. 31 began the era during which God will put His Spirit in all who are repentant and baptized as He commands. He expects true Christians to be *fully immersed* – ***completely filled*** – with his Spirit, not willy-nilly, incompletely, or haphazardly,

Just being physically baptized in water does not put us into God’s Church. We must be put into His Church ***by His Spirit*** after our baptism. God knows our hearts – whether or

not we have truly repented – and places his Spirit in us accordingly. Unless and until we have received His Spirit, we might sit among God’s true people, but we will not belong to the *body of Christ*.

Therefore, it is the gift of God’s Holy Spirit that *plunges* us – that *baptizes* us – *into* the True Church of God. This is the purpose of the *baptism by/of the Holy Spirit*. Has God put you into His Church in this manner? Both water baptism and Spirit baptism are *required* by God!

### Study Questions

1. Acts 1:5 – Did Jesus promise His disciples that they would be *baptized* with the Holy Spirit?
2. Acts 2:1-4 – When did the Holy Spirit actually come to *baptize* believers?
3. Verses 16-18 – Had God planned to make His Spirit generally available to mankind? So, this Day of Pentecost was not a day when only the *12 disciples* of Christ received the Holy Spirit?
4. Verse 38 – What relationship did Peter make between *baptism* and *receiving the Holy Spirit*? Would you conclude, therefore, that you must be baptized in order to receive the Holy Spirit? Explain.
5. 1 Corinthians 12:12, 13 and Colossians 1:18 – How do we become members of the *body of Christ* (the Church)? Is the word *baptized* an important word for understanding Paul’s meaning here? Why? Can we simply *join* the Church – or, must we be *put into it* by God’s Spirit (remember that *baptizo* means “to plunge” or “to put into”; also, read John 6:44, 65)?

6. Romans 8:9 – What determines whether or not we belong to Christ? So, if we do not have God's Holy Spirit, then we are not true Christians? If we have merely named the name of Jesus on our lips, does God violate all of this instruction and make us His children anyway? If we must be begotten by *water* and *Spirit* in order to be *born again*, does God honor any *shortcuts* man might devise?

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## Chapter Nine

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# Can You be Saved *without* Baptism?

**N**ow let's examine the comment we discussed in the beginning of this lesson: *You don't have to be baptized in order to be saved.* We have seen that it is *commanded* by God – but...what about the thief on the cross? Was he saved *without* having been baptized? We'll examine that with regard to what actually constitutes *salvation* according to God's revealed word.

First, let's consider what we are told in Romans 5:10 relative to our pending *salvation*. How are we actually *saved*? The entire matter of salvation is the product of our reconciliation to God through Jesus Christ (see Eph. 1:4-9). *Salvation is a process.*

There are many elements bound up in that process ... baptism being one of them. There are parts of the process that lead up to your baptism: the conviction that you are a sinner, repentance of the sins that you have committed, request for forgiveness, request for baptism, *et cetera*. The point at which you are baptized is *not* the point at which you are *saved*. It is the point at which you move to the *next step*

of the salvation process: living a life suitable for entering the God Family through Jesus Christ. Read Hebrews 6:4-6 to understand that you can still be *lost* if you do not hold up your part of the agreement that you made with God through Jesus Christ.

So, baptism is required as *part* of the *salvation process*. It is symbolic of the *death* of Jesus Christ – as well as our own participation in that death. ***Do not forget this point: baptism also pictures the resurrection of Jesus Christ to spirit life! It is that very powerful spirit life, when given to the true Christian as it was given to Jesus Christ, that actually saves us!***

Jesus Christ was the *first* in a series: the captain of our salvation. Had Jesus never been resurrected, we would never be saved (read 1 Corinthians 15:12-23). So, baptism is a *picture/symbol* of *our* salvation by resurrection from the dead. It is plain, then, that the thief on the cross was no more *saved* by what he asked of Jesus Christ than anyone else is presently *saved*. *Many assume that he was*. But ... they are not understanding the entire process involved in salvation. They are the victims of faulty, incomplete reasoning.

