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Water Baptism in the New Testament.

(2019)

Bible House of Grace contains an easy to read New and Old Testament commentary full of spiritual treasures and pearls, complete with an insightful resource guide illuminating God's love and grace.



Although I believe my aim is pure and God's will perfect this document is still the product of a human man, as to such I neither claim perfect knowledge or perfect understanding.

Water Baptism in the New Testament.

Topics.

- The voice of one crying in the wilderness.
 - John baptised with water, Jesus baptised with the Holy Spirit and fire.
 - Baptize all nations in the name of the father, the son and the Holy Spirit.
 - Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved.
 - Repent be baptized and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.
 - Those who have received the Holy Spirit were water baptised.
 - John's water baptism and water baptism into the Lord Jesus Christ.
 - Rise and be baptized and wash away your sins.
 - Water baptism into Christ is a baptism into his death.
 - All who are baptized into Christ have put on Christ.
 - Being buried with Christ in baptism you were raised with him through faith.
 - Water baptism corresponds to Noah's ark and the flood.
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NOTE: since the purpose and central focus of this study is upon water baptism it does not go into the detail of every aspect that may be contained in the Scriptures that are being viewed. For the meaning of Baptism see the title:

- The Definition of Water Baptism.
 - In Water Baptism (ON WEBSITE MENU).
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JOHN THE BAPTIST CAME PREACHING REPENT AND BE BAPTISED

- **Matthew 3:1-6:** In those days (in beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God) (Mark 1:1) John the Baptist came preaching in the wilderness of Judea, ²"REPENT, for the KINGDOM of HEAVEN is at HAND." ³For this is he who was spoken of by the prophet Isaiah when he said, "The voice of one crying in the wilderness: 'Prepare the way of the Lord; make his paths straight.'" ⁴Now John wore a garment of camel's hair and a leather belt around his waist, and his food was locusts and wild honey. ⁵Then Jerusalem and all Judea and all the region about the Jordan were going out to him, ⁶and they were BAPTIZED by him in the river Jordan, CONFESSING their SINS.
- Mark says: ⁴John appeared, BAPTIZING in the wilderness and proclaiming a BAPTISM of REPENTANCE for the FORGIVENESS of SINS. ⁵And all the country of Judea and all Jerusalem were going out to him and were being BAPTIZED by him in the river Jordan, CONFESSING their SINS (Mark 1:4-5)
- Luke says: John went into all the region around the Jordan, proclaiming a BAPTISM of REPENTANCE for the forgiveness of sins. ⁴As it is written in the book of the words of Isaiah the prophet, "The voice of one crying in the wilderness: Prepare the way of the Lord, make his paths straight (Luke 3:3-4).

The words, "Prepare the way of the Lord; make his paths straight," means get your life in order, turn from wicked and corrupt ways.

THE BEGINNING OF THE GOSPEL

The beginning of the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ is to:

- Repent for the forgiveness of sins.
- Confess your sins.
- Be water baptized.

REPENTANCE AND A CHANGE OF HEART

Repentance involves a change of heart, mind and passions it is about being sorry before God because of all the things we have done that are against the law of love toward others, against God's ways and that dishonor his name.

CONFESS YOUR SINS

Confess your sins does not mean tell every detail of what you have done wrong to someone, unless it is going to bring healing to yourself or to another, (i.e., admitting you have wronged them and asking forgiveness etc.). Confessing your sins carries the idea of acknowledging that you are a sinner before God, it is recognizing that no matter how good a person we might be before mankind we are not righteous before God and fall far short of His holiness. The religious leaders of Jesus generation (the Chief Priests, Pharisees and Scribes) believed they were righteous before God because they were descendants of Abraham and adhered to the ceremonial rites, holy days and kept all their Jewish religious customs and traditions. They were not only spiritually blind to their sin, but also full of prideful self-righteousness.

Confessing our sin means recognizing and acknowledging not only our outward sin, but also our inward sin before God it is about seeing our need for a Saviour.

- Be water baptised

Being water baptised is not about sprinkling a splash of water on a baby, (babies cannot repent or confess their sin) this type of water baptism is a man-made doctrine not a Bible teaching. Biblical water baptism is an act of humbleness and a declaration of committing one's life to follow Christ. These people went down into the River Jordan to be baptized. Certainly, even the tiniest amount of water would be acceptable to God if there is no water available (i.e., a desert) or if a person is lying on a hospital bed etc., since God sees the honesty of the heart. The following are four things that may prevent those seeking God from being water baptised when there is no shortage of water:

1. Doubt because they are still not sure they want to make such a commitment.
2. Lack of understanding water baptism and its meaning before God.
3. Having a heartfelt sense of being unworthy and therefore not ready (anyone who feels this way should know they are truly ready to be water baptised).
4. Pride, since being water baptised is also an act of humbleness. Everyone seeking God should know that pride is one of God's greatest enemies and will never be accepted as an excuse to refuse water baptism.

The people of Israel from generation to generation believed a Messiah the Christ was coming who would deliver them from all their enemies. It is certain the stories of Elizabeth's miracle birth of John and Mary's miracle birth of Jesus had spread around the region of Jerusalem and Judea and that the people had a certain expectation of their Messiah coming to God's chosen city Jerusalem so when word spread of this strange man in the wilderness telling people to prepare themselves for the coming of their Messiah they came out to hear what John had to say.

THE VOICE OF ONE CRYING IN THE WILDERNESS

Isaiah's words, "The voice of one crying in the wilderness: 'Prepare the way of the Lord; make his paths straight,'" is cited from:

- A voice cries: "In the wilderness prepare the way of the LORD; make straight in the desert a highway for our God. ⁴Every valley shall be lifted up, and every mountain and hill be made low; the uneven ground shall become level, and the rough places a plain. ⁵And the glory of the LORD shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together, for the mouth of the LORD has spoken" (Isaiah 40:3-5)

Often New Testament writers will cite a verse from the Old Testament to direct us to a particular section of the Scriptures since they give us further insights into the topic that the writer has in focus. This chapter is Isaiah is no exception it speaks of Christ and the majestic power and glory of God. Though Matthew and Mark use Isaiah's words for Christ's first appearing the ultimate fulfilment of them will be when the Lord returns as King of kings and Lord of lords to establish God's Kingdom of righteousness, justice, joy and peace on earth.

NOTE: the words the Kingdom of heaven is at hand does not mean that the Kingdom is in heaven, but refers to the spiritual Kingdom of God on earth that exists by faith and love in the hearts and minds of the faithful who believe in Christ. It is outwardly manifested through their lives by their testimony and living a life that honours God and brings a good testimony to the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and manifested collectively through the global body of Christ the church. When Christ returns as King of kings and Lord of lords to establish God's Kingdom of righteousness, justice, joy and peace on earth this spiritual Kingdom existing now will be literally manifested to the world when Christ gathers all who belong to his family to himself. For further information concerning the Kingdom of God see the title:

- Kingdom of God (ON WEBSITE MENU).

JOHN BAPTISED WITH WATER, JESUS BAPTISED WITH THE HOLY SPIRIT AND FIRE

- **Matthew 3:7-12:** But when he (John) saw many of the PHARISEES and SADDUCEES coming for BAPTISM he said to them, "You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come? ⁸Bear fruit in keeping with REPENTANCE. ⁹And do not presume to say to yourselves, 'We have Abraham as our father,' for I tell you, God is able from these stones to raise up children for Abraham. ¹⁰Even now the axe is laid to the root of the trees. Every tree therefore that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. ¹¹"I BAPTIZE you with WATER for REPENTANCE, but he who is coming after me is mightier than I, whose sandals I am not worthy to carry. He will BAPTIZE you with the HOLY SPIRIT and with FIRE. ¹²His winnowing fork is in his hand, and he will clear his threshing floor and gather his wheat into the barn, but the chaff he will burn with unquenchable fire."

NOTE: when fire is linked to the baptism in the Holy Spirit it refers to a baptism of judgment to condemnation.

- A parallel passage is found in (Luke 3:7-9) (Luke 3:15-17).

John shifts his attention now from those seeking God with a humble and repentant heart to the religious leaders of his generation who were full of hypocrisy and prideful self-righteousness. They came to John believing that they were righteous and had no need of repentance because they were descents of Abraham, attended to all the religious duties of the Temple and adhered to the ceremonial rites, holy days, and kept their religious customs and traditions.

