

# Questions About Baptism

## • I. Introduction

- A. We receive many questions about baptism, and these notes have been written to answer those questions and others that have often been asked on this subject.
- B. The Bible teaches that baptism is essential to salvation. It is at the point of our baptism that we enter the kingdom of God and depart the kingdom of darkness.
- C. Our deliverance from sin involves a passage through water, which to anyone who knows the Old Testament should not be surprising.
- D. It is at our baptism that we die to sin and are raised to walk in newness of life. It is at our baptism that our sins are washed away. To reject these facts is to reject the word of God.
- E. In these notes we will first consider 15 facts about baptism, and then consider 10 common arguments against the essentiality of baptism and show why those arguments are wrong.
- F. If you believe you were saved apart from baptism, please read these notes carefully and compare everything you find here with the word of God, which is quoted throughout.

## • II. Facts About Baptism (and Why They are Right)

- A. Fact #1: He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved.
  - 1. Mark 16:16 says "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved."
  - 2. That verse is hard to misunderstand without expert help, and yet many today act as if Jesus said, "He that believeth and is saved shall be baptized."
  - 3. And what about those who only believe? James says that they have much in common with demons, who also believe and who tremble. (James 2:19)
  - 4. But does baptism save? Let's let Peter answer that question:

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- a. The like figure whereunto even baptism doth also now save us (not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God,) by the resurrection of Jesus Christ. (1 Peter 3:21)
  
- B. Fact #2: Baptism is part of every conversion in the book of Acts.
  - 1. Consider each example:
    - a. Pentecost (Acts 2:36-47)
    - b. Samaritans (Acts 8:12)
    - c. Simon (Acts 8:13)
    - d. Ethiopian Eunuch (Acts 8:26-39)
    - e. Cornelius (Acts 10:47-48)
    - f. Lydia (Acts 16:14-15)
    - g. Philippian Jailer (Acts 16:30-33)
    - h. Corinthians (Acts 18:8)
    - i. Saul (Acts 22:10-16)
  
  - 2. And yet many modern day denominational preachers never mention baptism! Is any more evidence required to show that they are not proclaiming the gospel of Jesus Christ?
  
  - 3. One denominational preacher has published an outline on salvation that associates concepts about salvation with letters of the alphabet. In his outline, "R," for example, denotes Repentance. When you look at his list, you note that baptism does not appear anywhere -- in fact, he skips right over the letter "B"! Is that gospel preaching? If you think so, then please explain why it is so different from what we find in the New Testament. How does his outline compare with the Great Commission?
  
  - 4. A book published in 1936 was entitled "History of Denton County Baptist Association and the Sixty Churches Within its Jurisdiction." On pages 82-83 of that book we find the following very interesting account about a "Rev. J. B. Cole." It can only be described as incredible but true!

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- a. "An incident occurred in the Pilot Point church during Rev. J. B. Cole's pastorate, which involved a point of doctrine that subjected Pastor Cole to criticism, and gave the incident much publicity and notoriety. Pastor Cole went fishing one day with a business man who was not a Christian, and he availed himself of the opportunity to talk to the lost man about his unsaved condition, and led him to an acceptance of Christ. Jo Ives, the man converted, said to Pastor Cole, "Here is water, what doth hinder me from being baptized?" **Obviously Brother Cole thought of the story of Philip and the eunuch, and, taking that incident as an example, he led Mr. Ives out into the water and baptized him.** Rev. Cole had been a Baptist but a short time **and was not up on their conception of baptism, and how and when it should be administered.** The news of the incident soon spread among the members, and then the show began. The following Sunday, Mr. Ives presented himself to the church, asking membership, and his application was rejected and he was hurt by the action of the church and turned to another church, which readily accepted his baptism. The criticism of the pastor caused him to ask a committee of eminent brethren to sit in judgment upon his conduct. After reviewing the details of the incident they wrote the church advising it to drop the matter, and Pastor Cole to go his way, **but not to repeat the act.**"
  - b. I suppose they would have given Philip the same warning. (If not, why not?)
  - c. The inscription in that book is dated June 6, 1950, and is addressed to my grandfather, Jess Hall, Sr. The final line of the inscription reads, "Use this book in the interest of truth and condemnation of error." I am glad to say that is how the book is still being used almost 60 years after my grandfather received it as a gift!
- C. Fact #3: The Greek word "baptizo" means immersion.
  - 1. Those who ask whether sprinkling is baptism are really asking whether sprinkling is immersion, and the answer is self-evident.
  - 2. Did you ever wonder why the English Bible uses the word "baptism" rather than "immersion"? Alexander Campbell makes the case that King James himself intervened and ordered the word not to be translated because the Church of England, of

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which he was head, at the time of the translation practiced sprinkling for baptism.

- 3. The practice of sprinkling began in the 3rd century as a practice called "clinical baptism" that was administered to people who were so ill that immersion might have killed them.
  - a. Even then, however, the convert was literally soaked with buckets of water, thus coming as close to immersion as possible.
  - b. Of course, as with most departures, it moved further and further from the word of God as it began to be applied to those in no need of a clinical baptism and the buckets were replaced with much smaller containers.
- D. Fact #4: There is one baptism.
  - 1. Ephesians 4:4-6 --- "There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling; One Lord, one faith, one baptism, One God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all."
  - 2. John the Baptist mentions three baptisms in Matthew 3:11-12.
    - a. Matthew 3:11-12 --- "I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance: but he that cometh after me is mightier than I, whose shoes I am not worthy to bear: he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost, and with fire"
  - 3. And yet Paul says there is one baptism (Ephesians 4:6).
    - a. What did Paul mean? Did he mean that there used to be more than one, but now there is only one baptism left? No. I think as we will proceed we will see that as far as man's obedience is concerned, there has always been just one baptism.
    - b. What then did Paul mean?
      - 1. The context in Ephesians is a focus on unity. Paul listed these "ones" to show why there should be unity in the church.
      - 2. Of the other items in the list, there has always been only one and will never be more than one -- one body, one Spirit, one hope, one Lord, one faith, one God and Father
      - 3. The same is true of baptism -- there has always been one baptism!

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- c. What is the one baptism in Ephesians 4?
  - 1. Paul himself had baptized many of the Ephesians in water (Acts 19:1-5). In fact, it was in Ephesus that Paul re-baptized those who knew only the baptism of John. Why? Because that baptism had now been replaced with the Great Commission baptism in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost. (Matthew 28:19)
- d. Were there any other baptisms when Paul wrote this?
  - 1. We have two choices remaining -- Holy Spirit and fire.
  - 2. We will soon see that the baptism in the Holy Spirit had already occurred.
  - 3. But the baptism in fire is likely the destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70, which had not yet occurred.
- e. And yet Paul said there is one baptism. Why?
  - 1. Because at that time -- as today -- there is only one baptism applicable to all men personally; there is only one baptism that men can administer and that men can actively participate in; there is only one baptism that men can personally receive; there is only one baptism that saves and adds people to the one body; there is only one baptism that is taught as part of the one faith --- water baptism.
  - 2. Paul was addressing people who had all been baptized in water, and they needed no explanation by Paul as to the identity of the one baptism.

- E. Fact #5: Baptism is central to our fulfillment of the Great Commission.
  - 1. Baptism is central to the Great Commission.
    - a. Matthew 28:19 -- "Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost."
    - b. Those who ignore baptism in the Plan of Salvation are not following the Lord's Great Commission.
    - c. Christians are commanded by Jesus Christ to proclaim baptism, and that is exactly what the early church did.

