

IS WATER BAPTISM REQUIRED FOR SALVATION?

Is baptism necessary for salvation? *When* should it be done? Should infants be baptized? Should one be re-baptized in later years if one feels his first baptism was invalid? Should the living be baptized for the dead? What is the *form* for baptism? Sprinkling, pouring, or immersion? Can you be *saved* if you are *not* baptized? *Who* should do the baptizing? What if you were baptized by a man in whom you have since lost faith? Should you be baptized again? Here, from the pages of *your own Bible*, is the *plain truth* about water baptism.

**By Garner Ted Armstrong
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Surely baptism is one of the most well-known of all the Christian "sacraments." One major church takes it's name from John the Baptist. Many churches, following Catholic custom, "baptize" infants at their "christening" by sprinkling a few drops of water on them in an elaborate ceremony.

Some churches include baptismal tanks as a part of their pulpit platform and altar, with baptisms incorporated into special worship services before the entire congregation.

Millions have been "baptized" in one form or another. Hundreds of millions in the Catholic world, especially France, Italy, Spain, and most of Mexico, Central and South America, were sprinkled as an infant, believing they were "baptized." Baptism is called the "door of the church" by the Roman Catholics; the means by which one is brought into the body of the church.

In comparatively modern times, exultant believers have been seen cavorting beneath a fire hose, spraying water over the wildly enthusiastic following of an evangelist who held forth in a major street corner. Was this "baptism" valid? During the late '60s, the "Jesus People" movement saw hundreds joining hands, skipping over the sands of the Pacific coast, striding into the surf. Was this a valid baptism?

Probably, you were baptized at some time in your life, perhaps on your first birthday; perhaps as a young person at 15, or 17, when you were emotionally moved to do so by a revivalist. Maybe you were "baptized" into the *church* you attend because it was the church of your parents, and your friends.

But what about baptism? Have you ever *read* much about it *in the Bible*?

Some claim it is not necessary.

Have you ever heard a radio or TV preacher deliver a message similar to this? "If you want to be saved, all you have to do is accept Jesus in your heart. As you sit in your car or home -even if you are in a bar - just say, "I accept you, Jesus" and you will be *instantly saved*. You don't even need to be baptized!"

Is this statement correct? Is this all there is to being saved? Can a person who wishes to become a Christian simply whisper, "I accept you, Jesus" and thereby receive ETERNAL LIFE?

Or is there *more* to Christian conversion?

Understand this! Jesus died for our sins so that we may have ETERNAL LIFE (John 3:16). If we are to receive salvation, it is *vital* that we understand what is *required in order to receive this great gift*. We dare not take the word of any man; we must look to *the Bible* for our answers.

"But wait a minute!" you may protest. "You're telling me I must *earn* salvation. If salvation is a *free* gift, then that means I don't have to do *anything at all* in order to receive it! Right?"

Wrong! We are saved by GRACE through FAITH (Ephesians 2:8), but the process is *not* unconditional.

Suppose a friend telephoned you and said, "I have a gift for you. I'd like to give it to you today but you must come to my house to pick it up."

Is your friend offering you a *free* gift? Yes! Did you *earn* this gift? No! Will going to your friend's house mean that you have earned this gift? No! It is still a gift. But you must take certain steps in order to receive this gift. If you *refuse* to take those steps, you will receive *nothing*.

Receiving God's free gift of eternal life involves the same principle. You have not earned it, but you must do what the Bible instructs if you are desirous of receiving it.

Notice the instructions Peter gave to thousands of people who asked what they should do in order to receive eternal life. His first directive was to "REPENT." His second was to ". . . be baptized *every one of you* in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit" (Acts 2:38).

Can you see how Peter, who was speaking under God's inspiration, told his listeners that, even though eternal life was a *gift*, they could receive it only if they met certain requirements - REPENTANCE and BAPTISM? Comparing baptism to the Noachian Flood where only eight people were saved. Peter later wrote, "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 Christ" (1 Peter 3:21, Revised Standard Version).

Peter never once said, "Just sit there and whisper to yourself. 'Jesus, I accept you into my heart.'" No! Peter taught that receiving salvation required ACTION on the part of those wanting it. How could it be plainer? Repentance and baptism are essential *requirements* for salvation.

Many people today have been *deceived* into thinking that they have been saved. "How could this be?" you may ask. "Isn't the important thing that we worship Jesus Christ? Does it really matter *how* we worship Him?" Yes it does! Jesus said that the time would come when people would worship Him in a wrong manner! He said, "In vain do they worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men" (Mark 7:6-9).