FRUIT IN KEEPING WITH REPENTANCE

The expression, “fruit in keeping with repentance,” not only carries the idea of turning away from all that is corrupt and wicked, but also refers to developing the fruits of the Spirit love, compassion, kindness, mercy, grace, forgiveness and such like things.

GOD IS ABLE TO RAISE UP CHILDREN FOR ABRAHAM

God is able from these stones to raise up children for Abraham refers to the Gentiles. At this time the religious and self-righteous Jews believed they were the holy race with God and the Gentiles were the unclean race without God.

THE AXE IS LAID TO THE ROOT OF THE TREES

The words, “The axe is Laid to the root of the trees,” this can refer to the following two events:

1. The death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ since it abolished the entire need for the Levitical priesthood and the religious leader’s authority and power since no one today needs a human priest because Jesus God’s perfect and eternal High Priest has replaced all priests and is the only priest anyone seeking God needs.
2. Rome’s destruction of the Jewish TEMPLE in 70A.D.

JESUS WILL BAPTIZE YOU WITH THE HOLY SPIRIT AND WITH FIRE

The words, Holy Spirit from Strong’s Concordance carries the following two meanings, firstly the idea of a comforter and secondly the idea of an awful thing this is because the Holy Spirit (the Spirit of truth) comforts those with an honest, humble and repentant heart and judges them to eternal life, but for those full of pride, hypocrisy and self-righteousness the Holy Spirit judges them to condemnation and destruction. To be baptized with the Holy Spirit and with fire in this context carries the idea of being judged by the truth and condemned to destruction in contrast to eternal life. John is saying that Christ will baptise prideful, self-righteous hypocrites with a baptism of true judgment in righteousness and because of their lack of holiness (i.e., love, compassion, mercy and grace etc.) will condemn them to destruction because of their hypocrisy.

BURN WITH UNQUENCHABLE FIRE

In this context fire is a symbol of condemnation, total destruction and eternal death (i.e., total extinction). Fire is the perfect symbol of utter destruction and total extinction because it destroys everything in its path until it is brought to nothing. For further information concerning fire, see the title:

- Lake of Fire in, Death (ON WEBSITE MENU).

WHEAT AND CHAFF

The wheat refers to those seeking God with an honest, humble and repentant heart while the chaff refers to the self-righteous, prideful hypocrites.

JOHN BAPTIZES JESUS

- **Matthew 3:13-17:** ¹³Then Jesus came from Galilee to the Jordan to John, to be BAPTIZED by him. ¹⁴John would have prevented him, saying, "I need to be BAPTIZED by you, and do you come to me?" ¹⁵But Jesus answered him, "Let it be so now, for thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all RIGHTEOUSNESS." Then he consented. ¹⁶And when Jesus was BAPTIZED immediately he went up from the WATER and behold, the heavens were opened to him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and coming to rest on him. ¹⁷and behold, a voice from heaven said, "This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased."
- A parallel passage is found in (Mark 1:10-11).

There is no particular precept in the Old Testament requiring a person to be water baptized but Jesus by being baptised himself is giving sanction by his example to the baptism of John as a divine ordinance.

The phrase "To fulfil all righteousness" can mean:

- To show forth a perfect obedience.
- To show readiness to comply with all God's righteous precepts.
- To set a perfect example to all who follow.

It is true that water baptism was for sinners and that Jesus was sinless, but he humbled himself. John had need to be baptized by Jesus, yet Jesus who was without sin declares that he will now be baptized by John. Christ is now in a state of humiliation yet the Lord looked upon it as well becoming of him to fulfil all righteousness. With this in mind it could be said that fulfilling all righteousness means fulfilling all humbleness since pride is not only the greatest hindrance to people surrendering their life to God, but also totally opposed to the Spirit of God.

It is difficult to comprehend why anyone who confesses to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ would refuse to be water baptized when Jesus himself went down into the water to be baptized by John who considered himself totally unworthy to be baptizing the Lord and yet Jesus told him it was right and proper.

NOTE: any faithful brother or sister can baptize a man or woman into the Kingdom of God and the family of Christ who is ready to be baptized. No one has to wait for a church leader, minister or elder to water baptize them. This is because people being baptized are baptized into the global family of Christ not into a particular church congregation.

BAPTIZE ALL NATIONS IN THE NAME OF THE FATHER, THE SON AND THE HOLY SPIRIT

- **Matthew 28:16-20:** Now the ELEVEN DISCIPLES went to Galilee, to the mountain to which Jesus had directed them. ¹⁷And when they saw him they worshiped him, but some doubted. ¹⁸And Jesus came and said to them, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. ¹⁹Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, BAPTIZING them in the name of the FATHER and of the SON and of the HOLY SPIRIT.

After the death and resurrection of Jesus he appeared to the eleven apostles and gave them the following great commission to go and teach people in all nations in contrast to just in Israel all things concerning the Lord Jesus Christ and the message of the cross. Baptize in water whoever repents and believes the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ. The apostles were to continue this mission until they slept in Christ. Though Jesus was speaking directly to the eleven apostles the principal of teaching the Gospel and water baptism continues to apply to all Christians until Christ returns. This does not mean that every brother and sister in Christ has to be an evangelist, but it does mean they should share their faith when they are able and not hide the truth that they are a follower of the Lord Jesus Christ. Peter told the men of Israel to "Repent and be baptized every one of them in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of their sins" (Acts 2:38) and commanded the Gentiles to be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ (Acts 10:48). This shows that the words, "Baptize all nations in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit" are not a blueprint that must be dogmatically used as a legalistic formula everytime a man or woman is baptized. Whoever by faith has Christ seated on the throne of their mind and their heart also has the Holy Spirit and the Heavenly Father, so to be baptized into the name of Jesus is to be baptized into the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.

WHOEVER BELIEVES AND IS BAPTIZED WILL BE SAVED

- **Mark 16:15-16:** Jesus said to them, "Go into all the world and proclaim the GOSPEL to the whole creation. ¹⁶Whoever believes and is BAPTIZED will be SAVED, but whoever does not believe will be CONDEMNED.

This verse shines a spotlight on the truth that there are two parts to salvation.

1. Salvation.
2. Water Baptism.

THE TWO PARTS OF SALVATION

1. **The first part of salvation:** is to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ so it is important to understand what the word believe actually meant during the era of the early church since in our modern age the meaning in some circles of Christianity is very different from its pre-modern meanings, for many Christians today believing means believing a set of claims, a set of statements.

- Believing that God exists.
- Believing that the Bible is the word of God.
- Believing that Jesus is the Son of God born of the Virgin Mary.
- Believing that he died for our sins and that he rose from the dead.
- Believing that he is the only way to salvation.
- Believing that he will come again and so on and so forth.

This is what many modern Christians think believing means today. Many are taught that providing they believe and affirming a fixed set of beliefs (i.e., doctrines) to be true they are saved (these doctrines will vary depending on what church a person is in). But, during the era of the early church the word, believe had a very different meaning in Christianity as well as popular usage. It did not mean believing

statements to be true, but rather the object of belief was always a person, not a statement. This is the difference between believing that and believing in. To believe IN a person is quite different to believing a series of statements about that person. In pre-modern English believing meant believing in and being in a relationship of trust, loyalty, and love i.e. to most to believe meant to belove.

During the birth of the early church, believing in God and Jesus did not mean I believe that the following statements about God and Jesus are true, rather to believe in God and Jesus had the following two primary meanings:

- a) To trust in God and Jesus in contrast to trusting in statements about God and Jesus for this would be believing that (true biblical faith is to trust in God as known in Jesus).
- b) To commit one's allegiance, loyalty and love to God and to Jesus.

This believing faith, fidelity, loyalty, allegiance and commitment to God as known in Jesus in contrast to believing statements about God and Jesus are very different, the first leads to an emphasis on believing right statements, the second leads to a transformed life.

NOTE: this does not mean that it is wrong to believe in statements about God, Jesus and the Bible, but believing in statements will not save a person rather the statements are to lead a person to Christ who is the only one who can save anyone to eternal life, it is trusting in the person of the Lord Jesus Christ that saves a person not trusting in statements about him.