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- 2. Notice how the early disciples fulfilled the Great Commission shortly after it was given.
    - a. Peter preached in Acts 2, and proclaimed baptism. (Acts 2:38)
    - b. Philip preached in Acts 8, and proclaimed baptism. (Acts 8:12 and Acts 8:35)
    - c. Ananias told Paul what he must do, and proclaimed baptism. (Acts 9:6, 18; Acts 22:16)
    - d. Peter preached in Acts 10-11, and proclaimed baptism. (Acts 10: 33, 48; Acts 11:14)
    - e. Paul preached in Acts 16, and proclaimed baptism. (Acts 16:14-15)
    - f. Paul and Silas preached in Acts 16, and proclaimed baptism. (Acts 16:32-33)
    - g. Paul preached in Acts 18, and proclaimed baptism. (Acts 18:8)
    - h. Paul preached in Acts 19, and proclaimed baptism. (Acts 19:5)
  - 3. How can anyone say they are following the Great Commission when they fail to proclaim baptism or belittle baptism? Baptism is central to the gospel; it is central to the plan of God.
- F. Fact #6: The baptism of the Great Commission is water baptism.
- 1. This point seems self-evident and few disagree with it. Yet some have come up with various fanciful theories that the water of baptism of John was replaced with something else.
  - 2. Some argue that baptism after Pentecost was Spirit baptism rather than water baptism.
    - a. Yet some of the baptisms during this period specifically mention water.
      - 1. Philip and the Eunuch came to "a certain water" in Acts 8:36ff.
      - 2. Cornelius -- Acts 10:47 -- "Can any man forbid water, that these should not be baptized?"
      - 3. Also, note Hebrews 10:22 -- "having our bodies washed with pure water"

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- 4. And note 1 Peter 3:20-21 -- Comparing Noah being saved through water with baptism.
- 3. Logic suggests that baptism during this period is a baptism in water.
  - a. Baptism is called a burial and a resurrection in Romans 6:3-6 and Colossians 2:12. A burial in water and then coming up out of the water is a perfect symbol for a burial and resurrection. Do those who believe our baptism is baptism in the Spirit believe that we come up out of the Spirit? Does that make any sense? Wouldn't Romans 8:9 teach that we would be lost as soon as we came up out of the Spirit?
  - b. Baptism is likened to a washing or a bath in Titus 3:5 and Ephesians 5:26. Baths are taken in water, and yet Peter had to explain in 1 Peter 3:21 that baptism is not intended to cleanse the body (as with a normal bath) but to cleanse the conscience. Peter's argument makes no sense if baptism is anything other than water baptism.
- 4. Baptism is illustrated in the New Testament by two Old Testament events.
  - a. The deluge in 1 Peter 3:20-21.
  - b. Crossing the Red Sea in 1 Corinthians 10:1-2.
  - c. In both events, deliverance was wrought by God through water!
- 5. The Bible makes a specific distinction between the baptism of the Great Commission and the falling of the Holy Spirit upon them.
  - a. Acts 8:16 -- "For as yet he was fallen upon none of them: only they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus."
  - b. Acts 19:5-6 -- "When they heard this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. And when Paul had laid his hands upon them, the Holy Ghost came on them; and they spake with tongues, and prophesied."
- G. Fact #7: Baptism involves purification.
  - 1. Baptism is for the forgiveness of sins. It cleanses us from sin.

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- a. Acts 2:38 --- "Repent, and 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 Ghost."
- b. Acts 22:16 -- "And now why tarriest thou? arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord."
- c. Titus 3:5 -- "Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost."
- d. 1 Corinthians 6:11 -- "And such were some of you: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God."
- e. Hebrews 10:22 -- "Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water."
- f. Ephesians 5:26 -- "That he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word."
- 2. What about Holy Spirit baptism? Was its purpose to save man?
  - a. Christ's purpose in the baptism of the Spirit was to send the Spirit to the earth as he promised.
  - b. The Spirit has many roles to fulfill (inspirer, comforter, etc.) but one of them is not to be our savior from sin. Instead, the Spirit was to bring glory to the one who is our savior. (John 14:26, 15:26, 16:14) The Spirit wants our emphasis to be on the Son.
  - c. The Gift of the Holy Spirit is not received to forgive sins, but because our sins are forgiven. (Acts 2:38) The reception of God's Spirit is not for forgiveness but for the forgiven.
- H. Fact #8: Baptism involves a change of relationship.
  - 1. John 3:3-5 -- Baptism puts one into the Kingdom of God.
  - 2. 1 Corinthians 12:13, 27-28 -- Baptism puts one into the one body, which is the church of Christ.
  - 3. Romans 6:3 -- Baptism puts one into Christ
    - a. 2 Timothy 2:10 -- It is in Christ that one finds salvation.

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- b. Ephesians 1:7 -- It is in Christ that one finds redemption from sins.
  - c. Colossians 1:14 -- It is in Christ that one finds forgiveness of sins.
  - d. 2 Corinthians 5:17 -- It is in Christ that one finds new creaturehood.
  - 4. Galatians 3:27 -- It is at our baptism that we put on Christ.
- I. Fact #9: Preaching Christ involves preaching baptism.
- 1. Consider Acts 2:37-38. "Men and brethren, what shall we do?"
    - a. "This is the first time [in the history of the church] that this most important of all questions was ever propounded; and the first time, of course, that it was ever answered. Whatever may have been the true answer under any previous dispensation, or any previous day in the world's history, the answer given by Peter on this day of Pentecost, in which the [church] of Christ began, is the true and infallible answer for all the subjects of his authority in all subsequent time."
  - 2. Consider Philip and the Ethiopian Eunuch in Acts 8. Verse 35 says that Philip preached unto him Jesus. In verse 36, the Eunuch asked to be baptized immediately. If your preaching cannot have that effect because you never mention baptize or because you treat it as secondary and non-essential, then you are not preaching the gospel of Jesus Christ.
  - 3. If the Eunuch had heard a typical denominational sermon soaked in Calvinism, what would he have asked in verse 36?
- J. Fact #10: Man plays some role in his salvation. His participation is not purely passive.
- 1. If man plays no role in his salvation, then we are faced with only two possibilities:
    - a. Either all men are saved, because God would have no man perish. (2 Peter 3:9)
    - b. Or some are predestined for salvation and others are not, and there is nothing either group can do about it. That option would make God a respecter of persons, which he is not. (Acts 10:34)

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- 2. So where does that leave us? It must be true that man plays some role in his salvation.
  - a. What then must he do? We are not the first to ever ask that question. Those who heard the very first gospel sermon in Acts 2 asked that very question, and they were told to repent and be baptized.
- K. Fact #11: Preaching in the New Testament prompted immediate baptisms.
  - 1. If nothing else, the immediate response of those being baptized in the New Testament tells us that baptism is essential, and that immediate response differs greatly from how baptisms are performed today in the denominational world --- another clear departure from the pattern revealed in God's word.
    - a. Acts 16:33 ("And he took them the same hour of the night, and washed their stripes; and was baptized, he and all his, straightway.") Note that they were baptized after midnight.
    - b. Paul had been blind and without food or drink for three days, and yet what did he do first after hearing the gospel? He was baptized to wash away his sins. (Acts 22:16)
    - c. "In fact, one can look at every example of conversion in the Book of Acts and not find a soul eating a bite, drinking a drink, hitting a lick, or sleeping a wink between his hearing of the gospel and his being baptized. Why the urgency if baptism was not essential?"
    - d. As Ananias asked Paul, "And now why tarriest thou? arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord." (Acts 22:16)

- L. Fact #12: Infants have no need of baptism.
  - 1. Infant baptism had its origin in the correct understanding that baptism is essential for salvation.
    - a. But it also has its origin in the incorrect view that all humans, including infants, are tainted by the sin of Adam.
    - b. The Bible says that death spread to all, not because Adam sinned, but because all sinned. (Romans 5:12)
    - c. Thus, spiritual death does not spread to infants because infants are not capable of sinning.

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- 2. Infants have no need of baptism.
  - a. A person does not die spiritually until that person sins. Baptism is a burial of a spiritually dead person so as to quicken that person to be raised to walk in newness of life. (Romans 6:1-4) Infants do not need to be baptized for the same reason that living people do not need to be buried.
  - b. Children do not inherit the sins of their parents. (Ezekiel 18:20)
  - c. Matthew 18:3 --- Verily I say unto you, Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven.
- 3. Infants cannot be baptized because baptism involves more than just getting wet, and all they are able to do is get wet.
  - a. 1 Peter 3:21 tells us that baptism is an answer of a good conscience toward God.
  - b. Acts 22:16 tells us that baptism involves calling on the name of the Lord.
  - c. Acts 2:38 tells us that repentance must precede baptism.
  - d. Mark 16:15-16 tells us that belief must precede baptism.
  - e. If infants cannot answer or call or repent, then they cannot be baptized.
- 4. What about household of Stephanas baptized by Paul in 1 Corinthians 1:16? What about the family of the Jailer who were baptized in Acts 16:33?
  - a. What about them? Where does it say that these groups included infants? Wouldn't one need to find such a reference to prove that infant baptism is part of God's plan?
  - b. Also, there is often an implied infant exception in the Bible.
    - 1. Romans 3:23 -- All have sinned and come short of the glory of God.
    - 2. It is very possible that when the Bible mentions that a certain household was baptized, it expects the reader to understand that infants are excluded. We know that expectation exists elsewhere on other topics.