We must not swallow "hook, line, and sinker" what any *man* says. We must obey *God* and follow His instructions as laid out in His Holy Bible.

Jesus' Instructions and Example

Baptism did not begin with Peter after the death of Christ. Christian baptism was prefigured by the Israelites when they passed through the Red Sea (1 Corinthians 10:1-2). Jesus Himself taught baptism. He instructed His disciples, "Go ye into all the world, and preach the Gospel to every creature. He that believeth, and is baptized, shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned" (Mark 16:15-16). Did Jesus require the mere *verbal expression* of faith in order to receive eternal life? No. He required physical action - baptism - in order to be saved from

ETERNAL DAMNATION.

Should it surprise us that Jesus taught baptism? It shouldn't when we realize that Jesus Himself was baptized! Even though Jesus lived a perfect life and was *totally* without sin (1 Peter 2:22), He knew the importance of setting an example for us to follow. ". . . Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow His steps" (1 Peter 2:21). For this reason, Jesus was baptized and thereby demonstrated the *vital importance* of this act (Matthew 3:16).

What Method of Baptism?

"But there are many methods of baptism in the world's churches," it is often pointed out. "How does one know *which* method of baptism to use?"

Many of the large, fundamentalist churches utilize sprinkling, or pouring of water for baptism. However, in doing so, they ignorantly admit their *sole authority* for this completely unbiblical, unauthorized form of "baptism" is teaching handed down from the Roman Catholic Church; teaching *inherited* by many Protestants from the time of the reformation.

The primary Catholic authority, the Catholic Encyclopedia, admits, ". . . The most ancient form (of baptism) usually employed was unquestionably *immersion*. This is not only evident from the writings of the fathers and the early rituals of both the Latin and Oriental Churches, but it can also be gathered from the Epistles of St. Paul, who speaks of baptism as a bath (Ephes. v, 26; Rom. vi, 4; Tit. iii, 5). In the Latin Church (the church at Rome, as distinct from that at Constantinople and elsewhere), immersion seems to have prevailed *until the twelfth century*. After that time it is found in some places even as late as the sixteenth century. Infusion and aspersion (pouring and sprinkling), however, *were growing common in the thirteenth century*, and *gradually prevailed* in the Western Church." (Art. "Baptism," Cath. Encyclopedia, Vol. 11, pp. 261, 262, emphasis mine).

Thus it is admitted that the *Bible* teaches *immersion*; that the practice of immersing, baptizing believers *into* the water prevailed for more than *twelve long centuries* until it was "gradually" altered from the biblical form to the present-day Catholic sacrament.

But the Catholic Church recognizes the "traditions of the 'fathers' " as being *equal* with scripture. Most Protestant churches *reject* such traditions.

How strange, then, that with the exceptions of the Baptist Church and some others, many large professing "Christian" churches follow *Catholic tradition* in their form of 'baptism' instead of the plain words of Scripture - the commands of the Saviour, Christ Himself!

Modern "churchianity" is deeply divided on the subject. Anciently, controversy raged over various practices such as infant baptism, re-baptizing (which led to the name "Anabaptists," attached to those practicing re-baptism by their enemies) and baptizing surrogate candidates for the dead.

But did Jesus Christ leave it up to the churches to "decide" which mode of baptism they would like to use?

He certainly *did not!*

Obviously, according to the plain statements of Christ; according to Peter's command on the Day of Pentecost; according to the whole meaning and purpose of baptism (study Romans, the 6th chapter), one should be baptized *only after repentance*.

"REPENT!" Jesus cried.

And what does it mean to *repent*?

It means to be deeply convicted of sin - to be emotionally *shocked* into deep remorse; shameful penitence; contrition, sorrow!

And what IS SIN?

"Sin is the transgression of LAW!" (1 John 3:4). Sin is the breaking of any one of the ten cardinal points of God's Ten Commandments as they are *magnified*, made *spiritually* binding, by Jesus' whole life and teaching, particularly His famous "Sermon on the Mount."

Almighty God has not left it to mankind to decide *what is sin*. He has, rather, left it up to us to decide WHETHER to sin, or obey God's holy, righteous and perfect LAW!