- 2. **The second part of salvation:** is water baptism. In the context of these words of Mark baptism cannot mean baptism in or by the Holy Spirit (as some might think) because that would come with believing in Christ, which is contained in the first part of Marks statement. The change of heart mind and passion toward the Lord Jesus Christ comes prior to water baptism by the believing the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ and trusting it to be true, but even with this heartfelt devotion toward Christ and understanding of the Gospel believers are still to be water baptised into the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and his global family.

NOTICE: Mark says, the one who disbelieves is the one who will be condemned, only believing is mentioned, because one cannot undo the act of being water baptised. Whoever puts their trust in the Gospel remains free to choose to disbelieve at anytime, this is because God will never force or impose his will onto anyone or violate their will.

JESUS WILL BAPTIZE WITH THE HOLY SPIRIT

- **Mark 1:6-8:** ⁶Now John was clothed with camel's hair and wore a leather belt around his waist and ate locusts and wild honey. ⁷And he preached, saying, "After me comes he who is mightier than I, the strap of whose sandals I am not worthy to stoop down and untie. ⁸I have BAPTIZED you with WATER, but he will BAPTIZE you with the HOLY SPIRIT."
- A parallel passage is found in (John 1:25-27).

In this context the Baptism in the HOLY SPIRIT is not a baptism of fire and judgment to condemnation, but one of blessing. Though the Baptism in the HOLY SPIRIT embraces the power certain disciples received to go out into the streets of the towns and cities they visited and heal whoever they spoke a word of healing to or laid their hands upon of all kinds of mental illnesses, physical sickness and diseases and the supernatural gift of speaking foreign languages and dialects that they had never learned, but those listening to clearly understood. The Baptism in the Holy Spirit in the context of these verses primarily refers to a baptism that is available to all people of all

generations until the Lord returns in glory. It refers to a baptism in the gospel that leads to eternal life. John was baptizing under the law with the message, prepare the way for the coming Christ, in contrast Christ came with the revelation that he was:

- The promised Seed of Abraham.
- The prophet Moses said was to come like him.
- The promised Seed of David.
- The Messiah all the faithful prophets spoke of.
- The Christ the Old Testament Scriptures speak of.
- The Son of God and Saviour of the world.

Through Christ the new covenant of grace was introduced and Gentiles could become heirs of the promises of Abraham and inherit eternal life by faith in Christ and by grace. To be baptized with the Holy Spirit in this context means:

- To be baptized into Christ.
- To be baptized into the truth of the Gospel.
- To be baptized into eternal life.

It carries the idea of heart, the mind and the passions being influenced by the Spirit of God in such a manner that they are totally changed from their old thought patterns, worldviews and passions to now desiring from the heart to follow Christ and endeavouring as best they can to live a life that brings honour to God.

MAKE STRAIGHT THE WAY OF THE LORD

8

- **John 1:23-28:** He said, "I am the voice of one crying out in the wilderness, 'Make STRAIGHT the way of the Lord,' as the prophet Isaiah said." ²⁴(Now they had been sent from the Pharisees.) ²⁵They asked him, "Then why are you BAPTIZING, if you are neither the Christ, nor Elijah, nor the Prophet?" ²⁶John answered them, "I BAPTIZE with WATER, but among you stands one you do not know, ²⁷even he who comes after me, the strap of whose sandal I am not worthy to untie." ²⁸These things took place in Bethany across the Jordan, where John was BAPTIZING.

The words make straight the way of the Lord means get your life right before God. When the religious leaders of John's generation (the Pharisees) came to John to be baptised rather than baptise them John told them to show fruits fit for repentance. The Pharisees lacked compassion, mercy and love, added to this they oppressed their followers for their own selfish gain, thus make straight the WAY of the Lord means put off pride, selfish ambition, hypocrisy and such like things and put on kindness, forgiveness, compassion, grace and mercy etc.

HE THAT COMETH AFTER ME IS PREFERRED BEFORE ME

Jesus declared John to be the greatest of all prophets (Matt 11:8-11) (Luke 7:25-28) but John though he had an enormous calling and ministry did not consider himself as someone great, in fact he was a humble man who was very aware of his fallenness before the Lord we know this because he tells Pharisees that he does not even consider himself worthy to untie the laces of Jesus sandals.

The expression:

- He that cometh after me is preferred before me (v27)

Means the following two things:

1. From the beginning of time God had pre-ordained Jesus to be preferred before John the Baptist.
2. In God's eternal plan and purposes, He predestined Jesus to be higher in rank and authority than John.

NOTE: John is said to be the greatest of all prophets yet he did not do one miracle, the reason he is called the greatest prophet is because he had the privilege and calling to introduce Israel's promised Messiah, the Christ, the Son of God and Saviour of the world to world.

BEHOLD THE LAMB OF GOD, WHICH TAKES AWAY THE SIN OF THE WORLD

- **John 1:29-35:** ²⁹The next day John sees Jesus coming to him, and saith, Behold the LAMB of God, which takes away the SIN of the world. ³⁰This is he of whom I said, After me cometh a man which is PREFERRED before me: for he was BEFORE me. ³¹And I knew him not: but that he should be made MANIFEST to ISRAEL, therefore am I come BAPTIZING with WATER. ³²And John bare record, saying, I saw the SPIRIT descending from heaven like a DOVE and it ABODE upon him. ³³And 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 SPIRIT. ³⁴And I saw, and bare record that this is the Son of God. ³⁵The next day again John was standing with two of his disciples, ³⁶and he looked at Jesus as he walked by and said, "Behold, the LAMB of God!"

John's mother Elizabeth and Jesus mother Mary where cousins, so there is no-doubt Jesus and John would have grown up together, yet John says that he knew him not this would mean that he knew him not as Israel's Messiah, the Christ, the Son of God and Saviour of the world.

- He knew him not: but that he should be made manifest to Israel.

The only thing John knew about Israel's Messiah the Christ was that he was about to be made manifest to Israel that is why John baptised with water saying repent and get your lives ready. It wasn't until John saw the dove (symbolizing God's Spirit) descending on Jesus as God had told him it would (v33) that he knew he was the Messiah and the Son of God who takes away the sin of the world.

JESUS WAS BEFORE JOHN

Some have used the words, "For he was before me" (v30) to support the theory that Jesus pre-existed with God before the foundations of the world, but this not what John is saying, the words Jesus was before me mean that Jesus rank in God's eternal plan is above that of Johns, it carries the idea that Jesus calling is higher in authority and purpose than John's calling was. For further information concerning the belief Christ pre-existed see the title:

- Trinity (the Doctrine of the Trinity).
- In, Various Topics (ON WEBSITE MENU).

John states:

- When Christ comes he will baptize people with the Holy Spirit (v34).

In the context of these verses this means that Jews and Gentiles will be confronted with the truth of the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ which brings all sinners to the following crisis of decision:

- Accepting Christ or rejecting Christ.
- Choosing life or choosing death.

In this context baptism in the Holy Spirit could be stated, baptism in the Holy truth referring to the Gospel that leads to the Lord Jesus Christ. It should be highlighted here that the truth in this context does not refer to every doctrine of the Bible from Genesis to Revelation, but the truth that brings a sinner to a crisis decision of accepting Christ or rejecting Christ of choosing life or choosing death.

BEHOLD, THE LAMB OF GOD

Notice the following words of John:

- Behold the LAMB of God which takes away the sin of the world (v29).
- John looked at Jesus as he walked by and said, "Behold, the LAMB of God!" (36).

Here is the wonder and beauty of Scripture: the words, "Behold, the Lamb of God" take the mind of the ardent Bible student immediately back to the Old Testament Passover Lamb (that had to be without blemish) that God commanded Israel to eat from generation to generation to remind them that God had delivered them by a mighty hand from their slavery in Egypt (called the house of bondage) into the Promised Land. Here we see John use the same language, "Christ the Lamb of God. Through Jesus death and resurrection, he not only became our eternal Passover Lamb" without blemish but also delivers to the uttermost even the lowest of sinners from the bondage of sin and death to eternal life and everlasting glory.

JOHN WAS BAPTIZING BECAUSE WATER WAS PLENTIFUL

10

- **John 3:22-26:** After this Jesus and his disciples went into the Judean countryside, and he remained there with them and was BAPTIZING. ²³John also was BAPTIZING at Aenon near Salim, because WATER was PLENTIFUL there, and people were coming and being BAPTIZED ²⁴(for John had not yet been put in prison). ²⁵Now a discussion arose between some of John's DISCIPLES and a JEW over PURIFICATION. ²⁶And they came to John and said to him, "Rabbi, he (Jesus) who was with you across the Jordan, to whom you bore witness—look, he is BAPTIZING and all are going to him."