Let's understand correctly the matter of the thief on the cross next to Jesus Christ. The thief asked *to be remembered* by Christ when He sets up His kingdom. The first part of the problem is that Jesus did not set up His Kingdom at that time ... and has not yet returned to do so. Another part of the problem many have with understanding this passage hinges on a matter of *punctuation*. Most translations punctuate the passage so that it *appears* that Jesus and the thief would be in Paradise *that very day*: "I tell you[,] *today* you shall be with me in Paradise."

We should know that there are several ways ideas can be expressed. Our question is this: Did Jesus tell the thief: "I tell you that you shall be with me in Paradise *today*"? Consider this statement from the *Companion Bible*:

The interpretation of this verse depends entirely on punctuation, which rests entirely on human authority, the Greek manuscripts having no punctuation of any kind till the ninth century, and then it is only a dot [in the middle of the line] separating each word” (*Bullinger’s Companion Bible*, Appendix 173; emphases added. (It-would-be-similar-to-this-line.)

So, the commonly held translation could be incorrect because it is based on incorrect placement of the punctuation. If the comma was placed differently, it would definitely change the meaning of the verse (“I tell you today[,] you shall be with me in Paradise.”). That example points out that the statement was being made that day ... not the transference to Christ’s Kingdom. How could we be sure that the punctuation has been *incorrectly* placed?

Here’s what we know from scripture itself. **First**, Jesus gave the scribes and Pharisees the sign of Jonah to show that He would be *dead* and in the grave *three days and three nights* (Matthew 12:38-40). There would be no reason to express it like that except to say that He would be there the equivalent of 72 hours. If He is dead and buried, the He cannot set up His Kingdom and accept the thief into it on the day He is hanging on th cross.

**Second**, Mark 15:44-46 shows that Jesus was, in fact, *dead* before He was taken from the cross to be buried by Joseph of Arimathea. You have learned about the falsehood of the immortality of the soul in Lesson Three, so Jesus did not have an immortal soul that automatically survived the death of His body ... and neither did the thief.

Paul shows in 1 Corinthians 15:3, 4 what he was taught by Jesus Christ when he was converted: “...that Christ *died* for our sins **according to the Scriptures**; and that He was *buried*, and that He *rose again* [from the dead] the third day

*according to the Scriptures*” (emphases added). The “scriptures” to which Paul referred were from the Old Testament – prophecies. The one reference to such scriptures is found in Matthew 12:40 where Jesus Christ refers to Jonah’s experience in the belly of the whale (KJV). Others prophesy His death (see Isa. 53). So, even before the Word became flesh as Jesus Christ (John 1:14), it already had been determined that He would spend three days and three nights in the grave.

*Third*, if all of that is true – *according to the scriptures* – then *Jesus did not go to Paradise the day He was crucified*. It is interesting that the Lamsa translation reads like this: “Verily I say unto thee today[,] thou shalt be with me in Paradise.” Notice where they placed the comma. What this means is different from the way it is commonly translated: “I am telling you that this day you will be with me in Paradise.” So. It seems that many believe that Jesus and that thief died on that day and went immediately to Paradise. Is that true?

We have at least two scriptural clues: (a) 1 Thessalonians 4:13-17 shows us that the dead *in Christ* and the living *in Christ* will be redeemed by Jesus Christ *at His return* – *together*, not *separately* as each person dies; and (b) Hebrews 11:39, 40 shows that *all the saints of God* from the creation *until Christ’s return* will receive the reward *together* – not *separately*. The dead thief would not precede any other true believer even if he had been “converted” or “saved” according to his request. We will study more about his position in “Paradise” when we study the resurrections in Lesson Ten.

Suffice it to say at this point that Jesus Christ promised him that he would be alive during His reign after His return. However, his *salvation* is yet to be determined. God’s word reveals that this is not the only “day of salvation.”