When Paul repented, he came to the realization that his life was forfeit! He knew the *penalty* for sin! "For the wages of sin is *death*: but the GIFT of God (Notice it is God's *gift* - not something with which we were born; it is not something inherent within us!) is ETERNAL LIFE through Jesus Christ our Lord." (Rom. 6:23).

Paul wrote, "For we know that the *law is spiritual*; but I am *carnal*, sold under sin . . . *O wretched man that I am!* Who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" (Rom. 7:14-25).

When Paul was struck down on the road to Damascus (Acts 9:1-9) he was shocked into REPENTANCE! When Ananias placed his hands on him (Acts 9:17) Paul was immediately *baptized*. Notice; "And immediately there fell from his eyes as it had been scales: and he received sight forthwith, and arose, and *was baptized*" (Acts 9:18).

Here is a classic example of what Christ meant by His command to *repent*, and be baptized!

Isn't it then *obvious* to any *thinking* person that baptism is NOT FOR INFANTS? Can a baby "sin"? Can a tiny babe in arms become convicted of having *broken God's law*? Can a baby of months be brought to full knowledge of God's plan of redemption; of His Holy Law; to the conviction of *sin* and *repentance*?

Nonsense! Yet, many great and vaunted churches practice *infant "baptism"* (which is a misnomer, for they do not really "baptize," but sprinkle, or pour a bit of water on the startled infant's head!).

Does God authorize carnal, human churchmen to devise any method of so-called "baptism" that appeals to them?

By no means! The Bible lays down a *definite method* of baptism, which we shall see plainly. This is not a frivolous matter.

We cannot take this matter lightly. We must again go to the Scriptures to see how the actual act of baptism is supposed to be performed. In order to fully understand this matter, it must be pointed out that the New Testament was not written in King James English. It was written in the Greek language. Today we have many English translations - the most popular being the King James version which was first published in 1611.

When the apostles wrote the New Testament in Greek, they used the following words:

- (1) *cheo* meaning "to pour"
- (2) *rantidzo* meaning "to sprinkle"
- (3) *baptizo* meaning "to immerse" or "to dip."

If pouring or sprinkling were acceptable forms of baptism, the apostles would have used the words *cheo* or *rantidzo*. But they did not. They used the word *baptizo* whenever referring to the act required for salvation. Proper baptism *requires* immersion - not sprinkling or pouring.

During his ministry John the Baptist went to Aenon " . . . because there was much water there" (John 3:23). If sprinkling or pouring were proper forms of baptism, John could have used a few gallons of water to baptize *hundreds*. But he needed "much water" because he practiced *complete immersion*.

Notice that when Jesus was baptized He was *in* water. "And straightway coming up *out* of the water, he saw the heavens opened, and the spirit like a dove descending upon him" (Mark 1:10). John the Baptist did not take Jesus to a well and pour water on His head out of a dipper. Jesus was *immersed*.

Another example of water baptism is found in Acts 8. Here we see Philip teaching Christianity to the Ethiopian eunuch. When the eunuch asked to be baptized, he and Philip " . . . went down both *into* the water" (v.38) for baptism. And when they were finished " . . . they were come up *out* of the water" (v. 39). The Ethiopian eunuch was completely *immersed* in water.

Meaning of Baptism

"Why is *complete* immersion required?" is commonly asked. "What is so wrong with pouring or sprinkling?" God tells us not to follow the ways of men, but to obey His Commandments and to follow the example of Jesus Christ.

As you will see from a careful, thorough reading of Romans 6, baptism pictures, among other things, the complete *burial* of the *old self*.

Complete submergence in water is necessary because it is symbolic of *burial*. Can you imagine the local undertaker standing a dead corpse against a tree, shoveling a small amount of dirt on its head, and declaring the body "buried"? That is how *ludicrous* the practice of "sprinkling" or "pouring" must appear to Almighty God, who set *His method of baptism* down in scripture!

Baptism is an important symbolic act. It has a special threefold meaning for us. It pictures WASHING, BURIAL, AND RESURRECTION.

First, baptism cleanses us of our sins and gives us a fresh start with God. Both the blood of Christ and the waters of baptism wash away our sins (Revelation 1:5; Acts 22:16).

Second, baptism symbolizes the death of our old, sinful selves. To be baptized is to bury one's carnal self in a watery grave (Colossians 2:12).

And, third, baptism gives us new life. It symbolizes the resurrection which we are promised if we *obey* God and *accept Jesus Christ* as our Saviour.

"Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into His death? Therefore 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. For if we have been planted together in the likeness of His death, we shall be also in the likeness of His resurrection" (Romans 6:3-5).

What could be more beautiful? Baptism pictures being buried with Christ (by being covered with water) and being resurrected with Him (by being raised out of the water)! The symbolism of burial and resurrection cannot be portrayed by sprinkling or pouring.

This important ceremony was practiced by the New Testament ministers and has continued to this day. Jesus Christ has *never* given any man or group of men the authority to modify the method of baptism which *He preached* and which *the disciples practiced*.

Over the years many have asked God's ministers, "Aren't there *any* circumstances where God could give salvation to a person who was not baptized?" It is not up to men, even ministers of Jesus Christ, to dictate to God or to limit what He can do. The important point is that any person who desires eternal life and is able to be baptized *should do so*.

If there are special circumstances (and this would be rare, indeed), Almighty God knows, and understands. There are some, for instance, who have a very real *disease - hydrophobia*. In its worst form the disease literally causes fear of *swallowing*. Though rare among humans, it results in an unreasoning fear of water. Commonly, though it is called rabies among animals. If someone knows the *truth* of God: knows *what sin is*; is convicted, broken-hearted in *repentance* of sin; wishes to beg God's *forgiveness* for those sins; wishes *salvation* from God, but has an unusual *fear of water*, then God would surely understand. The decision would have to remain that of the individual, not of the minister, or other counselor.

Sometimes, handicapped persons have wondered if it were possible to be baptized. I have known of cases where some few were actually baptized *while lying on a stretcher*, because of incapacitating handicap, or weakness.

To satisfy some of the more curious questions, let's suppose the following scenario. Suppose a couple were marooned on the desert - more than a hundred miles from the nearest water of any kind. Suppose, as they knew they were near death, they read the Bible together, realized they were sinners - desired to be *forgiven* of God. Suppose it was physically *impossible* for them to be immersed in water (their most earnest prayer, surely!). Would God *reject* them because they were *unable*?

By the same token, suppose our fictitious couple were on an island in the ocean. They repented, wanted to call out to God for forgiveness, and for His Holy Spirit. Suppose they solemnly *baptized each other* in the sea? Would God *honor* such a practice? I sincerely doubt that *either* of the above scenarios have obtained, but surely, God *would not reject* such people, for He is far more concerned about what happens in the *human heart* than the physical, mechanical aspects of things.

The Bible does give us an example of a repentant person who was not baptized but was promised that he would be with Christ in the Kingdom of God. It took place during Jesus' crucifixion. Two thieves were also being crucified at that time. One expressed his belief in Christ and asked if Jesus would remember him when He came into His Kingdom. Jesus replied that the man would see Him in Paradise.

Unfortunately, this scripture is used by many churches to imply the thief went *immediately to heaven*. Yet, Christ said, clearly, that He (Christ) would be *dead* for "three days and three nights" (Matt. 12:40), buried in the "heart of the earth."

Following His resurrection, He warned the women, "touch me NOT, for I not yet ascended to my Father; but go to my brethren, and say unto them, 'I ascend unto my Father and to your Father; and to my God, and your God.'" (John 20:17).

Christ was *alone*. The thief was *not with Him*. Christ had NOT "gone to heaven" immediately upon death, but, *exactly as He said* (Matt. 12:40) was *buried!* Many do not believe Christ was truly *dead* for those three days and three nights. But if Christ did not *die*, then *we have no Saviour!*

Remember, *man* placed the commas and periods in the Bible. There *were* no punctuation marks in the Greek. If a husband turned to a wife, while driving the car along a country lane and said, "What's that up in the *road*, ahead?" The wife, hearing the pause after the word '*road*,' might misunderstand. She might think the husband was saying there was a *head* in the road!

But if he said "What's that - up in the road ahead?" She would understand.

So it is that, by misplacing the *comma*, men have totally perverted the meaning of Jesus' statement to the "thief on the cross."

What Jesus *really* said was, "Truly, *I'm telling you today -YOU SHALL BE* (in the future - after the resurrection!) with me in paradise!" (Luke 23:43, paraphrased).

But what about the thief? Christ obviously promised *salvation* to him, because the thief was repentant; because he recognized Christ!

This was a situation in which the man obviously was not physically able to be baptized. Sometimes a minister of God will counsel an inmate in prison who cannot to be baptized because the officials of his penal institution will not allow it. One inmate who still had eleven years to serve for robbery said, "I've repented of my sins and do not bemoan the fact that I won't be released for several more years. I know I must pay for my crime. But I can't be baptized for *eleven more years!* What if I die before I am released? Will I then suffer eternal damnation?"