From these verses we see that:

- Jesus and his disciples were water baptizing.
- John also was water baptizing.
- John was water baptizing because water was plentiful.
- People were coming to John and Jesus to be water baptized.
- The Jews were very aware that water baptism was all about being purified.
- More were going to Jesus than John to be water baptised.

The fact the Scriptures state that John was baptizing because water was plentiful shines a spotlight on the truth that water baptism is by complete immersion.

REPENT BE BAPTIZED AND YOU SHALL RECEIVE THE GIFT OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

- **Acts 2:37-38:** Now when they (the men of Israel (v22) heard this (that God has made Jesus both Lord and Christ whom they crucified) (v36) they were cut to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, "Brothers, what shall we do?" ³⁸And Peter said to them, "REPENT and be BAPTIZED every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the FORGIVENESS of your SINS and you will receive the GIFT of the HOLY SPIRIT.

Some think that they their sin is so gross that there can be no forgiveness for them, but here we see Peter saying to the Jewish nation who agreed to have their Messiah and their Lord crucified if they repent and are water baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of their sins they will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. No one should ever think they are beyond God's forgiveness since the blood of Christ is able to save to eternal life even the lowest of sinners to the uttermost.

THE HOLY SPIRIT

The Holy Spirit in this context refers to the gift of righteous that God grants as a pure and free gift to all who humble themselves in honest heartfelt repentance before God acknowledge (confess) they are sinners and accept the Lord Jesus Christ as their Lord and Saviour. This is the beauty and glory of the Christian faith no one is saved by their own self-effort or by adhering to ceremonial rites, holy days or keeping religious customs and traditions, but by faith in the Lord Jesus Christ and God's grace.

WHEN THE PEOPLE BELIEVED THE GOOD NEWS THEY WERE BAPTIZED

- **Acts 8:12:** But when they (the people of Samaria) BELIEVED Philip as he preached GOOD NEWS about the KINGDOM of God and the NAME of Jesus Christ, they were BAPTIZED, both men and women.

11

We know the word baptized here refers to water baptism because Phillip goes on to tell us in the following verses that when the apostles at Jerusalem heard the people of Samaria had received the word of God (the Gospel that leads to eternal life) and been baptised they sent to them Peter and John, to pray for them that they might receive the Holy Spirit because it had not yet fallen on any of them, but they had only been baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus (Acts 8:14-16).

This verse shines a spotlight on the truth that there are two aspects to salvation that leads to eternal life:

1. Believing the Good News concerning the Kingdom of God.
2. Believing on the name of Jesus.

The Good News concerning the Kingdom of God refers to the Gospel message that we are saved by faith and by grace and not by self-effort, works of the law or adhering to ceremonial rites, holy days or keeping religious customs and traditions. During the era of the early church sinners seeking God believed the message of the cross and the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ accepted him as their Saviour and were then immediately water baptized into the name of Jesus and by doing so became children of God and brothers and sisters of Christ in his eternal and global family.

PHILIP BAPTIZES THE ETHIOPIAN EUNUCH

- **Acts 8:36-39:** as they (Phillip and the Ethiopian eunuch) were going along the road they came to some WATER and the eunuch said, "See, here is WATER! What prevents me from being BAPTIZED?" ³⁷ And Philip said, If you BELIEVE with all your heart, you may be BAPTISED. And he answered and said, I BELIEVE that Jesus Christ is the Son of God.

³⁸And he commanded the chariot to stop, and they both went DOWN into the WATER, Philip and the eunuch, and he BAPTIZED him. ³⁹And when they came up out of the WATER the Spirit of the Lord carried Philip away, and the eunuch saw him no more, and went on his way rejoicing.

Prior to these verses the Ethiopian eunuch had asked Phillip who Isaiah was referring to when he wrote the following words:

- Like a sheep he was led to the slaughter and like a lamb before its shearer is silent, so he opens not his mouth. In his humiliation justice was denied him. Who can describe his generation? For his life is taken away from the earth (Acts 8:32-35).

To answer the Ethiopians question Philip told him the Good News about Jesus. Philip did not need to teach the Ethiopian the Bible from Genesis to Revelation, before he could water baptise the man, Philip simply explained the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ and the message of the Cross to the Ethiopian man. The man believed what Philip told him and he desired to be water baptised as soon as he saw water.

Following are five steps the Ethiopian eunuch went through before being water baptised:

1. He had a heart that was seeking God.
2. He made enquiries to Phillip who understood the Scriptures and who he trusted.
3. He listened with an open heart to all that Phillip told him.
4. He clearly knew he was a sinner before God and needed to be baptised.
5. He believed with all his heart all that Philip told him concerning the good news of the Gospel and that Jesus was the Son of God.
6. Philip baptised the eunuch and the eunuch went on his way rejoicing.

12

Following are two things that should be highlighted in this story:

1. Both Philip and the eunuch went down into the water and came up out of the water, showing that Philip did not simply sprinkle the Ethiopian man.
2. Phillip did not stay with the eunuch after baptising him though it is certain he told the eunuch where other believers were and that the eunuch sought out other believers to fellowship with and learn from. Though those who baptise someone into Christ should do everything they are able to help the new convert it is not their responsibility, but the responsibility of every new convert to continue to seek after the Lord and grow spiritually in their new found faith.

ANANIAS BAPTIZES PAUL

- **Acts 9:17-18:** So Ananias departed and ENTERED Paul's HOUSE. And laying his hands on him he said, "Brother Saul, the Lord Jesus who APPEARED to you on the road by which you came has sent me so that you may regain your 'SIGHT' and be FILLED with the HOLY SPIRIT." ¹⁸And immediately something like scales fell from his (Paul's) eyes, and he regained his sight. Then he ROSE and was BAPTIZED.

The word, baptized in this verse does not refer to the baptism of the Holy Spirit because we are told that Paul had already received the Holy Spirit and then arose no doubt to leave his house with Ananias to go elsewhere to be baptized in water. Prior to these verses, Paul had encountered Jesus on the road to Damascus and was blinded and the Lord had told Ananias to go to Paul so Ananias went to Paul's house laid his hands on him and Paul received his sight. Now consider the following:

- Paul had a miraculous encounter with Jesus.
- Jesus had told him he was a chosen instrument of the Lord's to carry his name before the Gentiles, kings and the children of Israel (v15).
- Paul's life was totally transformed.
- Paul received a miraculous healing at the hands of Ananias.

Yet even though Paul experienced Christ in this supernatural manner Ananias still considered it most important that Paul would be water baptized this clearly shines a spotlight on the importance of water baptism and the truth that water baptism was not done away with after Jesus death and resurrection.

THOSE WHO HAVE RECEIVED THE HOLY SPIRIT WERE WATER BAPTIZED

- **Acts 10:46-48:** they (Jewish believers) were hearing them (Gentiles who heard the word) (v44) speaking in tongues and extolling God. Then Peter declared, ⁴⁷"Can anyone withhold WATER for BAPTIZING these people, who have received the HOLY SPIRIT just as we have?" ⁴⁸And he commanded them to be BAPTIZED in the NAME of Jesus Christ.

Gentiles receive the Holy Spirit which was manifested by them praising God in a language and dialects that they had never learned, but those who heard them understood. Believing Jews are amazed that this particular gift of the Holy Spirit was poured out on the Gentiles (v45), in the same way that it was firstly poured out upon the Jews (in Acts 2). Here is an amazing thing, these Gentiles had received the Holy Spirit in the sense that they could speak in foreign languages, yet Peter still considered it most important that they were not prevented from being water baptized. Peter even commanded that they be water baptized this command of Peter's shines a brilliant spotlight on the truth that he did not take water baptism as a light or unnecessary act of obedience and faith and this is well after the death and resurrection of Christ.

13

LYDIA AND HER HOUSEHOLD ARE WATER BAPTIZED

- **Acts 16:13-15:** on the Sabbath day we (Paul and those with him) went outside the gate to the riverside, where we supposed there was a place of PRAYER and we sat down and spoke to the women who had come together. ¹⁴One who heard us was a woman named Lydia, from the city of Thyatira, a seller of purple goods, who was a WORSHIPER of God. The Lord opened her heart to pay attention to what was said by Paul. ¹⁵And after she was BAPTIZED and her HOUSEHOLD as well, she urged us, saying, "If you have judged me to be FAITHFUL to the Lord, come to my house and stay." And she prevailed upon us.