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- M. Fact #13: The baptism of John was water baptism for the remission of sins.
  - 1. John the Baptist was the first person in the New Testament who preached and performed baptism.
  - a. Mark 1:4-5 -- "John did baptize in the wilderness, and preach the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins. And there went out unto him all the land of Judaea, and they of Jerusalem, and were all baptized of him in the river of Jordan, confessing their sins."
  - b. Matthew 3:1-6 -- "In those days came John the Baptist, preaching in the wilderness of Judaea, And saying, Repent ye: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand. For this is he that was spoken of by the prophet Esaias, saying, The voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his paths straight. And the same John had his raiment of camel's hair, and a leathern girdle about his loins; and his meat was locusts and wild honey. Then went out to him Jerusalem, and all Judaea, and all the region round about Jordan, And were baptized of him in Jordan, confessing their sins."
  - c. Luke 3:3-4 -- "And he came into all the country about Jordan, preaching the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins; As it is written in the book of the words of Esaias the prophet, saying, The voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his paths straight."
  - d. Notice from these verses that John's baptism was for the forgiveness of sins.
  - e. The difference between baptism before and after the cross is only a matter of vantage point and not a difference in the results or purpose of baptism.
  - f. But with that said we also know that the Great Commission baptism in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit replaced the baptism of John. Those who were rebaptized in Acts 19, for example, could not have been baptized according to the Great Commission because they had never heard of the Holy Spirit.
  - 1. Matthew 28:19 -- "Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost."

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- 2. Acts 19:2-6 -- "He said unto them, Have ye received the Holy Ghost since ye believed? And they said unto him, We have not so much as heard whether there be any Holy Ghost. And he said unto them, Unto what then were ye baptized? And they said, Unto John's baptism. Then said Paul, John verily baptized with the baptism of repentance, saying unto the people, that they should believe on him which should come after him, that is, on Christ Jesus. When they heard this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. And when Paul had laid his hands upon them, the Holy Ghost came on them; and they spake with tongues, and prophesied."
- 2. We know that John baptized people in water.
  - a. Matthew 3:11 says that he baptized in water. "I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance."
- N. Fact #14: The baptism of John was not the baptism in the Holy Spirit, and neither is the baptism of the Great Commission.
  - 1. Matthew 3:11 tells us that John baptized in water, but Jesus would (future tense) baptize them with the Holy Spirit and with fire.
    - a. "I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance: but he that cometh after me is mightier than I, whose shoes I am not worthy to bear: he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost, and with fire."
    - b. John 7:39 and John 16:7 also tell us that the Spirit had not yet been given because Jesus was not yet glorified and had not yet departed.
      - 1. John 7:39 -- "But this spake he of the Spirit, which they that believe on him should receive: for the Holy Ghost was not yet given; because that Jesus was not yet glorified."
      - 2. John 16:7 -- "Nevertheless I tell you the truth; It is expedient for you that I go away: for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send him unto you."
    - c. Acts 1:4-5 and Luke 24:49 tell us that the Holy Spirit baptism had not yet happened even at the time of Ascension, but it would happen not many days after that event.

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- 1. Acts 1:4-5 -- "And, being assembled together with them, commanded them that they should not depart from Jerusalem, but wait for the promise of the Father, which, saith he, ye have heard of me. For John truly baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost not many days hence."
- 2. Luke 24:49 -- "And, behold, I send the promise of my Father upon you: but tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem, until ye be endued with power from on high."
- d. Note that the baptism of the Spirit was still future after three years of baptizing in water. Also note that John's baptism by water was baptism for the remission of sins. (Mark 1:4-5) Thus, we know that it is possible to have a water baptism for the remission of sins that is not a baptism of the Holy Spirit.
- 2. When did the baptism in the Holy Spirit occur?
  - a. Acts 2:33 tells us that the Holy Spirit was poured forth on Pentecost, which as Acts 1:4-5 (quoted above) said was not many days after the Ascension.
    - 1. Acts 2:33 -- "Therefore being by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost, he hath shed forth this, which ye now see and hear."
  - b. Acts 3:13 tells us that Jesus had at that time been glorified by the Father, which John 7:38-39 and John 16:7 (both quoted above) told us must occur before the Holy Spirit would be given.
    - 1. Acts 3:13 -- "The God of Abraham, and of Isaac, and of Jacob, the God of our fathers, hath glorified his Son Jesus; whom ye delivered up, and denied him in the presence of Pilate, when he was determined to let him go."
- 3. Thus, no one was baptized in the Holy Spirit prior to Pentecost.
  - a. This tells us, for example, that Jesus could not have been commanding Nicodemus in John 3:5 to be baptized in the Holy Spirit because that baptism did not yet exist. The only baptism that Nicodemus could have obeyed at that point was water baptism (in fact, that is the only baptism that has ever been able to be obeyed).

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- b. The only people who rejected John's baptism during this period were those who rejected the counsel of God.
  - 1. Luke 7:30 -- "But the Pharisees and lawyers rejected the counsel of God against themselves, being not baptized of him."
  - 4. Jesus did no baptizing during this period, water or otherwise. (John 4:2). Why not?
    - a. Most likely to keep his baptism separate from the one that man performs.
    - b. Indeed, the separation goes even further. Man performs water baptism on earth; Jesus performed baptism of the Holy Spirit and baptism in fire from Heaven.
    - c. When men are found baptizing people in the New Testament, they are always performing water baptism. Why? Because they can perform no other. There is no example anywhere of men performing any other baptism or being commanded to be baptized in any other way than in water. Holy Spirit baptism was a promise, not a command.
  - 5. The baptism of the Great Commission is also not the baptism in the Holy Spirit for the simple reason that the former is a command to be obeyed by man and the latter is a promise from Jesus that has already occurred. For more on this point, look below at our comments regarding the conversion of Cornelius.
- O. Fact #15: Jesus was baptized to fulfill all righteousness.
- 1. Why was Jesus baptized?
    - a. We know it was not for forgiveness of sins because Jesus was sinless. (Hebrews 4:15)
    - b. In insisting that John baptize him, Jesus stated the reason for his baptism: "And Jesus answering said unto him, Suffer it to be so now: for thus it becometh us to fulfill all righteousness. Then he suffered him." Matthew 3:15.
    - c. Being baptized to "fulfill all righteousness" involved at least three things.
      - 1. John was God's messenger sent to Israel to prepare the way for Jesus. It was God's will that Jews be baptized of John.

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Jesus had no sins to remit by baptism, but it would have been sin for him to disobey the command.

- 2. While Jesus had no sin, Isaiah 53:12 tells us, “he was numbered with the transgressors; and he bare the sin of many.” G. Campbell Morgan, in his commentary on Matthew 3:15 wrote, “There, in baptism as in incarnation and birth, and finally and for consummation, in the mystery of His Passion, we see the King identifying Himself with the people over whom He is to reign, in the fact of their deepest need, and direst failure.”
- 3. God was pleased with Jesus’ obedience: “And Jesus, when he was baptized, went up straightway out of the water: and, lo, the heavens were opened unto him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove, and lighting upon him: And lo a voice from heaven, saying, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.” Matthew 3:16-17.

### • III. Arguments Against the Essentiality of Baptism (and Why They are Wrong)

#### • A. History of the Controversy

- 1. Most denominations promote the theory that baptism is simply a sign or a symbol of the salvation that one has previously received through faith alone. That is, they argue that if you believe and are saved, then you will be baptized, even though Jesus said that if you believe and are baptized, then you will be saved.
- 2. This view, as with most departures from the word of God, is a fairly recent innovation.
- 3. The understanding that baptism is the point in time at which God bestows salvation was the nearly unanimous view in Christendom for about 1500 years. It was a consensus shared by the early church fathers, Catholic theologians of the Middle Ages, and even Martin Luther.
- 4. The other view was invented by Huldreich Zwingli in the 1520's. You may not have heard of him, but you have heard of his most famous follower: John Calvin. It was through Calvin's influence that this false view spread to most modern denominations.