The principle of "the thief on the cross" would seem to fit in this instance. This inmate is simply *unable* to comply with the Bible command to be baptized. But if he is truly repentant and accepts Jesus Christ as his Lord and Saviour, he too will be with Christ in Paradise.

Sometimes a person who has requested baptism lives in an area where we cannot get a minister to him for some time. Invariably the person expresses concern about having to wait. One man refused to drive his car for fear he might be involved in a fatal automobile accident before he could be baptized. A similar situation is that of a hospitalized person who is so ill or injured that hospital paraphernalia such as a body cast, intravenous feeding tubes, or a breathing machine will not allow immersion in water. Once again, no concern is necessary in such situations because of the "thief on the cross" principle.

In What Name?

Many have been confused by Matthew 28:19 where Jesus talked about baptizing in His name and in the Father's name. Some are also confused by the mention of the "Holy Ghost."

Since this scripture is often used during the baptism ceremony, it would be worthwhile for the reader to understand two points.

First, the King James Bible uses words that have different meanings today than they had over 350 years ago. The translators in 1611 used the word "ghost" for the Greek word *pneuma*. God does not have a ghost (there is no such thing as a ghost as portrayed in fictional movies on the supernatural), but God *does* have a Spirit. The Holy Spirit is not a personage in the God Family. The God Family is presently composed of the Father and the Son - it is not a trinity.

The word "trinity" is nowhere mentioned in the Bible, and the *only* scripture which implies it is a deliberate insertion by copyists *after the invention of printing*. The spurious verse is found in 1 John 5:7, "For there are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost; and these three are one." *Not one word* of that passage is found in the Codex Sinaiticus, Vaticanus, or Alexandrinus, nor in *any* manuscripts until after the time of the comparatively modern invention of *printing*. For full information on this vital subject, ask for a re-print article on the subject of "The Trinity."

Remember! Christ prayed to the *Father*. Even the Roman Catholic Church recognized the Father as the supreme member of the Godhead; the One to whom Christ returned; the One to whom Christ credited all His works!

Yet, when the angel announced the conception of Christ, he said, ". . . for that which is conceived in her is *of the Holy Spirit*." (Matt. 1:20). Mary was told, "The Holy Spirit shall come upon thee, and the POWER OF THE HIGHEST shall overshadow thee: therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God!" (Luke 1:35).

Obviously, not *one* of the vaunted churches of this world claims the "Holy Ghost" is the FATHER of Jesus Christ, yet the Bible says again and again that the agency used by God in bringing about this stupendous miracle *was the Holy Spirit!* Write for the "trinity" article for a *complete, irrefutable* Bible study on this important issue.

Back to our discussion. Remember, the first point was that the word "Ghost" is an error. It should be rendered "Spirit."

Second, the word "in" in this scripture was translated from the Greek word *eis*. A better translation would be "into."

A more accurate rendering of Matthew 28:19 would be, "Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them *into* the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit."

Baptism puts us *into* the divine God Family. At baptism we become *begotten* sons of God and earn the right to call Him "Father."

Notice from this scripture that we are baptized into *Jesus Christ*, not into any church denomination. Oftentimes ministers of this world's churches will baptize a person *only* if the new person is willing to be baptized *into* that minister's church denomination. This is wrong! Any person who wishes to receive salvation should *refuse* such a requirement. He should only be baptized into the name of the Father and of the Son. Loyalty to any man or group of men should also be refused because it is *not* a requirement for baptism.

A proper procedure for baptism should follow this form very closely: Before the actual baptism, the repentant person should be asked if he has repented of his sins and accepted Jesus

Christ as personal Lord and Saviour. Then, the person doing the immersing should say, "And now, (the persons' full name) as a result of your repentance of your *sins*; the transgression of God's holy law, I now baptize you into the name of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit, 'in the name of' meaning 'by the authority of' Jesus Christ for the remission of your sins." The repentant person is then *totally immersed* in water.

Some church denominations believe baptism should be performed only in *running* water such as a river or stream. But there is no scriptural basis for this. A baptism may be performed in a swimming pool, a lake, the ocean, or any body of water which is large enough to accommodate complete immersion.

When Should You Be Baptized?