Paul and those with him come across a group of women who had gathered together to pray, Paul joins them and no doubt shares with them the message of the cross and the things concerning the Lord Jesus Christ. Lydia a worshipper of God and faithful woman listens to Paul and responds to his message. Since all her household was water baptized it is most likely Lydia invited Paul to her HOME to share the Gospel message with her family. Lydia is so zealous to hear more of Paul's teaching she invites Paul to stay in her home.

PAUL WATER BAPTIZES A JAILER AND ALL HIS HOUSEHOLD

- **Acts 16:29-34:** the jailer called for lights and rushed in, and trembling with fear he fell down before Paul and Silas. ³⁰Then he brought them out and said, "Sirs, what must I do to be SAVED?" ³¹And they said, "BELIEVE in the Lord Jesus, and you will be SAVED you and your HOUSEHOLD." ³²And they spoke the WORD of the Lord to him and to ALL who were in his HOUSE. ³³And he took them the SAME HOUR of the night and washed

their wounds; and he was BAPTIZED at ONCE, he and all his family. ³⁴Then he brought them up into his house and set food before them. And he REJOICED along with his entire household that he had BELIEVED in God.

Today there are certain religious leaders who believe it takes weeks of biblical teaching before a person seeking God is ready to be water baptized. This story completely destroys this theory. Overnight Paul answered the jailer's question, "What must I do to be saved?" And then not only water baptized the jailer, but also water baptized all his household. It is certain that the message Paul shared with the jailer and his household were the things concerning Jesus, the Gospel and the message of the cross. As soon as a person believes with all their heart the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ, they are ready to be water baptized. No one has to be a walking Bible encyclopedia or know the Bible from Genesis to Revelation before they can be water baptized. This is because water baptism is only the beginning of their spiritual walk in the global Kingdom of God and the worldwide family of Christ.

Water baptism is the entry into the Kingdom of God and the beginning of a new convert's growth:

- In the fruits of the Spirit (love, compassion, mercy, grace and forgiveness etc.).
- In greater knowledge and understanding of walking and living in the Spirit.
- In greater knowledge of the Bible.
- In greater knowledge of God.
- In greater knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Walking in a spiritual union of love with God and the Lord Jesus Christ is a life-long spiritual journey that will not end in growing in the fruits of the Spirit or in knowledge of the Bible or of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ until the Lord returns in glory.

14

MANY BELIEVED AND WHERE WATER BAPTIZED

- **Acts 18:7-8:** And he left there and went to the house of a man named Titius Justus, a WORSHIPER of God. His house was next door to the synagogue. ⁸Crispus, the ruler of the synagogue, BELIEVED in the Lord, together with his entire HOUSEHOLD. And many of the Corinthians hearing Paul BELIEVED' and were BAPTIZED.

Paul was directly confronted by Christ and sent to declare his name to Jews and Gentiles alike. Jesus gave him heavenly revelations concerning God's eternal plan of Salvation in Christ. This means that Paul not only knew the love and grace of God that surpasses knowledge, but also had had an absolute clear understanding of God's plan of salvation of Christ and of eternal life. Yet Paul with all his brilliant knowledge and perfect understanding of salvation in Christ still considers it most important to water baptize people who worship God and believe in the Lord Jesus Christ.

This highlights the truths:

- No matter how brilliant a believer's knowledge of the Bible is they still need to be water baptised.
- No matter how much a believer worships and loves God and the Lord Jesus Christ they still need to be water baptised.
- No matter how much faith a person has in Jesus they still need to be water baptised.

These Scriptures show that Paul (one of the greatest apostles of the New Testament) even after the death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ still considered water baptism to be a most vital part of Salvation in the Lord Jesus Christ.

A PERSONAL NOTE

It is very difficult for me to understand why certain religious leaders and their followers who confess to believe in Christ would deny being water baptised when there is so much Scriptural evidence throughout the book of Acts that shows so many faithful believers being water baptised and also so clearly shows that Paul who wrote the great majority of the New Testament always considered it a vital part of Salvation. These evidences shine a very clear (at least to those who have eyes to see and ears to hear) spotlight on the truth that water baptism has never been done away with.

APOLLOS ONLY KNEW THE BAPTISM OF JOHN

- **Acts 18:24-28:** Now a Jew named Apollos, a native of Alexandria, came to Ephesus. He was an eloquent man, COMPETENT in the SCRIPTURES. ²⁵He had been instructed in the way of the Lord. And being FERVENT in SPIRIT, he spoke and taught ACCURATELY the things CONCERNING Jesus, though he knew only the BAPTISM of John. ²⁶He began to speak boldly in the synagogue, but when Priscilla and Aquila heard him, they took him and explained to him the way of God MORE ACCURATELY. ²⁷And when he wished to cross to Achaia, the brothers encouraged him and wrote to the disciples to welcome him. When he arrived, he greatly helped those who through GRACE had BELIEVED ²⁸for he powerfully refuted the Jews in public, showing by the SCRIPTURES that the CHRIST was Jesus.

Apollos was a Jew who not only was fervent in his spirit for the things concerning God and had a great knowledge of the Scriptures (this would refer mostly to the Old Testament Scriptures) though he would have believed in Israel's Messiah the Christ, but he only knew John's water baptism which was about preparing the way for the Lord. Aquila and Priscilla expound to him the way of God more perfectly means they showed him that water baptism is no longer about preparing the way for the Lord, but about being water baptised into the Lord. Today God is building a new nation (also called a new man in Christ) this new nation (made up of Jews and Gentiles) is the global body of Christ and the way into this new nation is through water baptism into the name of the Lord Jesus Christ.

15

JOHN'S WATER BAPTISM AND WATER BAPTISM INTO THE LORD JESUS CHRIST

- **Acts 19:3-5:** And he (Paul) said, "Into what then were you BAPTIZED?" They (Apollos and other disciples) said, "Into John's BAPTISM." ⁴And Paul said, "John BAPTIZED with the 'BAPTISM' of REPENTANCE telling the people to BELIEVE in the one who was to COME after him, that is, Jesus." ⁵On hearing this, they were BAPTIZED in the NAME of the Lord Jesus.

Each of the word's baptism used in the Scriptures above have the same meaning and are all related to water. After Jesus resurrection he told the eleven apostles to go into all nations baptizing people in the name of the Father the Son and the Holy Spirit that is exactly what Paul is doing here. These believers had been baptized by John's baptism of repentance looking forward to the coming Christ or the one to come after John they are now being water baptized again into the name of the Lord Jesus. Both John's baptism and water baptism today still involve repentance, forgiveness of sins and faith toward God, but there is one important difference and that is that the central focus has changed. When people were baptized by John,

they were looking toward the one that was to come after John, whereas those being baptized today are being baptized into the name of Christ and into the Kingdom of God and into the global family of Christ.

Besides repentance and faith toward God water baptism today includes the following three things:

1. Identification with Christ.
2. Identification with his death and burial.
3. Identification with his resurrection.

The people being baptized by John knew nothing of these three aspects concerning their coming Messiah the Christ the Son of God and Saviour of the world.

RISE AND BE BAPTIZED AND WASH AWAY YOUR SINS

- **Acts 22:14-16:** And he (Ananias) said, 'The God of our fathers appointed you (Paul) to know his will, to see the Righteous One and to hear a voice from his mouth; ¹⁵for you will be a witness for him to everyone of what you have seen and heard. ¹⁶And now why do you wait? Rise and be BAPTIZED and WASH away your SINS calling on his name.'

God Himself has revealed His will to Paul, appointed him to see the Lord Jesus Christ and hear him speak, Jesus has told Paul that he will testify of his name to everyone (Jews and Gentiles) Paul's life is totally transformed by this experience and yet God tells a devout Jewish man named Ananias to go to him. Ananias goes to Paul and even though he is fully aware of Paul's miraculous experience and his transformed life toward Christ still tells him to go and be water baptized into the name of the Lord Jesus Christ to wash away his sins.