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- B. Argument #1: Baptism is a work, and we are not saved by works.
  - 1. I think we can all agree that no act of obedience has any merit in and of itself. No one will ever be able to earn his own salvation. Salvation is a gift from God. The power to save man from sin is in the blood of Christ. We are saved by the grace of God. (Luke 17:10; Romans 4:1-6; Romans 5:15-18)
  - a. I have never met anyone who believes that baptism is essential yet who disagrees with any of those statements, yet we are often accused of such. Saying that baptism is essential to our salvation and saying that our salvation is a free gift are not contradictory!
  - 2. There is no question that salvation is by grace through faith (Titus 2:11-12; Romans 5:1). The question is not whether we are saved by grace through faith, but when does that occur.
    - a. At what point are we transferred from the kingdom of darkness into the kingdom of light? (Colossians 1:13) There must be a moment in time when that transfer occurs -- when is it?
    - b. Romans 6:4 tells us that our life's walk in faith begins at our baptism. ("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.")
    - c. Galatians 3:27 tells us that the number of people who have put on Christ is precisely equal to the number of people who have been baptized. ("For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ.") How could that be true if people could be saved apart from baptism? Or perhaps there are some who believe we can be saved without putting on Christ?
  - 3. A question we often hear is: "How can water baptism, an act of man, be essential to salvation when the Bible says we are saved by faith apart from works?"
    - a. They generally cite Ephesians 2:8-9 ("For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast.")

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- b. To respond we need to consider two questions: What is saving faith? Is baptism a part of the saving faith or is baptism a work?
- 4. What is the saving faith?
  - a. Two verses often pitted against each other are found in James and in Romans:
    - 1. James 2:24 -- "Ye see then how that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only."
    - 2. Romans 3:28 -- "Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law." (And Romans 4:4 -- "Now to him that worketh is the reward not reckoned of grace, but of debt.")
  - b. Our goal is not to decide whether Paul was right or James was right because we know they were both right. Our goal is to determine what they were both telling us about the one saving faith that was "once delivered unto the saints." (Jude 3)
  - c. Both James and Paul understood that faith requires action. Paul understood that the faith that saves is the faith that obeys. In fact he referred to the "obedience of faith" at the beginning (1:5) and the end (16:26) of Romans.
  - d. James likewise was not saying that faith does not save, but was instead telling us what kind of faith saves. He was not adding anything to faith (as in faith plus works) but was telling us what a saving faith must include.
  - e. James was dealing with people who defined faith precisely the same way that the Faith Only advocates do today. Only believe, they say. And James reminds them that the devils believe and tremble! (James 2:19) And James 2:14 asks "What doth it profit, my brethren, though a man say he hath faith, and have not works? can faith save him?"
  - f. When we study what the Bible says on the subject on faith, we find that a saving faith has two ingredients: trust and obedience. A faith that lacks either one is not a saving faith, but is a dead faith.
  - g. Hebrews 11:30 tells us that "by faith, the walls of Jericho fell down." When did those walls fall down? After the people obeyed the command of God. They may have believed with all

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their heart that those walls would fall down after they marched around the city as God commanded, but the walls did not fall down just because they believed they would.

- 5. Is baptism a part of the saving faith or is baptism a work?
  - a. Have you ever met anyone who believes they earned their redemption by being baptized? Would that even make sense seeing that baptism is not something you do but rather is something that is done to you? We hear (active), we believe (active), we repent (active), we confess (active), and we are baptized (passive)? And they call baptism a work!? (John 6:29 refers to belief as a work, but baptism is never called a work in the Bible. In fact, Titus 3:4-7 (quoted below) tells us just the opposite!)
  - b. Have you ever seen anyone come up out of the waters of baptism singing "How Great I Am"? Or instead have you seen people rejoicing as did the Eunuch in Acts 8:39?
  - c. Noah labored 100 years to save his household and no one that we know of accused him of trying to earn his salvation by obeying God and building the ark. Hebrews 11:7 tells us that Noah built that ark by faith. Did he earn his salvation by building that ark? Would he have been saved had he not built that ark?
    - 1. Hebrews 11:7 tells us that 100 years of ark building was faith. How then can anyone seriously label 5 seconds of obedience in baptism a meritorious work?
  - d. Those who believe they are saved from their sins at their baptism believe so because the Lord said so, and they take him at his word. That is called trust, not self righteousness.
  - e. Isn't this what Paul said in Titus 3:4-7?
    - 1. But after that the kindness and love of God our Saviour toward man appeared, Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost; Which he shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Saviour; That being justified by his grace, we should be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life.
    - 2. Notice that Paul does not link baptism to our works of righteousness (which do not save) but to the mercy of God (which does save).

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- C. Argument #2: Baptism today is like circumcision in the Old Testament, and Abraham was justified by faith prior to his circumcision.
  - 1. Some argue that baptism in the New Testament parallels circumcision in the Old Testament. They then point to Romans 4:11 ("And [Abraham] received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness of the faith which he had while still uncircumcised.") in an effort to show that we are saved prior to our baptism.
  - 2. How are baptism and circumcision related?
    - a. Descendants of Abraham and Jacob were not brought into the Old Covenant by circumcision; they were physically born into that covenant, and they were circumcised as a sign of their membership in that covenant.
      - 1. (Genesis 17:11) "and you shall be circumcised in the flesh of your foreskins, and it shall be a sign of the covenant between Me and you."
    - b. Those who failed to be circumcised were said to have broken the covenant.
      - 1. (Genesis 17:14) "And the uncircumcised male child, who is not circumcised in the flesh of his foreskin, that person shall be cut off from his people; he has broken My covenant."
    - c. Thus, they were circumcised to remain under the covenant, not to enter the covenant.
    - d. In this sense, our baptism does not parallel circumcision under the Old Covenant, but rather parallels physical birth under the Old Covenant. Just as a Jew was physically born into the Old Covenant, we are spiritually born again into the New Covenant when we are baptized for the remission of our sins.
  - 3. But, you ask, what about Colossians 2:11-13?
    - a. "In Him you were also circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, by putting off the body of the sins of the flesh, by the circumcision of Christ, 12 buried with Him in baptism, in which you also were raised with Him through

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faith in the working of God, who raised Him from the dead.  
13 And you, being dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He has made alive together with Him, having forgiven you all trespasses."

- b. That passage compares baptism with circumcision to show that our baptism is the moment when sins are put away. (We know this also from Acts 22:16 ("Arise and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on the name of the Lord."))
  - c. Baptism in the New Covenant corresponds to two events in the Old Covenant. First, it corresponds to physical birth in the Old Covenant because we enter the New Covenant at our baptism. Second, it corresponds to circumcision because we put off the old man at our baptism.
  - 4. Both of these comparisons can be pushed to false extremes. The comparison with physical birth does not justify infant baptism. Neither does the comparison with circumcision suggest that we enter the New Covenant before our baptism. The source of that comparison in Colossians 2 shows that we put off the old man at the moment of our baptism – not before.
- D. Argument #3: Acts 2:38 really means we are baptized "because of" the remission of sins.
- 1. Some argue that Acts 2:38, Mark 1:4, and Luke 3:3 should read "because of the remission of sins" rather than "for the remission of sin." That argument makes no sense grammatically or contextually.
  - a. Some argue that the "for" in Acts 2:38 should be read as it would on a wanted poster -- "Wanted for murder" (i.e., wanted because of murder rather than wanted in order to commit murder).
  - b. A. T. Robertson: "One will decide the use here according as he believes that baptism is essential to the remission of sins or not." He has that completely backwards, and his methodology explains why he mistranslates the verse.
  - c. The English may have this ambiguity about the meaning of "for," but there is no ambiguity in the underlying Greek.
- 2. The Greek word "eis," which is translated "for, into, unto, etc." always means with a view to or toward and never means because

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of. It always takes the accusative case, which is the case of motion towards.

- a. Matthew 26:28 -- "For this is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins."
- b. Romans 10:10 -- "With the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation."
- 3. Some point to Matthew 12:41, which says "The men of Nineveh shall rise in judgment with this generation, and shall condemn it: because they repented at ["eis"] the preaching of Jonas."
  - a. First, notice that while the word "because" appears in Matthew 12:41, that is not where the Greek word "eis" is used in that verse. Instead, "eis" is translated "at" in that verse.
  - b. Did they repent because of the preaching or with a view toward the preaching?
  - c. The Bible tells us they repented with a view toward the preaching of Noah and the terrible destruction that he foretold and that they successfully avoided that fate by their repentance.
- 4. Also, Acts 2:38 is Peter's answer to the question in verse 37, "What must we do?" His listeners realized they were sinful, and they wanted to know what they had to do to get right with God. Peter's answer makes the most sense as an answer to that question -- what they must do to be saved.
  - a. Peter told them to repent and be baptized for the remission of their sins.
  - b. How would the answer "Repent and be baptized because your sins have been forgiven" make any sense at all in response to the question in verse 37?
- E. Argument #4: John 3:16 is the gospel in miniature, and it says nothing about baptism.
  - 1. Some point to the absence of the word "baptism" in passages such as John 3:16, Acts 16:31, Acts 2:21, and Romans 10:13 and argue that this absence means that baptism is not necessary.