The truth is simple: the thief was *unable* to be baptized because of circumstances beyond his control. Since baptism

is not what determines our salvation or gives us eternal life, he did not *lose* his opportunity to be saved in the future. If there are circumstances which absolutely prevent a repentant individual from being baptized, that would be God's problem, not ours. He commands complete immersion for all who are able. Those who are able must not deliberately ignore, reject, defy, or refuse to obey this command from God. That would be an act of willful disobedience and would cause a loss of salvation

### Study Questions.

1. Romans 5:10 – By what means are we actually *saved*? So, baptism, in and of itself, does not *save* us? It is *part* of the process?
2. Luke 23:42, 43 – What did the thief ask Jesus Christ? Did he confess his sins and make a statement about repentance and acceptance of Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior? Are those necessary steps in the salvation process (read Romans 10:8-10)? What did Jesus say in reply to the thief's request? Explain why His answer shows that He did not mean that He and the thief would be in Paradise that very day.
3. Does any of this instruction change your mind about dying and, as an immortal soul, going immediately to heaven or hell? What will you do about your answer to this question?

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## Chapter Ten

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# How do We Receive the Holy Spirit?

**W**hat does God's word reveal to us about receiving the Holy Spirit? How is it received? Is it an *automatic* consequence to being baptized, or is something else required? Remember that Cornelius and those with him were unique because God gave them the Holy Spirit *before they were baptized in order to make it clear to Peter and the other apostles that God was opening the way of salvation to the Gentiles*. All other examples you are about to study show it coming *after* baptism.

We will study this doctrine in more detail in a later lesson, but you should understand, at this point of the discussion, that it is a basic doctrine of Jesus Christ. These doctrines are teachings that Jesus Christ considered important as required practices of the true faith – part of which Jude calls “...the faith which was once delivered unto the saints” (Jude 3). That would go all the way back to at least Abel (see Heb,

11:4). Since God does not allow us to add to or take away from His word (read Deuteronomy 4:2; 12:32; Proverbs 30:5, 6; Revelation 22:18, 19), *we cannot simply dismiss the importance of these doctrines as being insignificant to the salvation process*. The seven basic doctrines of Jesus Christ are found in Hebrews 6:1, 2: (1) the doctrine of Christ, (2) repentance, (3) baptisms, (4) laying on of hands, (5) resurrection of the dead, (6) eternal judgment, and (7) going on to perfection.

### The Laying on of Hands

You will note, perhaps, that Acts 2:38 does not specifically address the laying on of hands doctrine. Peter addresses the basic doctrines of repentance and baptism in the name of Christ for the remission of (forgiveness, pardon, release from) your sins. That does not mean that hands were not laid upon those who were baptized that day. There are two examples that shed some light on this situation.

You can see in Acts 5:12 that the “hands” of the Apostles were an active part of their ministry. Why would baptism be an exception? It was not. Acts 8:14-17 shows that the Apostles included the laying on of hands for the receipt of the Holy Spirit after baptism. In this case, the Apostle Philip (vv. 5-12) “preached Christ” among the people of Samaria, but apparently left out the laying on of hands. God saw to it that the situation was corrected.

The Apostles Peter and John were subsequently sent to Samaria to understand the significance of converts being made in that territory (evidently from among some *Israelitish* people whose descendants had *not* been carried to Assyria centuries before – see 2 Kings 17:20-24 – because the “open door” for the *Gentiles* to be converted had not yet been “opened” ... see Matt.10:5, 6; 15:21-28; Acts 10).

It is significant that the practice was known by the Apos-

bles. John 4:2 tells us that Jesus baptized His disciples, but it does not indicate *when* that was done. We do know, however, that Jesus told His disciples before He ascended to the Father's right hand that "not many" days afterward they would be *baptized* with the Holy Spirit (Acts 1:5). That represents a scriptural clue that they had not received the Holy Spirit immediately after they were baptized.

Pay attention to Acts 8:23. Simon Magus was a magician and a sorcerer (vv. 9-11) who watched the Apostles lay hands on the repentant for the receipt of the Holy Spirit. He offered to buy the power to do the same thing, but the Apostle Peter rebuked him and put a curse upon him.

That act is the source for the term *simony*: *the act of buying or selling sacraments or benefices (a Church office that provides pay and other personal benefits)*. You can see the far-reaching effects of Simon's sin. It is not beyond the realm of possibility that Simon wanted to add this power to the arsenal of magic tricks he used to spread his own religious philosophy – which, after he was baptized by Philip (see v. 13), became the foundation for a quasi-Christian form of *Gnosticism* (a form of *false* Christianity). That form of "Christianity" is the focus of many heresies that the Apostles (especially Paul) fought (read 1 Cor. 11:17-19; 15:12-20; 2 Cor. 11:1-15; Gal. 1:6-12; Eph. 4:1-16; Col. 2; 2 Pet. 2; 1 John 4).