16

This shines a brilliant spotlight on the following two truths:

1. After the death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ the apostles and the disciples of Christ still considered water baptism a vital part of salvation.
2. No matter how great an experience a person may have had with the Lord or how strong their faith is or how devoted they are or how much their life has been transformed they are still by faith required to enter into the waters of baptism.

Consider the following:

- Jesus who had no sin was water baptised.
- Paul one of the greatest apostles who also wrote a major part of the New Testament was water baptised.
- Throughout the book of Acts (long after Jesus death and resurrection) believers are being water baptised.

Surely this must make those who confess to believe in Christ, but believe water baptised is not for today question what they believe. The cumulative and collective evidence makes it obvious to the humble Bible student who desires to obey the word of God that water baptism has not diminished in its vital role regarding salvation that is in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Paul had first-hand revelations of the blood of Christ and his crucifixion, yet a man sent by God tells him he still had to be water baptized to wash away his sins. Ananias even puts a sense of emergency on it saying, "And now why wait?"

- **Romans 6:1-6:** What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin that grace may abound?
²By no means! How can we who died to sin still live in it? ³Do you not know that all of us who have been BAPTISED into Christ Jesus were BAPTISED into his DEATH? ⁴We were buried therefore with him by BAPTISM into DEATH in order that, just as Christ was 'RAISED' from the DEAD by the glory of the Father, we too might WALK in NEWNESS of life. ⁵For if we have been united with him in a DEATH like his, we shall certainly be united with him in a RESURRECTION like his. ⁶We know that our old self was crucified with him in order that the body of sin might be brought to nothing, so that we would no longer be enslaved to sin.

Biblical water baptism involves repentance from wrong doing and of anything that has offended God this kind of repentance brings a change of desire in the heart and mind which births a desire in the heart to honour God and an equally strong passion to avoid anything that offends Him. This is what Paul means when he says those who are baptised into Christ have died to sin. Their new nature hates sin and loves righteousness thus Paul is basically saying:

- How can a person who has had this change take place in their heart continue to live a lifestyle of sin?

What's more those that are water baptised into Christ are identifying with Christ's death and resurrection they are acknowledging that they also will die and be resurrected to a new and eternal life as Christ was. Paul in these verses is saying to those who have been water baptised don't wait until they are resurrected to live the new life rather live it now and don't live in the old sinful and godless lifestyle they have repented from especially since those who have been united with Christ in death through water baptism will be resurrected to eternal glory as Christ was (v4).

Our old-self (lower nature) was crucified (v6) means that:

There is a new desire and passion in the heart of those baptised into Christ. The desire of this new higher nature (often called the spirit) is to honour God, nevertheless even though it is now the dominant desire of the heart, the lower nature (often called the flesh) is still pulled toward sin, in spite of the higher nature's desire to honour God. Because of this there is conflict between the lower nature (the flesh) and the higher nature (the Spirit) which desires to do those things that honour God whereas the old nature (self, ego and pride etc.) is indifferent or does not even consider God it's only thought is self-gratification and self-glory whereas the new nature is always considering or desiring God's best interest it may not always succeed, but there is sorrow toward God when the lower nature does get the victory.

This is what Paul was referring to when he said:

- We should no longer be enslaved to sin (v6).

Though the very powerful voice of sin tempts us to wrong-doing to satisfy self, ego, pride or greed etc., this is not the new nature of the Spirit that has given birth to the desire to honour the Lord, nevertheless because of our human limitations (v19) (i.e., the aberrations and dysfunctions that dwell within all mankind) the voice of temptation is often far more powerful than the sweet and quiet voice of the spirit thus the reason we are saved by faith and by grace and not by self-effort and works of the law. For further information on this chapter see:

- Romans 6 in, Commentary NT (ON WEBSITE MENU).

- **1 Corinthians 1:12-18:** What I mean is that each one of you says, "I follow Paul," or "I follow Apollos," or "I follow Cephas," or "I follow Christ." ¹³Is Christ divided? Was Paul crucified for you? Or were you BAPTIZED in the name of Paul? ¹⁴I thank God that I BAPTIZED none of you except Crispus and Gaius, ¹⁵so that no one may say that you were BAPTIZED in my name. ¹⁶(I did baptize also the household of Stephanas. Beyond that, I do not know whether I baptized anyone else.) ¹⁷For Christ did not send me to BAPTIZE but to preach the GOSPEL and not with words of eloquent wisdom, lest the cross of Christ be emptied of its power.

The reason Paul is glad that he never water baptized any of these believers is because he suspects that had he baptized them they would have exalted him as they were exalting Apollos and Peter and thereby caused even more division. By Paul's stating that he baptized Crispus and Gaius and the household of Stephanas and saying that he is not sure whether he baptized any others or who else he might have baptized shines a spotlight on the truth that Paul believed water baptism continues to be a vital part of the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ that the Lord himself called Paul to proclaim. Paul's words:

- Christ did not send me to baptize but to preach the gospel (v17).

Does not mean that Paul considered water baptism to be of no importance, but that it was not what he was to spend his time doing since any faithful believer in Christ can water baptise a person into the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. Whereas none of us have the brilliant knowledge that Paul was gifted with, so it is only natural that all his time should be given to proclaiming the Lord Jesus Christ. Paul's time was far too valuable to be taken up doing a ministry that many others were able to perform.

ALL WHO ARE BAPTIZED INTO CHRIST HAVE PUT ON CHRIST

18

- **Galatians 3:26-29:** ²⁶in Christ Jesus you are all sons of God, through FAITH. ²⁷For as many of you as were BAPTIZED into Christ have put on Christ. ²⁸There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female, for you are all ONE in Christ Jesus. ²⁹And if you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's offspring, HEIRS according to promise.

Prior to Christ appearing the Jews believed they were the holy race with God and the Gentiles were an unclean race without God. Paul in these verses is teaching the Jews and the Gentiles that whoever is water baptized into Christ have put on Christ, meaning they are by faith clothed in his royal robes of righteousness. It matters not whether they are born of Abraham, a Hebrew or Jew or whether they are rich or poor, noble or lowly or male or female all are made equal in Christ concerning righteousness and eternal salvation through water baptism. The true Seed of Abraham is not those who are biologically Abraham's descendants, but those who have faith in the promised Seed of Abraham who of course is the Lord Jesus Christ. Paul is basically saying to the Jews and Gentiles alike whoever is water baptized into the promised Seed of Abraham the Lord Jesus Christ are not only Abrahams offspring, but also become heirs to the eternal promises God made to Abraham.

ONE BODY, ONE, HOPE, ONE LORD, ONE FAITH, ONE BAPTISM AND ONE GOD

- **Ephesians 4:4-6:** ⁴There is one body and one Spirit—just as you were called to the one hope that belongs to your call— ⁵one Lord, one faith, one 'BAPTISM' ⁶one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all.

Jesus himself after his death and resurrection appeared to the eleven apostles and commanded them to go into all the world water baptizing

repentant believers into his name until the end of the age (meaning until Christ returns). Christ after his death burial and resurrection extended John's baptism to not only be a baptism of repentance, but also a baptism into the name of Jesus and his global and eternal family. The baptism Paul is referring to in these Scriptures is water baptism. In these verses Paul groups water baptism with Christ's body, the Spirit, the hope, the faith, the Lord Jesus Christ and God the Father clearly showing that Paul viewed water baptism as a vital part of Christian faith, the Gospel and of eternal salvation.

BEING BURIED WITH CHRIST IN BAPTISM YOU WERE RAISED WITH HIM THROUGH FAITH

- **Colossians 2:11-12:** In Christ also you (believers) were circumcised with a circumcision made without hands, by putting off the body of the flesh, by the circumcision of Christ, ¹²having been BURIED with him in BAPTISM, in which you were also RAISED with him through FAITH in the powerful working of God, who RAISED him from the DEAD.

Paul in these verses is saying that the Jews were circumcised by men's hands putting off the flesh (i.e. the foreskin) of the body while those who were dead in sin (separated from God) have been forgiven all their sin and together with Christ have been united to God not by a circumcision of man's hands, but by being buried with Christ through the waters' of baptism and rising up out of them to be made alive to Christ. Christ's death cancelled all record of sin that separated us from God. This is because in Christ we are saved by faith and grace and by Christ's righteousness and not by our own self-effort or works of the law or by our own righteousness.

For a Gentile to receive God's favour in the Old Testament they had to become part of the Jewish nation they did this by adhering to Jewish religious laws and by being circumcised which made them a proselyte Jew and part of the Jewish nation and heirs to the promises God made to Abraham. In the New Testament water baptism has replaced circumcision and both Jews and Gentiles are required to be water baptized into the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. This is because God is building a new nation in Christ made up of Jews and Gentiles. This new nation is also called a new man, a new creature in Christ, the Bride of Christ, the global Kingdom of Christ and the global Body of Christ.

19

CIRCUMCISION IN THE JEWISH MIND

In the Jewish mind circumcision was without doubt deemed to be one of the highest standards of righteousness. They believed that an uncircumcised person was separated from God and therefore unclean. Because of this mindset no religious Jew (especially those in high position of leadership) would willingly put themselves in the company of an uncircumcised person since they considered them to be unclean. The reason the Jewish nation held circumcision in such high regard was because the LORD made the following covenant with Abraham and his offspring saying:

- Every male among you shall be circumcised and it shall be a sign of the covenant between me and you. He who is eight days old among you shall be circumcised it shall be an everlasting covenant and any male who is not circumcised shall be cut off from Israel because he has broken my covenant (Gen 17:10-14) (Gen 17:23-27).

Though circumcision was a sign of God's covenant with Israel (Rom 4:9-12) many in the Jewish faith had turned it into the means of salvation i.e., as long as they were circumcised, they were right with God. Certain Jews accepted Christ was their Messiah the Christ, but denied that salvation was in him alone and therefore continued to teach that even those who did believe in Christ must still be circumcised and keep the laws and customs of Moses to be saved.

REMEMBER: the Jews had believed in the covenant of circumcision for over 4000 years and now Paul is telling them that it is not necessary to be literally and physically circumcised because they have already been spiritually circumcised, but not by human hands, but through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

THE CIRCUMCISION OF CHRIST

The expression, "The circumcision of Christ" (v11) refers to the life changing moment when a sinner in repentance humbles themselves before God and accepts the Lord Jesus Christ as their Lord and Saviour. In this climatic and spiritual life changing moment not only is their heart (inner most being) filled with God's Holy Spirit which transforms their mind and their passions from craving after the things of this temporary and mortal world to desiring the things of God's eternal world, but they are also by the Spirit, by God's grace and by love united in union with Jesus himself and from this union desire to live their life to honour his name.

NOTE: though the desire to honour God is in the heart it does not mean every wrongful action or inward attitude is instantly changed, this is an ongoing process as one spiritually grows in the Lord from being a spiritual child to being a spiritually mature adult full of the fruits of the spirit (i.e., compassion, grace, mercy, kindness and forgiveness etc.).

Old Testament circumcision was a sign that a person was separated for God (Rom 4:9-12) today this has been replaced by water baptism. The resurrection of Lord Jesus Christ is every brother and sisters guarantee that God will raise them to eternal life as He raised Christ from the grave to die no more, so likewise all who belong to the family of Christ will be raised from the grave to eternal life and everlasting glory instead of being condemned by the law and judged guilty because of sin and sentence to eternal death, which means that Paul's words:

- Buried with him in baptism (v12).

Are alluding to the immersions practised in the case of adults, wherein the person being baptised appears to be buried under the water. This is because water baptism is identification with Christ who died for our sins, was laid in the grave, where he continued for a while and then rose on the third Day to eternal life and everlasting glory. Likewise when a repentant sinner is baptized they are covered with water as if they were buried in it, because water baptism is a representation of the burial of Christ and a representation of our burial with him, as being dead to sin, to the law, and to the world by our faith in Christ and a testimony of a total change of life as a marriage is to a relationship of love.

In regards to water baptism the following three things should be noted:

1. The words, "Buried with him in baptism, and raised with him" (v12) shows that water baptism was performed by covering the whole body in water because no other form of administration of baptism as sprinkling, or pouring water on the face, can represent a burial and a resurrection in such majestic fashion as going down into the water and being under it, represents Christ's descending into the state of the dead, and his continuance in it, so the emersion, or coming up out of the water, represents his rising from the dead, and that of his people in him, in order to walk in newness of life.
2. There is nothing spiritual in the sign or ceremony of water baptism itself since without repentance before God and faith in Christ and his death and resurrection water baptism will be of no use. The person being baptised is simply being dunked in water, but when a person has a right heart toward God and the Lord Jesus Christ and enters the waters of baptism in faith, God by His spirit responds accordingly.

3. In climates where total immersion is safe the normal method of biblical water baptism and the one most in accordance with Scripture is full immersion, but where total immersion would be inconvenient (i.e., a third world country where there is not even enough clean water to drink) or where it could be dangerous to a person's health or life (i.e., sickness) to insist on total immersion in such cases is not only enforcing legalistic ceremonialism that is devoid of the Spirit of God and ignoring the faith of the one being baptised, but is also placing unnecessary hardship on the repentant believer since in these circumstances God who sees the honesty of the heart and responds to faith accordingly will accept any form of sprinkling or dipping in water that is administered in faith.

WATER BAPTISM CORRESPONDS TO NOAH'S ARK AND THE FLOOD

- **1 Peter 3:20-22:** because they formerly did not obey, when God's patience waited in the days of Noah, while the ARK was being prepared, in which a few, that is, eight persons, were brought SAFELY through WATER. ²¹BAPTISM, which corresponds to this, now SAVES you, not as a REMOVAL of DIRT from the body but as an appeal to God for a GOOD CONSCIENCE, through the RESURRECTION of Jesus Christ.

Some say the connection here is that Noah was saved by the water and thus the connection to Water baptism, but the verse says Noah was safely brought through the water not saved by it. It was the ark not the water that saved Noah and his family. Noah's world was washed clean by water, so it is in this sense water is made instrumental in our salvation in that it washes us clean from sin, while the ark a symbol of Christ and the resurrection saves us to eternal life and everlasting glory.

The flood and the ark that saved Noah's family can be likened to water baptism in the following ways:

- As long as Noah and his family remained in the ark, they were safe from the flood; likewise, as long as believers remain in Christ, they are safe from eternal destruction.
- Noah and his family had to patiently believe God's word that the flood was coming; likewise, whoever wants to be delivered from impending death must believe the words of Christ.
- The water destroyed all those who refused to enter the ark; likewise, condemnation awaits those who deny Christ.
- The ark carried Noah and his family into a new world; likewise, Christ will carry those who abide in him into the new eternal world to come.
- Everyone had plenty of time to respond to Noah's message of impending doom; likewise, people have had over two-thousand years to respond to the Gospel.
- Noah was saved from destruction; likewise, we are saved from death.
- In the case of Noah water was employed to cleanse the world of the wicked; likewise, water is a symbol of our own cleansing.
- To wash the earth clean of all wickedness it had to be totally immersed in water; likewise, we are fully immersed to wash our sins away.
- Noah was raised by the water to a new world; likewise, those baptised will be raised to eternal life.
- Noah and his family entered into the ark and were saved; likewise, baptised believers enter into Christ and are saved.
- Sin overwhelmed Noah's world and water cleansed it; likewise, sin overwhelms us and water washes clean.

- Only adult persons entered into the ark; likewise, only those old enough to understand what they are doing should enter the waters of baptism.
- Only faithful believers entered the ark; likewise, only faithful believers are to enter the waters of baptism.

The windows of heaven opened over Noah and his family and poured out waters upon them until they were, as it were immersed in water and fully covered over with water, a truly fitting figure of baptism by immersion. Water baptism may be said to save us, but not as the meritorious commendable praiseworthy worthy cause, but as a vital, essential and necessary condition required for salvation. No one can be saved without being regenerated and their heart purified through repentance and faith in Christ of which baptism is the appropriate and perfect symbol. Water Baptism is not a mere external washing in water no matter how solemnly it may be done. No outward act of cleaning or purification saves us, but only that which pertains to the conscience. This is one of the reasons Peter most likely made the following comment:

- Not the removal of dirt from the body, but as an appeal to God for a GOOD CONSCIENCE, through the RESURRECTION of Jesus Christ (v21).