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- a. John 3:16 -- "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life."
- b. Acts 16:31 -- "And they said, Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house."
- c. Acts 2:21 -- "And it shall come to pass, that whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved."
- d. Romans 10:13 -- "For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved."
- 2. First, we should pause to note the irony of those who get their understanding of baptism from verses that do not mention the word while ignoring the many verses that do mention the word!
- 3. Also, if our understanding of God's plan of salvation is to be taken from a single verse lifted out of context, then why not use Acts 27:31?
  - a. "Paul said to the centurion and to the soldiers, Except these abide in the ship, ye cannot be saved."
  - b. That verse would appear to indicate we are saved by remaining dry!
- 4. We must take into account the spiritual condition of those who were being told how to be saved.
  - a. With regard to the Philippian jailer in Acts 16:31, as far as Scripture reveals, this was the first time that the gospel had been preached on the continent of Europe. The jailer was most likely one who had never heard either what he needed to do to be saved or about Jesus. In fact, it is most likely that when he asked what he needed to do to be saved he was asking about his physical life, and not is spiritual life. Paul set a good example of turning an early question into a heavenly inquiry.
  - b. Those who had not heard enough to believe, were told to believe (Acts 16:31). That, of course, is the first step. But James very clearly tells us that it is not the final step.
  - c. Also, Acts 2:21 and Romans 10:13 tell us we must call on the name of the Lord, but Acts 22:16 tells us how we do that --- in water baptism.

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- 5. We must also consider the context of these passages, and John 3:16 is a prime example.
  - a. The belief in John 3:16 includes obedience. Consider the immediate context in John 3:14-15 ("And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up: That whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life.")
  - b. When we turn to Numbers 21:9 to see what this belief involved, we find that unless the people looked at the serpent they would not be saved. Did they earn their salvation by looking? Hardly. But was looking required? Absolutely. The word "believe" in John is in place of the word "look" in Numbers.
  - c. I doubt that anyone in those days was preaching that all you had to do was believe! "What do you mean I have to look to be saved? All I have to do is believe because if I looked then that would be a meritorious work by which I would be trying to earn my salvation." Would that have made any sense then? Does it make any more sense today when people say it about baptism?
- 6. The logical conclusion of those who believe that baptism is a work must be that man need do nothing to be saved. Because if man must do something, then under their definition that man is being saved by works. But how then do they explain the answer in the Bible to the question "What shall we do" in Acts 2:37? Their answer today would be "Nothing," but Peter's answer in Acts 2:38 was very different.

- F. Argument #5: The thief on the cross was saved without being baptized.
  - 1. Before we examine this issue, I think we can all agree that this was an unusual situation.
    - a. The thief was in no position to be baptized even if had wanted to or needed to. Those who want to stake their eternal destiny on the example of this thief should consider this point very carefully.
    - b. As an aside, you sometimes hear people argue about what would happen if someone decided to be baptized, but was killed on their way to the church. What would happen to them? Again, this is an unusual condition, and it would be

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dangerous to stake one's eternal destiny on such a situation -- particularly when it did not apply to the person asking the question! Also, we know that for each person it will someday be too late to obey the gospel, either because of that person's death or because Jesus comes again. We can sit around all day and think up hypotheticals about which God will judge, but the words of Ananias apply to every man -- "And now why tarriest thou? arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord." (Acts 22:16)

- 2. We should also note that there is much more evidence that the thief was baptized than that he was not.
  - a. Many assume that he was not baptized, but that assumption is baseless. The Bible certainly does not say that the thief was unbaptized.
  - b. We should note the widespread coverage and acceptance of John's baptism.
    - 1. Acts 13:23-25 --- "to all the people of Israel"
    - 2. Mark 1:4-5 --- "all the land of Judea"
    - 3. Matthew 3:5-6 --- "Jerusalem, all Judea, and all the region round about Jordan"
    - 4. Luke 3:7 --- multitude
    - 5. John 4:1 --- Jesus made and baptized more disciples than John
  - c. We should observe how informed the thief was.
    - 1. Luke 23:42 tells us he knew about the kingdom.
    - 2. He knew the kingdom was yet to come.
    - 3. He knew he needed Christ.
  - d. Although the Bible is silent on the issue, the evidence weighs in favor of the thief having been baptized under the baptism of John.
  - e. It is not enough, however, to establish that the assumption that the thief on the cross is more likely than not incorrect because both conclusions (that he was or was not baptized) are assumptions. Even if the circumstantial evidence for the conclusion that the thief was baptized is based on undisputed

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Biblical facts, it is still an assumption and is not necessarily so. Thus, whether the thief on the cross was saved without being baptized remains a valid question.

- 3. But whether he was or was not baptized, the promises made by Jesus to the thief were made before Jesus died, and the thief died before the first gospel sermon in Acts 2. No one today is similarly situated with this thief!
- 4. We know that Jesus had the power on Earth to forgive sins.
  - a. Mark 2:10 -- "But that ye may know that the Son of man hath power on earth to forgive sins."
  - b. See also Matthew 9:6 and Luke 5:24.
  - c. These statements, including the one to this thief, were all made prior to the death of the testator.
  - d. Hebrews 9:16 -- "For where a testament is, there must also of necessity be the death of the testator."
  - e. While Jesus was alive, even on the cross, the Mosaic Code was in effect. It became ineffective after his death. (Romans 7:1-7)
  - f. Thus, the thief survived the Mosaic Code only briefly (John 19:31-33) and received his forgiveness prior to the death of Jesus and the effectiveness of the New Covenant (Hebrews 9:15-20).
- 5. Here is a question you may not have considered: Why did Jesus forgive the thief from the cross but not forgive those who crucified him from the cross? Instead, he asked God to forgive them. Why?
  - a. Because those at the foot of the cross were not about to die. Instead, they would still be alive after his ascension and would be alive to hear the first gospel sermon, at which time Peter charged them with killing the Son of God. Jesus' prayer from the cross on their behalf was answered in Acts 2 when they heard and obeyed the gospel.

### • G. Argument #6: Cornelius was saved prior to being baptized.

- 1. To respond to this argument, we need to consider Holy Spirit baptism. Earlier we saw that from Matthew 3:11 that the baptism in the Holy Spirit was different from the baptism of John and was something Christ would do. We also saw that it

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was something that occurred on the Day of Pentecost. (See the discussion of these points earlier in these notes.)

- 2. Holy Spirit baptism was performed on the Day of Pentecost in Acts 2, and after that it was either performed once again or it was never performed again (depending on how we understand the events involving Cornelius found in Acts 10-11).
- 3. The terms "pouring forth" or "baptizing in" the Spirit do not occur after Pentecost except in the past tense or the perfect tense.
  - a. Aside: Some argue that the use of the phrase "pouring out" of the Spirit in Acts 2:17 to denote the baptism in the Holy Spirit sanctions a mode of baptism in which water is poured on a person as opposed to immersion in water. But the pouring out of the Spirit was in sufficient quantity to immerse the world. How do we know that? Because Jesus had promised an immersion in the Holy Spirit.
- 4. Some assert that Holy Spirit baptism occurred a second time in Acts 10-11 when Peter preached the gospel to Cornelius and came to fully understand that the gospel was for all -- Jew and Gentile alike.
- 5. I have so taught in the past, but after studying for this lesson, it now seems very likely to me that the baptism in the Spirit and the baptism in fire promised by Jesus were each one time events -- one occurring at Pentecost and the other in AD 70 with the destruction of Jerusalem.
- 6. Here are the two verses in Acts 10-11 most pertinent to our discussion here:
  - a. Acts 10:44-45 While Peter yet spake these words, the Holy Ghost fell on all them which heard the word. And they of the circumcision which believed were astonished, as many as came with Peter, because that on the Gentiles also was poured out the gift of the Holy Ghost.
  - b. We should note that this event preceded the water baptism in Acts 10:47-48 -- "Can any man forbid water, that these should not be baptized, which have received the Holy Ghost as well as we? And he commanded them to be baptized in the name of the Lord. Then prayed they him to tarry certain days."