Some ministers tell repentant persons, "It is not for you to decide *when* you are ready for baptism. As a minister, I have the discernment to determine *whether or not* you are bearing good fruit."

This high-handed attitude is *not* scriptural. Philip did not require the Ethiopian eunuch to demonstrate several months of good works to "prove" he was "worthy" of baptism. Nor did the disciples require "proof" from the thousands that they baptized on the day of Pentecost. The Philippian jailer and his household repented and were baptized by Paul and Silas in the *same night* (Acts 16:33).

As soon as a person realizes that he is a sinner, that he *needs to be washed clean by the blood of Jesus Christ, that he accepts Jesus Christ as his personal Saviour, and that he wants to become an obedient* begotten son of God, HE SHOULD BE BAPTIZED! If it is not possible for him to be baptized immediately, he should be baptized as soon as possible.

On one hand, baptism should not be taken lightly. It should not be undertaken without counting the costs. On the other hand, like all important steps one takes in life, *it should not be put off!*

And because of the vital importance of baptism, it is not a step to be taken by children. The Scriptures speak *only* of "men and women" being baptized (Acts 8:12). There is *no* New Testament reference to children being baptized.

It is impossible to draw an arbitrary line as to what the minimum age for baptism should be. No one can say, "Twenty years old is the earliest anyone can be baptized." Some young people, though not many, are ready for repentance at age seventeen. Even more uncommon is the sixteen year old who truly understands the significance of such a step.

Many a child is convinced *in his own mind* that he has come to true repentance and may even convince others of it, only to come to the realization later that it was just a passing interest replaced by a new infatuation with another person, a rock group, or a car.

Who Should Perform Baptism?

It is a commonly held belief that only an ordained minister may baptize. This is not true. When the disciples first baptized, they were not yet ordained. They were not even converted! Remember, however, *Jesus Christ* had appointed them directly! They were *His students*, His disciples. Though unconverted, they were His bona fide representatives. Not just anyone - surely not spiritual novices; not those who are unacquainted with the scriptures, should perform baptisms.

In Acts 2:37-41 we learn that three thousand people were baptized on the Pentecost following Jesus' crucifixion. Did the twelve apostles baptize this vast number? Probably not. No doubt nonordained members also baptized.

In Acts 8 we see the example of Philip who, although a deacon, was apparently not an ordained minister as yet. Even so, he baptized many Samaritans (v. 12) and later the Ethiopian eunuch (v.38).

So the Scriptures are plain that ministers are *not* the only persons qualified to baptize. The person who baptizes you is only human anyway. One woman was baptized by a minister who was later discovered to be a thief. Did the minister's sins invalidate her baptism? Absolutely not! Because it is actually Christ who baptizes us. He uses imperfect men as His instruments to do His will.

All have sinned and come short of the glory of God (Romans 3:23). Therefore, it is unreasonable to expect baptism at the hands of a man who is free from sin. When you are baptized, you do not look to the human being who puts you under the water. You look to Jesus Christ, the One who actually washes away your sins. But in the process of seeking baptism, it is wise to look for someone who can help you with questions and provide you with spiritual guidance. Jesus Christ set up His true Church with ministers who are specially called for this purpose. All biblical examples show that baptisms were performed by *representatives* of the true Church of God. In all cases these representatives were either *ministers* of the Church of God or they were men *selected by the ministry* to represent the Church.

Receiving the Holy Spirit

The ceremony of baptism completely cleanses the repentant person of all past sins. At that moment, he stands before God as a holy vessel. It is then that the baptizing person places his hands on him and asks God to put the Holy Spirit in that person. This is known as "the laying on of hands."

Actually, the laying on of hands is a *second* baptism. Paul called it the baptism of the Holy Spirit. "For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit" (1 Corinthians 12:13).

As mentioned earlier, the Holy Spirit is the divine power from God which guides and directs the Christian. The person is still a free moral agent - free to do whatever he wants. But he now has God's Spirit within him, showing him the way as he submits his life to God.

This power within us was promised by Christ. "But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost [Spirit] is come upon you" (Acts 1:8). The power of the Holy Spirit is the essence of the mind of God. It is that Spirit which God uses to put His laws into our minds and write them in our hearts (Hebrews 10:16).

When the Christian gives his whole life to God and places his trust in Him, he receives the blessings of a peaceful mind. "But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance . . ." (Galatians 5:22-23).

Is it possible to be baptized and *not* receive the Holy Spirit? Yes! In the New Testament we read of a dynamic preacher named Apollos who was taught by John the Baptist. Apollos baptized people but did not perform the laying on of hands. Later Paul met some of these converts and

was shocked that not only was the Holy Spirit absent from their lives, they had never even heard of it! (Acts 18:24, 19:16.)

There are *many* Christians today who are in the same condition. They have been baptized but *do not* have God's Holy Spirit in them. The solution to this problem is the one administered by Paul. He *rebaptized* them and laid hands on them so that they could receive the Holy Spirit (Acts 19:5-6).

What About Re-Baptism?

Tens of thousands have had the experience of "repentance" at an early state in their lives. Then, as the years go by, they "backslide," as the churches term it, drifting into sinful habits, appetites, and attitudes. At some point in their lives, they begin to realize this sinful condition, and they again come to the place of *repentance*.

They begin to attend church; they begin to "straighten out their lives" again, probably because of some emotional shock. Sometimes it is financial; or a divorce, or loss of a loved one, or terrible sickness or disease. Something awakens them to their spiritual need.

But they begin to feel rejected. They begin to feel *guilty* about their previous baptism; about having slipped back into hurtful old ways. Some, convinced they are "not good enough" for God, drift along for *years*, wondering whether they have committed the "unpardonable sin", wondering if God will reject them. But, while they WANT to be forgiven anew. They *want* to repent; to straighten out their lives, they labor under guilt feelings, and can't seem to shake them off!

Then, the question comes; "Should I be re-baptized?" The answer? It is *entirely up to you*. Any Christian can sin - and ALL do, from time to time. But there is a difference between slipping up; yielding to temptation, giving in to physical appetites (like a severe habit of smoking, etc., which can be like a terrible *yoke*, and for some almost *impossible* to break) and sinning - quite a difference between that, and *living a life of sin*.

Surely, if there exists *serious doubt* about your own state of mind when you were first baptized; about how much you understood about what sin really *is*, whether you truly *repented* of it; whether you knew enough about *how to obey God*, then you should remove that doubt, and be baptized again. The point is, no other human being can make that decision but *you*. No one can know your *heart* except God Almighty. No man - minister, or not, can claim to know your mind and heart.

Baptism For the Dead

Some churches practice "baptism for the dead," also known as "vicarious baptism." It is based on the belief that one person can be baptized for a dead person who was not a Christian. This dead person supposedly will then be offered salvation.

Vicarious baptism is based on just one scripture which says. "Else what shall they do which are baptized for the dead, if the dead rise not at all? Why are they then baptized for the dead?" However, the most obviously *logical* explanation is found in remembering what we learned about *infants* being baptized. Baptism should follow *repentance*; a *conscious* act by a living, breathing, human being! Baptism is an act of voluntary submission to God's will! It the act of a *living* person, "acting out" the terrible consequences of sin, obeying God's command willingly.

The dead are completely inert; unconscious, oblivious! It is nonsensical to assume a living

person can somehow be "baptized" for some person who died, when the dead person is incapable of thought; of understanding scripture; of repentance, and acceptance of Jesus Christ as personal Saviour!

The Greek word for the English "for" is the same word used throughout the New Testament, *huper*, which means, according to the Greek-English Lexicon (Thayer), "Up, over, etc., Lat. super, *over*, a preposition, which stands before either the gen. or the acc. according as it is used to express the idea of state and rest or of motion over and beyond a place."

Since the use in 1 Cor. 15:29 is in the *genitive*, notice what Thayer says, "With the GENITIVE; cf. W. 382 (358) sq. 1. prop. of place, i.e. of position, situation, extension: *over*, *above*, *beyond*, *across* . . . Lat. *pro*, *for*, i.e. *for one's safety*, *for one's advantage* or *benefit*."

Specifically, when dealing with I Cor. 15:29, Thayer says, ". . . *in the place of, instead of*" (Thayers, p.638-639).

NOTICE! The meaning of the term *huper* from the Greek *does not mean "on behalf of"!* It means INSTEAD of, or "in the *place of*."

Now, notice the original scripture: "The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death. . . else what shall they do which are baptized for (Gk. *huper*, meaning IN THE PLACE OF, or INSTEAD OF) the dead, if the dead rise not at all? Why are they then baptized for (*huper*) the dead?"

"And why stand we in jeopardy every hour? I protest by your rejoicing which I have in Christ Jesus our Lord, I die daily" (1 Cor. 15:26-31).

The whole context of the 15th chapter of 1 Corinthians is the subject of the *resurrection of the dead*. Paul reveals that some of the Corinthians were *doubting* this important truth! (See vs. 12-18). But Christ is the Head of a *living* Church, and said He would be with that Church down through the *many generations*. He said the Church would never cease to exist!

But, unless there were newcomers; new converts, being baptized to *replace* those who died (baptized IN THEIR PLACE, INSTEAD of the dead-) then, as that older generation ceased to exist, there would *be no church*. As part of Paul's argument, he explains to the Corinthians that the church continued to baptize newcomers to "fill up the place of" the dead; *replacing* those who died, thus tying the rite of baptism directly to the hope of the *resurrection*, which it partially foreshadows.

This was NOT authorization for living persons to be baptized a dozen, or a hundred times for unknown, dead persons, which makes a travesty of the *whole point* of baptism!

What Should You Do?

Now, *what about you?* Have you been baptized? Did you *know*, if you were, what *sin really* was - about the weekly Sabbath; God's Holy Days, His laws concerning clean and unclean things, tithing; about the *real* truth concerning the nature of man; about Bible prophecy? *After* you were baptized, did you begin to *grow* in grace and knowledge; to become more and more well-versed in the Bible, the sacred word of God? Were the fruits of God's Holy Spirit of LOVE, JOY, PEACE instilled deeply into your mind, inculcated into your very *character*?

If you have never been baptized, do you now realize that you MUST obey this command of your Master; your Lord and Saviour, if you are to be truly SAVED?

IF you were baptized previously, but have since drifted back into carnal habits; drifted away from God - do you recognize the need to call upon God to get you started back in the *right way*; God's WAY OF LIFE?

As you well know, we have *never* held "altar calls"; never begged audiences over radio, television, or in personal appearances to "come forward" or to "make a commitment." That does not mean we are unconcerned about your personal salvation -it means we reject the practices of many of the modern religious leaders, believing, instead, that we should adhere as closely as possible to the teachings and customs of Christ Himself!

God commissions His true Church, "*Cry aloud, spare not, lift up thy voice LIKE A TRUMPET, and shew my people their transgression, and the house of Jacob their sin!*" (Isa. 58:1). He says, "Preach the word, be instant in season, out of season; (keep at it! Don't let up!) reprove, rebuke, exhort with all long-suffering and doctrine. For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but will heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; and they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto *fables*."

"But *watch* thou in all things, endure afflictions, *do the work of an evangelist*, make full proof of thy ministry!" (2 Tim. 4:2-5).

Jesus prophesied, "And this *gospel of the Kingdom* shall be preached in all the world *for a witness* (a witness *against* them!) unto all nations; and THEN SHALL THE END COME." (Matt. 24:14).

Somehow, God has brought YOU into contact with His work; with His church!

This is *not* a work of men. It is not a large, wealthy, politically-powerful organization; it is not boastful of great properties, but is of very modest, humble means. Yet it is a work of FAITH; a work that is the work of Jesus Christ in his human instruments - *all the church* - a collective work of *many*, not just the work of one man, or a small handful of men!

In this booklet, you have read the TRUTH from Almighty God about baptism! Christ said to REPENT, and be baptized! Peter cried, "REPENT, and BE BAPTIZED!" Whether you have heeded this command in the past; whether you heed it today - the time is coming when you WILL heed, for the only alternative is to *lose out* on eternal life; to LOSE SALVATION!

No, we do not beg, or make emotional appeals. But we *do* preach Christ's Gospel of forgiveness; of God's love; of the coming TRIBULATION and the DAY OF THE LORD! We plainly speak out about SIN, and show WHY we should repent!

If you need personal counseling about baptism; about your own spiritual condition, please ask for a list of the ministers nearest you. If no one lives within reasonable distance, it is possible we could help you in the not too distance future when conducting one of our many personal-appearance campaigns. Failing that, perhaps someone can visit your area. We will be happy to counsel by letter, or even telephone, if that is desired.

The most important question in your life is whether you are *converted*; whether you are a servant of Jesus Christ; whether you have been made a child of God, brought into His Church, the spiritual Body of Christ. YOU must make that decision. We will pray that you make the right one. And we will also pray that you do not put it off - that you are encouraged to act NOW.

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This publication is intended to be used as a personal study tool. Please know it is not wise to take any man's word for anything, so prove all things for yourself from the pages of your own Bible.

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