To guard against the supposition that water baptism has of itself a purifying and saving power Peter expressly declares that he means much more than a mere outward washing of the body by water, by stating that it involves having a good conscience before God through the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

A GOOD CONSCIENCE TOWARD GOD

The answer of a good conscience toward God carries the idea:

1. When a baptism is performed there has been some questioning and inquiry in regards to the belief of the candidate to be baptised.
2. The candidate has an enlightened conscience and a full understanding of the Gospel and the message of the Cross.
3. The one being baptised understands that the real worth of baptism and its power in saving is not in the mere external act, but in the sincere state of their heart toward God and the Lord Jesus Christ.

THE STATEMENT WATER BAPTISM SAVES

The statement water baptism saves us supposes:

- That the one being baptised has a clear understanding of all that is properly meant by being baptised
- That baptism is being properly administered in honest repentance and faith in the Lord Jesus and as an act of unreserved dedication to God.
- That the candidate desires to live a life that honours God and the Lord Jesus Christ.
- The one being baptised has embraced Christ as their Lord and Saviour.
- They have made a good confession of faith and a renunciation of sin

When a person is conscious that water baptism is a command of Christ and therefore it is their duty to submit to it and upon profession of their faith in Christ and as an act of obedience to his command, they enter into the waters baptism and rise up out of them having Christ glory in view and not

their own they are discharging a good conscience towards God. It is this sense that it is right and proper to say they are being saved by baptism since it combines both the act of obedience, repentance and faith toward Christ. The words, "Baptism now saves us as an appeal to God for a good conscience could be written, "Baptism now saves us as an inquiry of a good conscience. Meaning that the one seeking forgiveness of sin has pondered in their heart and mind the following questions:

- Can I rid myself of a corrupt conscience?
- Will the most holy God accept me a sinner?
- Will the Lord Jesus Christ receive me and grant me life eternal?
- Will I be granted grace and adoption into the family of God?
- Will the love of God and the Lord Jesus Christs dwell in my heart?

The answer to all these questions is, "Repent and be baptized," and both God and the Lord Jesus Christ will answer them all with a resounding 'YES' When the candidate seeking to be water baptised has thought upon these types of questions and made inquiry concerning them and responded accordingly it can be said that they are entering the waters of baptism with a good conscience before God. The outward act of baptism will save no one without a good conscience towards God (infants cannot make such an answer and therefore ought not to be baptized).

Water baptism is:

- The outward act of faith that testifies to the inward belief and change of heart and mind toward God.
- The washing of the old life away and entry into the new life in Christ.
- The washing away of sins while calling upon the name of the Lord (Acts 22:16).

Those who believe in Christ have a good conscience toward God, but not because their flesh (self, ego and pride etc.) is destroyed, but because of the death, burial and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ. Water baptism is an act of faith it is a baptism into Christ's death and a rising into his life it is the divine means God has ordained for repentant sinners to enter into Christ's name and his global and eternal family. Christ's resurrection is not only the source of a believer's deliverance from sin's penalty and power but also the source of a believer's new spiritual life. It is not the water which is the instrument of salvation (the water only flowed round the ark), but when the outward actions of water baptism are accompanied with faith both the outward act and the inward faith combine to become the spiritual doorway and entry into the global and eternal Kingdom of God and the family of Christ.

The simple meaning may be easily apprehended. Noah believed in God; walked uprightly before him, and found grace in his sight; he obeyed him in building the ark, and God made it the means of his salvation from the waters of the deluge. Baptism implies a consecration and dedication of the heart, mind and body to God and the Lord Jesus Christ. Those who faithfully enter the waters of Baptism in faith are saved from their sins now and through the resurrection of Christ from the dead will be saved to eternal life and everlasting glory.

FOOTNOTES

The practise and teaching of water baptism by the apostles and those that followed is seen in the Scriptures spanning over 70 years from the beginning of the gospels in 30 A.D to the final book of Revelation around 100 A.D.

Water baptism is taught in the following books:

Acts ----- 30 A.D.

1 Corinthians ----- 54-55 A.D.

2 Corinthians and Romans ----- 57 A.D.

Ephesians and Colossians ----- 62 A.D.

1 Peter ----- 64-100 A.D.

Titus ----- 65-66A.D.

Hebrews and 2 Peter ----- 67-69 A.D.

Revelation ----- 90-96 A.D.

Through the entire book of Acts (30 A.D. to 100 A.D.) the apostles and those that followed were faithful to the command of Jesus Christ to go into all the world and water baptise repentant believers into the name of the Father the Son and the Holy Spirit and make disciples of them. There are numerous New Testament examples that show that baptism in water was a practise attended to by all who believed the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ in early times. What was necessary or appropriate for the first Christians is just as necessary and appropriate for Christians today.

THE OLD MAN AND THE NEW MAN

The outward act of water baptism evidences an inward decision of the heart and mind to put off of the old man (Adam's nature) and a put on the new man (Christ's nature). Jesus is the one covering name by which the naked son and daughter of Adam are majestically covered in royal robes of righteousness so that when they stand before God they are not only seen as being righteous, but also approved of in His sight.

24

BEING SUBMERGED IN WATER DOES NOT GUARANTEE ACCEPTANCE BY GOD

Every believer should clearly understand that acceptance by God it is not brought about by the mere act of being submerged in water this is because water baptism in itself has no religious virtue whatever if it is not mixed with faith. The act of water baptism is only recognised by God when it is performed in connection with an intelligent understanding of the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ and the message of the cross and with an affectionate belief in the Lord Jesus Christ.

WATER BAPTISM AND MARRIAGE

Water baptism could be likened to a marriage and a single man or woman in the following way. They find a partner, listen to them and learn all they can about that person. If over time they begin to love that person a change of heart takes place and they desire to make a life-long commitment to that person. They seal that commitment and testify to the world by marriage that they are now prepared to live a new life with the one they deeply love and make them supreme in their heart, mind and life in all that they do. Those seeking God listen to the Gospel and the message of the Cross and the things concerning the Lord Jesus Christ, if they love what they hear and believe it and begin to taste the love and grace of God toward them a change of heart begins to takes place. They have a heartfelt desire to commitment their life to Christ. To seal that commitment and testify to

the world and to God that they are now prepared to live a new life with Christ as supreme in their heart, mind and life in all that do they enter the waters baptism. In a natural marriage the bride enters into a new life united together with her bridegroom. Even though the bride not only loves her bridegroom and is fully committed to him long before the marriage ceremony, she cannot say she is married to him until she has made that legal and binding commitment to him. Water Baptism is very similar in that those being baptized even though they already love their Bridegroom and are fully committed to him they cannot stand before God with a clear conscience and say that they belong to the Kingdom of God until by faith they have gone down into the waters of baptism and risen up out of them into Christ and his global and eternal family.

WORKS, FAITH AND WATER BAPTISM

There are religious leaders today who say that water baptism is not necessary for salvation, because people are saved by faith and not works. They class water baptism as a work (i.e., something a person can do to earn salvation). Certainly it is true that we are all saved by grace through faith and not by self-effort and works and that salvation is a free gift of God and it is true that there is no work of the flesh a person can do to earn or to make the flesh worthy of salvation, but water baptism is not a work of the flesh, but an act of faith and obedience. The Lord Jesus Christ commanded his apostles to go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit (Matt. 28:19). Entering into the water's baptism is an act of obedience to the command of the Lord Jesus Christ and an outward evidence of faith that is dwelling in the heart and mind. Only when faith and a heartfelt devotion toward the Lord Jesus Christ is absent from the act of water baptism could it be classed as an act of works. The entire act of entering the waters of baptism is an act of faith and not works, if it is simply works the person being baptized is simply taking a dunk in some water, but when a man or woman enters the waters of baptism with the following faith and heartfelt belief that through faith in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ they are:

- Being fully obedient to the Lords command.
- Identifying with Christ's death, burial and resurrection.
- Being washed clean of all sin.
- Entering into the Kingdom of God and the global and eternal family of Christ.

If faith is not involved in this entire process water baptism is just another dip in a pool, but when a person has devotion toward Christ and understands what water baptism means it is a very spiritual experience.

A PERSONAL NOTE

To those who desire to be baptized forget who is baptizing you, forget what church you belong to (if any) forget what your family members, secular friends or work colleagues may think because none of these things mean anything to God. This spiritual experience of faith is solely between you and Christ and no one else he is the only one your mind and heart should be looking toward as you are immersed into the waters of baptism and rise up out of them. Jesus says:

- There is more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who need no repentance (Luke 15:7).
- There is joy before the angels of God over one sinner who repents (Luke 15:10).