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- 7. Let's back up to Acts 2 and note an important fact about the baptism in the Spirit in that chapter:
  - a. It was for all --- Acts 2:17 "And it shall come to pass in the last days, saith God, I will pour out of my Spirit upon all flesh." (quoting Joel 2)
- 8. Now Acts 10:44 says that the Holy Spirit "fell" on Cornelius and his household, and verse 45 says that the Jewish believers were astonished because the gift of the Holy Ghost was poured out on the Gentiles.
- 9. Does the "pouring out" in verse 45 refer to the "falling on" in verse 44?
  - a. Many say yes, and if so then this is the second and final example of a baptism in the Holy Spirit in the New Testament. And that view may very well be correct. If it is, then the baptism in the Holy Spirit was repeated for the express purpose of convincing Peter that the gospel was for all flesh.
  - b. But the answer may very well be no. Instead, the "pouring out" in verse 45 may refer all the way back to the original pouring out in Acts 2 that was prophesied in Joel, that was promised by Jesus, and that happened on Pentecost.
  - c. Supporting this latter view is that "was poured" in verse 45 is in the perfect tense, which in Greek denotes a past completed action that results in a continued state of being. In other words, the action of pouring had been completed in the past but the results were continuing.
  - d. If Luke had wanted to say that the Spirit had just been poured out he could have used a simple past tense as he did in Acts 2:33 "having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost"
  - e. Another point in favor of the latter view is that verse 45 says that the Spirit has been poured out on the Gentiles and not just on Cornelius and his household. Peter seems to have finally realized that the "all flesh" in Joel 2 and in Acts 2 included both Jew and Gentile --- and that happened in Acts 2 not in Acts 10, even though Peter did not realize it until Acts 10.
- 10. Why were the Jewish believers astonished?

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- a. Certainly they were astonished because they realized that the "all flesh" in Acts 2 included Gentiles, but they were no doubt also astonished that the Holy Spirit fell on Cornelius prior to his being saved.
  - b. How do we know that Cornelius was not yet saved? When Acts 10 begins we meet Cornelius who, although a devout man, was not right with God. (10:2) He was told to send for Peter, who would tell him what he needed to do. (10:6; 11:14) The Holy Spirit fell on Cornelius "as [Peter] began to speak." (11:15) That is, Peter had not yet had an opportunity to tell Cornelius what he needed to do to be saved. When Peter finally did proclaim that message, he told Cornelius to be baptized in water. (10:47-48)
  - c. Why then did the Spirit fall on Cornelius? Peter tells us in 11:16. The Spirit fell on Cornelius not for the sake of Cornelius but for the sake of Peter -- so that Peter would remember the promise of Christ in Matthew 3:11 and the events of Acts 2 (referred to as "at the beginning" in 11:15). It was a sign for Peter and those with Peter, all of whom were astonished at the sign.
- 11. One final issue is what is meant by the "gift" in 11:17.
- a. This "gift" cannot be the promised gift in Acts 2:38 because that gift follows baptism and Cornelius had not yet been baptized.
  - b. The gift of the Holy Spirit is given in one sense to everyone, but in another sense it is given only to those who obey the gospel.
  - c. We see this very distinction in Acts 2 where the Holy Spirit is poured out on "all flesh" but only those who obey the gospel in Acts 2:38 will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. In Acts 2:17 God gave the gift of the Holy Spirit to all flesh, but in Acts 2:38 Peter told us how we can receive that gift. It is the former sense that Peter refers to in 11:17. Cornelius received it in the latter sense when he was baptized in 10:47-48.
  - d. We see the same distinction with the gift of God's son. John 3:16 tells us that God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten son -- the gift was to all. But the latter half of John 3:16 tells us that not all will receive that gift.

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- H. Argument #7: Mark 16:16 does not say that those who are not baptized are lost.
  - 1. Mark 16:16 -- "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned."
  - a. Some argue that if baptism were really essential then Jesus would have said "he that believeth not and is baptized not shall be damned."
  - b. The first issue I have with that argument is that the way it is typically phrase it is logically flawed right from the start. The opposite of "believing and being baptized" is not "not believing AND not being baptized" but rather is "not believing OR not being baptized."
  - c. If both belief and baptism are essential, then you are lost if you fail to do either one.
  - d. Thus, one should argue that if baptism were really essential then Jesus would have said "he that believeth not OR is baptized not shall be damned."
- 2. This is a weak argument even with this initial correction, but we will consider it because it is so common.
  - a. "If you pick up a Bible, open it, read Matthew, read Mark, read Luke, and read John, then you will have read the gospels. If you do not pick up a Bible, then you will not have read the gospels."
  - b. Now is that second part understandable and true, or do I need instead to say, "If you don't pick up a Bible, or if you don't open it, or if you don't read Matthew, or if you don't read Mark, or if you don't read Luke, or if you don't read John, then you will not have read the gospels"?
  - c. Do you see what I mean when I say this is a weak argument?
- 3. Jesus has told us what will happen if we believe and are baptized. Do you really want to show up on Judgment Day and complain to Jesus that he didn't tell us what would happen if we did not believe or were not baptized? I think that on that Day two things will happen: Jesus will disagree that he never told you, and He will tell you again.

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- I. Argument #8: Paul said in 1 Corinthians 1:17 that Christ did not send him to baptize, but to preach the gospel.
  - 1. In 1 Corinthians 1:17, Paul wrote, "For Christ sent me not to baptize, but to preach the gospel."
  - 2. To understand this verse we must consider the context and determine why Paul turned his attention to baptism in a discussion involving divisions in the church.
  - 3. The commentators almost all agree that a driving force behind the factions must have been the identity of the person who baptized them.
    - a. Those baptized by Paul no doubt were filled with great pride, and it likely deflated them somewhat to discover that Paul had no recollection of the event!
    - b. There must have been other additional sources of the division, but this must have been a major factor.
  - 4. For Christ sent me not to baptize.
    - a. We must read that verse in context. The issue here is not whether one must be baptized -- indeed, Paul is operating under the assumption that they ALL had been baptized. The issue is whether it is important WHO baptized you.
    - b. Do I have a greater status in the church because I was baptized by Brother So and So? The answer is, of course, no -- and that is the point Paul is making here.
    - c. Christ did not send him to physically walk into the water and perform the physical act of baptism -- but that does not mean that Christ did not send him to preach baptism because we know in fact that Christ did that very thing. (Matthew 28:19)
  - 5. Paul cannot possibly be contrasting baptism with preaching the gospel because it is not possible to preach the gospel without also preaching baptism.
    - a. Philip, for example, preached Jesus to the Ethiopian Eunuch in Acts 8:35, and in the very next verse the Eunuch wanted to be baptized.
    - b. The very first gospel sermon in Acts 2 ended with Peter telling his listeners to be baptized for the remission of their sins.

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- c. Paul's very own sins had been washed away at his baptism. (Acts 22:16)
- 6. William Barclay makes some good points on this verse:
  - a. "It is not to be thought that Paul is belittling baptism. ... The point is this baptism was into the name of Jesus. That phrase in Greek implies the closest possible connection. To give money into a man's name was to pay it into his account. To sell a slave into a man's name was to give that slave into his undisputed possession. A soldier swore loyalty into the name of Caesar; he belonged absolutely to the Emperor. Into the name of implied utter possession. ... All that Paul is saying is, "I am glad that I was so busy preaching, because if I had baptized it would have given some of you the excuse to say that you were baptized into my possession instead of into Christ's." He is not making little of baptism; he is simply glad that no act of his could be misconstrued as annexing men for himself and not for Christ."
- J. Argument #9: How can getting wet make any difference to our eternal destiny? It just doesn't make any sense to me.
  - 1. Naaman nearly made the same mistake in 2 Kings 5:1-18. (Read those verses if you are not already familiar with the story.)
  - 2. Despite what countless denominational commentators have had to say about these verses, the comparisons between these events and baptism are striking.
    - a. Both involve water. (Acts 8:36)
    - b. Both involve immersion in water. (Acts 8:38)
    - c. Both involve cleansing. (Acts 22:16)
    - d. Both involve being made new. (Romans 6:4)  
Both involve becoming like a little child. (Matthew 18:3)
    - e. Both involve obedience to God's command. (Acts 2:38)
  - 3. As we know, God has a plan of salvation. But Naaman also had a plan of salvation. Let's take a look at Naaman's Plan of Salvation.
    - a. Naaman's plan involves constant excitement. He thought Elisha should come out, wave his hand all around, and

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dramatically call on the name of the Lord. God's plan was much too dull for Naaman.