We do not receive the true Holy Spirit by following quasi-Christian doctrines and practices (John 7:21-23). That is the importance of understanding the warnings given in this gospel about assuming that all 32,000+ "Christian" denominations represent the truth of God. That is highly impossible because they do not represent the outcome Paul teaches in Ephesians 4:1-16.

It should be plain to you that the Holy Spirit was given to baptized true believers when God's true ministry laid hands upon them. It is no different than this in our day and

time. When God's true ministers baptize the truly repentant, they lay hands upon them and pray over them for the receipt of the Holy Spirit. Those who have received the Holy Spirit without the laying on of hands (Acts 10:44-48) are *special exceptions* made by God for *special* purposes.

In this incident, it was done to make sure that the Apostles and others of the "circumcision" understood that this was the moment when God opened the "door" to salvation for *Gentiles* – for those not of Israel (read Rom. 11 to understand this more plainly).

Read 2 Timothy 1:7. Of what is Paul speaking here? I bring this up because of the doctrine of some denominations that one must have an *intense spiritual reaction* to the receipt of the Holy Spirit ... even prophesying and speaking in unknown tongues. I have known of congregations that would gather around the repentant candidate and go into uncontrollable "spirit" frenzies until the repentant individual also exhibited that kind of behavior. If they did not, they were not accepted as members until they did.

We must understand what constitutes a *sound mind*. Several translations translate that Greek term to be *self-control* – "sober good sense." Coupled with a spirit of power and love, this *self-control* enables an individual to maintain a *reasoned, disciplined, well-ordered life*. Being swept away in *uncontrollable emotion* is not in character with the receipt of the Holy Spirit. While it is true that there are examples of people who did speak in "tongues" upon receiving the Spirit, it is **not** a litmus test that determines whether or not an individual has actually received it.

The Holy Spirit enters one's *mind* and begets him/her spiritually (read John 3:5, Romans 8:16, and 1 Corinthians 2:10-14). Certainly, there can be feelings of gratitude, joy, and thankfulness as expressions of one's own natural emotions. But, the absence of great emotional outbursts does not indicate that God did not forgive the individual and, there-

fore, withheld His Spirit.

## Study Questions

1. Hebrews 6:2 – Is “laying on of hands” one of the basic doctrines of Jesus Christ? Is that significant for us today? Why?
2. Acts 8:14-17 – Why were Peter and John sent to the new converts in Samaria? Had these people been baptized? Had they received the Holy Spirit? What did the disciples do so that they could receive the Holy Spirit?
3. Verses 5-13, 18-22 – Was Simon Magus baptized by Philip like the other new converts had been? Did he see that the Holy Spirit was given by the laying on of hands by the disciples? Did the laying on of hands represent a special *power* to Simon? So much so that he tried to purchase it?
4. Acts 19:1-6 – Which baptism had these people received? Had they received the Holy spirit? Did Paul *re-baptize* them? Why? What did Paul do after he *re-baptized* them? Does this suggest the importance of being baptized *in the name of Jesus Christ*, as well as the importance of the *laying on of hands* by God’s authorized ministers for the receipt of the Holy Spirit?
5. 2 Timothy 1:7 – Is there any special *feeling* or *emotional outburst* that *must* accompany the receipt of the Holy Spirit – like speaking in “tongues” or uncontrollable weeping?

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## Chapter Eleven

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# What about Infant Baptism?

**F**rom where did the practice of infant baptism come? Is there anywhere in scripture where God commands it? No. So, does this mean that infant baptism is a *commandment of men*? Let's examine its history and learn the *truth*.

The practice revolves around the concept of “original sin” that is supposedly inherited from Adam. A *pagan* concept that has been “Christianized teaches that unless the individual is baptized, s/he is eternally lost *because of Adam's sin*. The question is simple: Are you *lost* because of *Adam's sin* – or *your own*?

What does Romans 5:12 say? It says that sin *entered* the world by Adam and Eve's sin. But, why was death passed upon *all of mankind*? Read Romans 1:24, 26, 28. Make note of Paul's comment about God having turned mankind over to the consequences of their sins. Once Adam and Eve had sinned, it was *inevitable* that all humans who subsequently were born into the human milieu would also sin in one form or another ... to one degree or another. The sin of Adam and Eve made it *inevitable* that all subsequent humans would also sin. We must also admit that we have done our fair share of

sinning.

There is a peculiar argument by Paul in which such an argument is framed. The idea that all humans sinned in Adam is not as ridiculous as some might want to make it seem. Read Hebrews 7 in its entirety. Make special note of Paul's argument in vv. 9, 10. Paul's argument is that the tribe of Levi (the priestly tribe of Israel) paid tithes *in Abraham*. The Levites did not even exist when Abraham did this in Genesis 14 (read the entire account and pay attention to vv. 17-20). Paul's reckoning here could also apply to true Christians: We also paid tithes in Abraham (Gal. 3:26-29).

In that sense, when the Lord God pronounced His sentence upon Adam and Eve, He as good as said that their offspring also will have sinned. Romans 3:23 says unequivocally that "All have sinned and come short of the glory of God." Believe it or not, accept it or not, like it or not, John 3:16-18 says that *all* (which includes *infants*) are *condemned* unless and until they believe in Jesus Christ. It was for the *salvation of all of mankind* that Jesus Christ came to be sacrificed for our sins.

If that is true, would God be just if He eternally condemned an infant who died *before* it was old enough to understand sin, its consequences, and how to properly repent? If this were the only day of salvation, quite naturally there would be great cause for concern. But ... Isaiah 2:1-5, Zechariah 14:16-19, and Revelation 20:1-3, 5, 11-15 suggest that the 1,000-year Kingdom period and afterwards are also periods when God will deal with all of the difficult questions about those who never have a chance to understand His truth through no fault of their own – the infants, the heathens, the deceived.

Neander, in his work *History of the Christian Church*, accounts for how infant baptism was introduced into "Christianity":

...When the notion of *magical influence*, a *charm* connected with the *sacraments* [baptism being one of them], continually gained ground, the *theory* was finally evolved of the unconditional necessity of *infant baptism*. About the middle of the third century this *theory* was admitted in the North African Church ... but while in *theory* the necessity of infant baptism was admitted, still in practice it was very far from being generally prevailing (Vol. I, pp. 313-314 – Torrey’s Translation; emphasis added).

Many of the early Church “fathers” believed in various *pagan* traditions and beliefs, including the *pagan theory* of infant baptism, and were instrumental in *syncretizing* them into “Christianity.” Among them were Origen, Chrysostom, Clement of Alexandria, Cyprian (Bishop of Carthage in North Africa), and Augustine of Hippo (the chief defender and promoter who considered the pagan Plato to have been an early Christian).

It was because of Augustine’s influence that the practice became a general ecclesiastical institution (Vol. 3, p. 193). Cote’s *Archeology of Baptism* states that it was finally *universally* practiced in the 6th century – made compulsory by an edict from Emperor Justinian, who reigned over the Eastern Roman Empire from A.D. 527 to A.D. 565.

The edict commanded all unbaptized pagans, including women and children (infants included) to present themselves to local churches to be *immediately* baptized. History reveals that infant baptism was inspired by pagan Egyptian beliefs and practices; therefore, it is a mere doctrine of men – not a commandment of God.

Some “Christian” churches “baptize” (pour or sprinkle) infants on the eighth day after their births as a substitute for the male circumcision imposed on Abram after the Lord God entered into covenant relationship with him (Gen. 17:10-27;

21:1-4). That practice was extended to the descendants of Abram. Modern circumcisions are generally done at birth unless the parents object. The Israelite are referred to by Paul as being the “circumcision” (Rom. 2:25-3:2). Infant baptism presupposes its own original sin irrespective of what Adam and Eve did. There is a fallacy (mistaken belief; unsound argument) in that reasoning. Why? How?

Read Isaiah 6:10-16. King Ahaz was having difficulty believing a prophecy dictated by the Lord God. The Lord God offered him a “sign” that would validate the Lord’s cause. The “sign” involved the birth of a male child. The decisive, most important point of this “sign” involved how long it would take that infant to learn how to refuse evil and choose good. Paul uses a similar example in Romans 9:9-11. In Judaism, that age is set at twelve years old: the age of accountability (Bat Mizpah for boys and Bar Mizpah for girls). Read Luke 2:40-52. Note especially v. 42. Does Jesus show signs of maturing to the point of knowing good from evil?

God expects us to be mature enough to know about the consequences of sin and how He plans to deliver us from its consequences. That ability is most generally reached when one is 12 years old. Christ and His apostles *blessed* little children, but there is no evidence that they *baptized* them.

# Postscript

From God's perspective, there is no good reason for a person, once s/he understands what must be done in order to acquire the salvation God offers us in Jesus Christ, to put off being baptized. Even if you are infirm, weak, elderly, or spiritually immature. How could you be "perfect" *before* you have received God's Holy Spirit?

I have provided you enough information in this lesson to understand this subject *according to Scripture* – even how you could have received a *false baptism* and stand in need of being re-baptized. The examples we studied from the New Testament showed people who wanted to be baptized *immediately* upon understanding God's truth. This demonstrates an understanding of an *immediate need* for forgiveness and release from their slavery to sin – an *immediate need* for Christ as Savior.

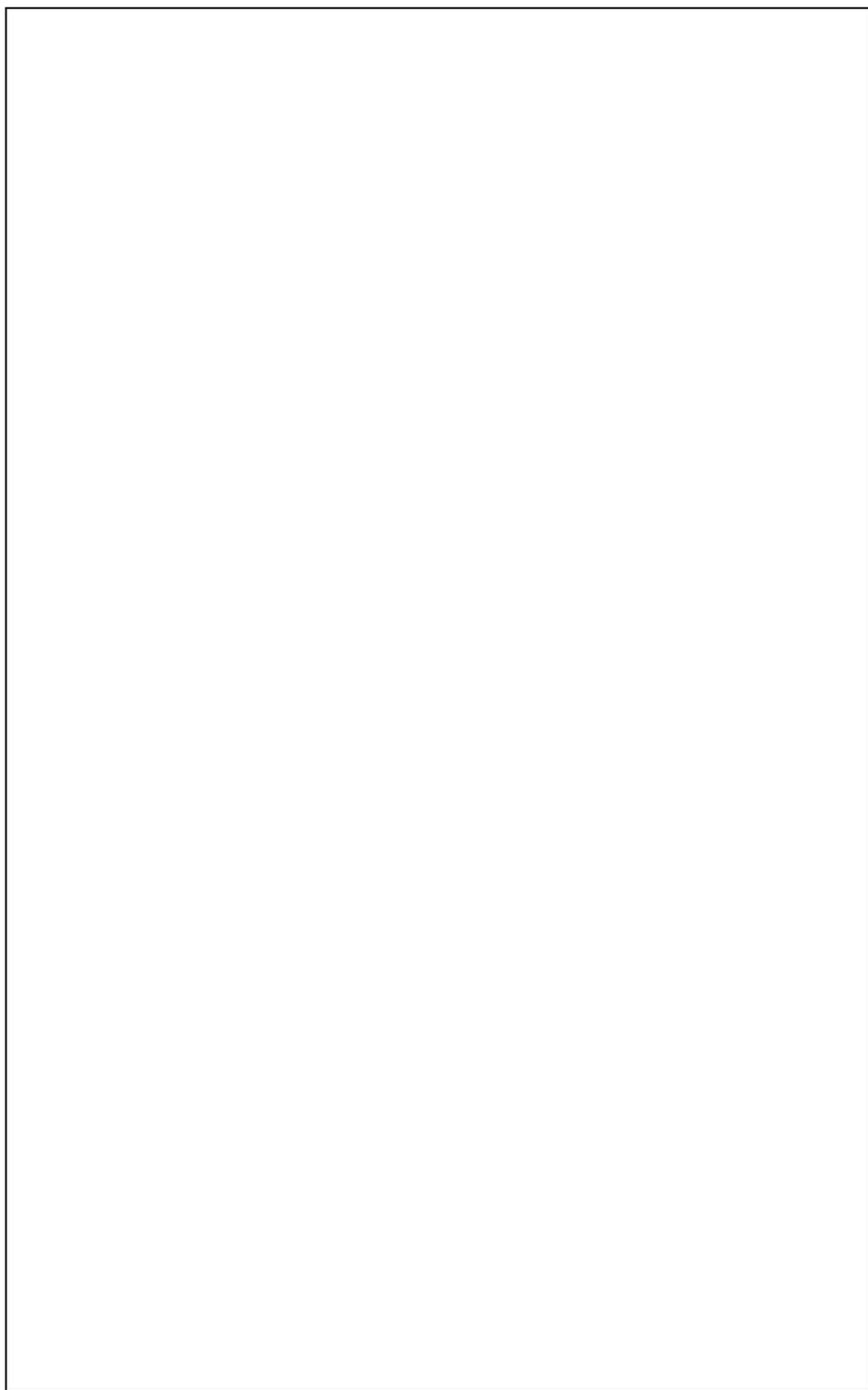
What I have shown you in this study should also make it clear that mere "acceptance" of Christ is not enough. Profession of faith, while a very vital part of the salvation process, will not, in and of itself, save you. Hopefully, you can see that much more is needed – including belief in specific doctrines ... like the *gospel of the Kingdom of God*.

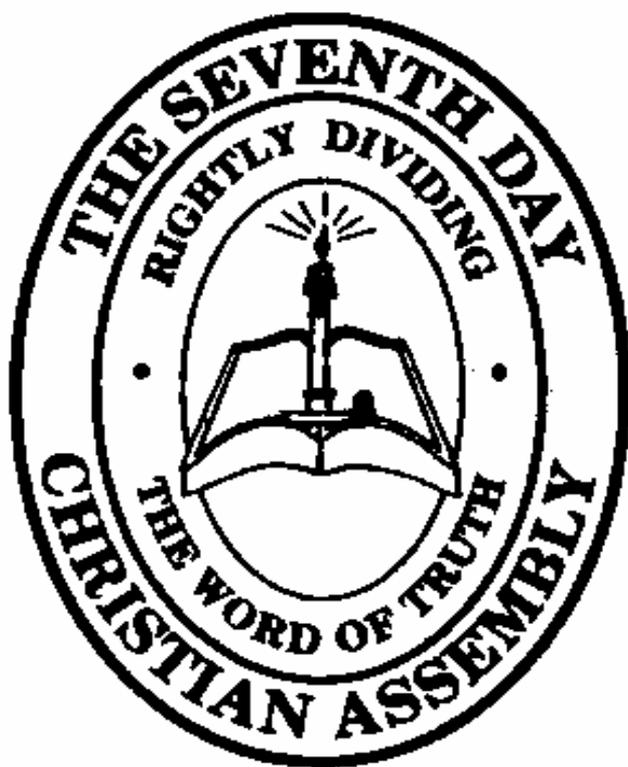
This Bible Study Course lays out many of those specific doctrines in contrast to what is commonly taught. You must come to understand and believe God's *revealed truth* – to repent of your sins and determine to overcome, with God's help, your own human nature and all the wiles of Satan the Devil. Once that basic attitude is in place, then you are "ready" for baptism. *This is the way to the salvation that God has revealed in His word of truth. Dare we think that we know better than God and try to take shortcuts?*

After you have been baptized and had the laying on of

hands, then you will receive the Spirit of God – which, in effect, *plunges* you into the body of Christ, *the true, spirit-begotten Church of the Living God*. You become a potential member of the Divine Family of God – an heir of salvation and a true Christian! What a wonderful calling! What a wonderful potential!

If you would like to discuss baptism with me, please contact me. It would be my great pleasure to discuss this with you and to baptize you according to the demands of God's holy word.





## **Straight Talk ... Plain Truth**

**THIS BOOK IS NOT TO BE SOLD**

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