- b. Naaman's plan involves personal convenience. There were a lot of rivers back home in Syria. God's plan was much too inconvenient.
  - c. Under Naaman's plan, if you get your feelings hurt then you don't have to do anything at all. If one of God's servants hurts your feelings, then you should just get really mad and go away.
  - d. Under Naaman's plan, you are in charge of determining what you need to do to be saved. If what you are commanded to do by God doesn't make sense to you or isn't what you expect, then you can just ignore it and do what you want to do instead.
  - e. Under Naaman's plan, just showing up is all you really need to do. Was he really supposed to do something else?
  - f. Under Naaman's plan, you get preferential treatment if you are rich and powerful.
  - g. Under Naaman's plan, partial obedience is okay. After all, Naaman was willing to wash himself in a river, just not the river that Elisha had in mind.
- 4. And what would have been the result had Naaman persisted in following his own plan?
    - a. He would have died in his leprosy, just as those who today follow their own plan with regard to the Gospel will die in their sins.
  - 5. The Old Testament is here for our instruction, and we would be hard pressed to find a more instructive story than that of Naaman the leper.
  - 6. Finally, it is interesting to notice that there are some misconceptions around today that not even Naaman fell for!
    - a. Naaman knew that belief alone was not enough. He believed the prophet could cure him even when he was back in Syria. (Otherwise, why did he travel this great distance.) But he knew belief alone was not enough. He never questioned that some action would be required either on his part or Elisha's part.

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- b. Naaman knew that he had not been "predestined" to die of leprosy without regard to any action on his part. While it was true that he had leprosy, Naaman understood that his condition need not be permanent. He believed he could be healed.
- c. Naaman understood that he had not been a leper from his birth. In fact, what he wanted and eventually obtained was to return to the condition he was in at his physical birth.
- d. Naaman most likely understood that he could catch leprosy again if he came in contact with lepers. He no doubt was very careful after his cleansing to avoid catching that terrible disease again.
- e. Finally, Naaman's gratitude shows us that he did not believe he had earned his cleansing

- K. Argument #10: All you need to do to be saved is just accept the Lord Jesus Christ as your personal savior, make him Lord of your life, and pray the sinner's prayer.
  - 1. "Wait! Salvation by works! Prayer is a work, and we are not saved by works!"
    - a. Why don't we ever hear that? It seems some in the denominational world are a bit inconsistent on the issue of works. After all, prayer is something we do whereas baptism is something that is done to us. Wouldn't it seem that prayer is more of a work than baptism?
  - 2. And look at Acts 2:36.
    - a. Did Peter say that they needed to make Jesus Lord of their life? No. He told them that Jesus was already Lord of their life. What they needed to do was to trust in him and obey him.
    - b. After all, Jesus is King of kings and Lord of lords (as 1 Timothy 6:15 tells us he is), then how could it be that he is not my king and my lord without regard to whether I obey him? I obey him because he is King and Lord, not to make him King and Lord!

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- 3. The so-called "Sinner's Prayer" that you hear so much about today from denominational preachers does not appear anywhere in the Bible.
  - a. Indeed, nowhere in the Bible was anyone ever told to pray the "Sinner's Prayer" to be saved.
    - 1. Every example of conversion in the book of Acts involved baptism and not one involved anything called the "sinner's prayer." Should that tell us something? Does anyone really think that men can just rewrite God's plan of salvation and then expect to be right with him on judgment day?
  - b. By contrast, there are numerous examples showing that prayer alone does not save.
  - c. Saul, for example, prayed following his meeting with Jesus on the road to Damascus (Acts 9:11), but Saul was still in his sins when Ananias met him three days later (Acts 22:16).
  - d. Cornelius prayed to God always, and yet there was something else he needed to do to be saved (Acts 10:2, 6, 33, 48).
  - e. If prayer alone did not save Saul or Cornelius, it will not save you either. You must obey the gospel.

### • IV. Conclusion

- A. If you have not been baptized for the remission of your sins, then:
  - 1. You are not in Christ. (Romans 6:3)
  - 2. You have not put on Christ. (Galatians 3:27)
  - 3. You have not been added to the Lord's church. (1 Corinthians 12:13, 27-28)
  - 4. You are not walking in newness of life. (Romans 6:4)
  - 5. You are still in your sins. You have not been washed. (Acts 22:16)
- B. And note that the command is to be baptized "for the remission of sins."
  - 1. We must be immersed for the right reason.

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- 2. Earlier we said that the issue was not whether we are saved by grace through faith, but when that occurs. Some might then wonder whether this issue is really that important. Why does it matter when salvation occurs so long as it occurs?
  - 3. But that is the real issue -- does it occur if one is never baptized for the remission of sins? To be baptized for the remission of sins, you must understand when you are being saved.
  - 4. If when you were baptized you thought your sins had already been forgiven, then you were not baptized for the remission of your sins. Instead, all that happened to you was that you got wet.
- C. Despite all that the Bible says on the subject of baptism, many will never believe the truth on that subject but will instead go to their graves and die in their sin after a lifetime of refusing to obey the gospel and be baptized for the remission of their sins. Why?
- 1. Satan delights in twisting the commands of God.
  - 2. God told Eve that she would surely die if she ate of the fruit, and Satan told her she would not surely die.
  - 3. Jesus tells us that we will be saved if we believe and are baptized. Satan tells us that all we need to believe. And Satan knows all about belief, because he believes and trembles.
  - 4. But there is no need for us to tremble if we obey the gospel --- and that gospel has not changed since the first day it was proclaimed.
  - 5. A good illustration of modern attitudes is found in *The Standard Manual For Baptist Churches* by Edward T. Hiscox, p. 22:
    - a. "It is most likely that in the Apostolic age when there was by 'one Lord, one faith, and one baptism,' and no differing denomination existed, that baptism of a convert by that very act constituted him a member of the church, and at once endowed him with all the rights and privileges of full membership. In that sense, 'baptism was the door into the church.' Now is it different. . . ."
    - b. A good question is, "By what right and by whose authority is it different?" It cannot be by the authority of Scripture because

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Scripture reads the same now as it did in the first century. It must, therefore, be by the authority of man.

- 6. Matthew 28:18-20 --- " And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world. Amen.
- 7. Acts 2:36-38 --- Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ. Now when they heard this, they were pricked in their heart, and said unto Peter and to the rest of the apostles, Men and brethren, what shall we do? Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and 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 Ghost.

### • V. All Verses in the Bible That Include Some Form of the Word "Baptism"

#### • A. In the Gospels:

- 1. Matthew 3:1 In those days came John the Baptist, preaching in the wilderness of Judaea,
- 2. Matthew 3:6 And were baptized of him in Jordan, confessing their sins.
- 3. Matthew 3:7 But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees come to his baptism, he said unto them, O generation of vipers, who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come?
- 4. Matthew 3:11 I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance: but he that cometh after me is mightier than I, whose shoes I am not worthy to bear: he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost, and with fire:
- 5. Matthew 3:13 Then cometh Jesus from Galilee to Jordan unto John, to be baptized of him.

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- 6. Matthew 3:14 But John forbad him, saying, I have need to be baptized of thee, and comest thou to me?
- 7. Matthew 3:16 And Jesus, when he was baptized, went up straightway out of the water: and, lo, the heavens were opened unto him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove, and lighting upon him:
- 8. Matthew 11:11 Verily I say unto you, Among them that are born of women there hath not risen a greater than John the Baptist: notwithstanding he that is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he.
- 9. Matthew 11:12 And from the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force.
- 10. Matthew 14:2 And said unto his servants, This is John the Baptist; he is risen from the dead; and therefore mighty works do shew forth themselves in him.
- 11. Matthew 14:8 And she, being before instructed of her mother, said, Give me here John Baptist's head in a charger.
- 12. Matthew 16:14 And they said, Some say that thou art John the Baptist: some, Elias; and others, Jeremias, or one of the prophets.
- 13. Matthew 17:13 Then the disciples understood that he spake unto them of John the Baptist.
- 14. Matthew 20:22 But Jesus answered and said, Ye know not what ye ask. Are ye able to drink of the cup that I shall drink of, and to be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with? They say unto him, We are able.

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- 15. Matthew 20:23 And he saith unto them, Ye shall drink indeed of my cup, and be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with: but to sit on my right hand, and on my left, is not mine to give, but it shall be given to them for whom it is prepared of my Father.
- 16. Matthew 21:25 The baptism of John, whence was it? from heaven, or of men? And they reasoned with themselves, saying, If we shall say, From heaven; he will say unto us, Why did ye not then believe him?
- 17. Matthew 28:19 Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost:
- 18. Mark 1:4 John did baptize in the wilderness, and preach the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins.
- 19. Mark 1:5 And there went out unto him all the land of Judaea, and they of Jerusalem, and were all baptized of him in the river of Jordan, confessing their sins.
- 20. Mark 1:8 I indeed have baptized you with water: but he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost.
- 21. Mark 1:9 And it came to pass in those days, that Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee, and was baptized of John in Jordan.
- 22. Mark 6:14 And king Herod heard of him; (for his name was spread abroad:) and he said, That John the Baptist was risen from the dead, and therefore mighty works do shew forth themselves in him.
- 23. Mark 6:24 And she went forth, and said unto her mother, What shall I ask? And she said, The head of John the Baptist.

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- 24. Mark 6:25 And she came in straightway with haste unto the king, and asked, saying, I will that thou give me by and by in a charger the head of John the Baptist.
- 25. Mark 8:28 And they answered, John the Baptist: but some say, Elias; and others, One of the prophets.
- 26. Mark 10:38 But Jesus said unto them, Ye know not what ye ask: can ye drink of the cup that I drink of? and be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with?
- 27. Mark 10:39 And they said unto him, We can. And Jesus said unto them, Ye shall indeed drink of the cup that I drink of; and with the baptism that I am baptized withal shall ye be baptized:
- 28. Mark 11:30 The baptism of John, was it from heaven, or of men? answer me.
- 29. Mark 16:16 He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned.
- 30. Luke 3:3 And he came into all the country about Jordan, preaching the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins;
- 31. Luke 3:7 Then said he to the multitude that came forth to be baptized of him, O generation of vipers, who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come?
- 32. Luke 3:12 Then came also publicans to be baptized, and said unto him, Master, what shall we do?
- 33. Luke 3:16 John answered, saying unto them all, I indeed baptize you with water; but one mightier than I cometh, the latchet of whose shoes I am not worthy to unloose: he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost and with fire:

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- 34. Luke 3:21 Now when all the people were baptized, it came to pass, that Jesus also being baptized, and praying, the heaven was opened,
- 35. Luke 7:20 When the men were come unto him, they said, John Baptist hath sent us unto thee, saying, Art thou he that should come? or look we for another?
- 36. Luke 7:28 For I say unto you, Among those that are born of women there is not a greater prophet than John the Baptist: but he that is least in the kingdom of God is greater than he.
- 37. Luke 7:29 And all the people that heard him, and the publicans, justified God, being baptized with the baptism of John.
- 38. Luke 7:30 But the Pharisees and lawyers rejected the counsel of God against themselves, being not baptized of him.
- 39. Luke 7:33 For John the Baptist came neither eating bread nor drinking wine; and ye say, He hath a devil.
- 40. Luke 9:19 They answering said, John the Baptist; but some say, Elias; and others say, that one of the old prophets is risen again.
- 41. Luke 12:50 But I have a baptism to be baptized with; and how am I straitened till it be accomplished!
- 42. Luke 20:4 The baptism of John, was it from heaven, or of men?
- 43. John 1:25 And they asked him, and said unto him, Why baptizest thou then, if thou be not that Christ, nor Elias, neither that prophet?
- 44. John 1:26 John answered them, saying, I baptize with water: but there standeth one among you, whom ye know not;

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- 45. John 1:28 These things were done in Bethabara beyond Jordan, where John was baptizing.
- 46. John 1:31 And I knew him not: but that he should be made manifest to Israel, therefore am I come baptizing with water.
- 47. John 1:33 And I knew him not: but he that sent me to baptize with water, the same said unto me, Upon whom thou shalt see the Spirit descending, and remaining on him, the same is he which baptizeth with the Holy Ghost.
- 48. John 3:22 After these things came Jesus and his disciples into the land of Judaea; and there he tarried with them, and baptized.
- 49. John 3:23 And John also was baptizing in Aenon near to Salim, because there was much water there: and they came, and were baptized.
- 50. John 3:26 And they came unto John, and said unto him, Rabbi, he that was with thee beyond Jordan, to whom thou barest witness, behold, the same baptizeth, and all men come to him.
- 51. John 4:1 When therefore the Lord knew how the Pharisees had heard that Jesus made and baptized more disciples than John,
- 52. John 4:2 (Though Jesus himself baptized not, but his disciples,)
- 53. John 10:40 And went away again beyond Jordan into the place where John at first baptized; and there he abode.

- B. In Acts:

- 1. Acts 1:5 For John truly baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost not many days hence.

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- 2. Acts 1:22 Beginning from the baptism of John, unto that same day that he was taken up from us, must one be ordained to be a witness with us of his resurrection.
- 3. Acts 2:38 Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and 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 Ghost.
- 4. Acts 2:41 Then they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls.
- 5. Acts 8:12 But when they believed Philip preaching the things concerning the kingdom of God, and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women.
- 6. Acts 8:13 Then Simon himself believed also: and when he was baptized, he continued with Philip, and wondered, beholding the miracles and signs which were done.
- 7. Acts 8:16 (For as yet he was fallen upon none of them: only they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus.)
- 8. Acts 8:36 And as they went on their way, they came unto a certain water: and the eunuch said, See, here is water; what doth hinder me to be baptized?
- 9. Acts 8:38 And he commanded the chariot to stand still: and they went down both into the water, both Philip and the eunuch; and he baptized him.
- 10. Acts 9:18 And immediately there fell from his eyes as it had been scales: and he received sight forthwith, and arose, and was baptized.
- 11. Acts 10:37 That word, I say, ye know, which was published throughout all Judaea, and began from Galilee, after the baptism which John preached;

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- 12. Acts 10:47 Can any man forbid water, that these should not be baptized, which have received the Holy Ghost as well as we?
- 13. Acts 10:48 And he commanded them to be baptized in the name of the Lord. Then prayed they him to tarry certain days.
- 14. Acts 11:16 Then remembered I the word of the Lord, how that he said, John indeed baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost.
- 15. Acts 13:24 When John had first preached before his coming the baptism of repentance to all the people of Israel.
- 16. Acts 16:15 And when she was baptized, and her household, she besought us, saying, If ye have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come into my house, and abide there. And she constrained us.
- 17. Acts 16:33 And he took them the same hour of the night, and washed their stripes; and was baptized, he and all his, straightway.
- 18. Acts 18:8 And Crispus, the chief ruler of the synagogue, believed on the Lord with all his house; and many of the Corinthians hearing believed, and were baptized.
- 19. Acts 18:25 This man was instructed in the way of the Lord; and being fervent in the spirit, he spake and taught diligently the things of the Lord, knowing only the baptism of John.
- 20. Acts 19:3 And he said unto them, Unto what then were ye baptized? And they said, Unto John's baptism.
- 21. Acts 19:4 Then said Paul, John verily baptized with the baptism of repentance, saying unto the people, that they should believe on him which should come after him, that is, on Christ Jesus.

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- 22. Acts 19:5 When they heard this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus.
- 23. Acts 22:16 And now why tarriest thou? arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord.

### • C. In the Epistles:

- 1. Romans 6:3 Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death?
- 2. Romans 6:4 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.
- 3. 1 Corinthians 1:13 Is Christ divided? was Paul crucified for you? or were ye baptized in the name of Paul?
- 4. 1 Corinthians 1:14 I thank God that I baptized none of you, but Crispus and Gaius;
- 5. 1 Corinthians 1:15 Lest any should say that I had baptized in mine own name.
- 6. 1 Corinthians 1:16 And I baptized also the household of Stephanas: besides, I know not whether I baptized any other.
- 7. 1 Corinthians 1:17 For Christ sent me not to baptize, but to preach the gospel: not with wisdom of words, lest the cross of Christ should be made of none effect.
- 8. 1 Corinthians 10:2 And were all baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea;
- 9. 1 Corinthians 12:13 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.

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- 10. 1 Corinthians 15:29 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?
- 11. Galatians 3:27 For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ.
- 12. Ephesians 4:5 One Lord, one faith, one baptism,
- 13. Colossians 2:12 Buried with him in baptism, wherein also ye are risen with him through the faith of the operation of God, who hath raised him from the dead.
- 14. Hebrews 6:2 Of the doctrine of baptisms, and of laying on of hands, and of resurrection of the dead, and of eternal judgment.
- 15. 1 Peter 3:21 The like figure whereunto even baptism doth also now save us (not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God,) by the resurrection of Jesus Christ: