

## Doctrine of Baptism

### The Essential Significance of Baptism

*Matthew 28:16 Then the eleven disciples went away into Galilee, into a mountain where Jesus had appointed them. 17 And when they saw him, they worshipped him: but some doubted. 18 And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. 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: 20 Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen.*

1. Baptism is not the predominate theme of the passage, but the making of disciples. Teach them, then, baptize those who are taught in all the nations.
  - Go.
  - Teach all nations.
  - Baptize them, those who are taught, for nations cannot be baptized.
  - Teach them, those who are baptized, for nations cannot be baptized.
2. The essential significance of baptism is that they might be baptized into the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.
3. By being baptized into the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit is to be adopted into the family of God.
4. The phrase “baptized in the name of”, speaks of relationship.
5. The phrase “baptized into the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit” speaks of a relationship with the triune God.
6. This relationship with the triune God comes by way of union with Christ in His death, burial, and resurrection, which baptism illustrates.
7. When our Lord said, “Make disciples, baptizing them into the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit”, it conveyed something specific. It conveyed a special relationship. This concept is supported by two other Scriptures.
  - *1 Corinthians 1:13 Is Christ divided? Was Paul crucified for you? Or were ye baptized in the name of Paul?*

#### ***Special Note.***

Paul was telling the Christians that they were not baptized in relationship to him, but to Christ, and so there is an essential unity to be found in the church, not division. To be baptized into the name of someone was to be united with them, and to be obedient to them in love, and worship.

- *1 Corinthians 10:1 Moreover, brethren, I would not that ye should be ignorant, how that all our fathers were under the cloud, and all passed through the sea; 2 And were all baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea;*

***Special Note.***

To be baptized into Moses was to be identified with him. He was their leader, their guide, their protector. They were united with him. There is a formal relationship between the leader and the led.

8. There are several more examples of being baptized in the name of Jesus in order to establish an identity, and a unity with Christ.

- *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.*
- *Acts 8:16 (For as yet he was fallen upon none of them: only they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus.)*
- *Acts 10:48 And he commanded them to be baptized in the name of the Lord. Then prayed they him to tarry certain days.*
- *Acts 19:5 When they heard this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus.*

***Special Note.***

In these accounts, the formula of Matthew 28 is not used, and for three reasons. First, since the person and work of Christ are central in the message of the gospel, it is only right and natural that He should have pre-eminence in any form that might surround the gospel ordinance.

- *Colossians 1:18 And he is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things he might have the preeminence.*

The Christian religion is a Christocentric, Trinitarian, theism. It is a doctrine of God, that is basically Trinitarian, but it is a Christ centered Trinitarianism because it is the interaction of sinners with the Triune God. Angels may not need a Christ centered Trinitarianism, but man does. It is by Christ that sinners approach God the Father, and come into the orbit of redemptive love. In the book of Acts, Luke provides a compendium where a part is used for the whole.

Second, according to our Lord Himself, union with Christ always brings union with the Father, and with the Spirit. To be baptized in the name of Jesus was to be formally united with the Father, and the Spirit as well.

- *John 14:16 And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever;*

- *John 14:17 Even the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him: but ye know him; for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you.*
- *John 14:23 Jesus answered and said unto him, If a man love me, he will keep my words: and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him.*
- *John 17:21 That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me. 22 And the glory which thou gavest me I have given them; that they may be one, even as we are one: 23 I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one; and that the world may know that thou hast sent me, and hast loved them, as thou hast loved me.*

Third, the only way to enter into a vital union with God the Father, and with God the Holy Spirit, is through Jesus Christ.

### **Union with God the Father through Christ**

- *John 14:6 Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me.*
- *Hebrews 7:25 Wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them.*
- *1 Timothy 2:5 For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus;*

### **Union with God the Holy Spirit through Christ**

- *John 7:37 In the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried, saying, If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink. 38 He that believeth on me, as the scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water.*

In the book of Acts, the principle is established that by being baptized in the name of Jesus, a vital union was established with the Father, and with the Holy Spirit.

9. In Matthew 28, to be baptized into the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, is to become formally identified with the God into whose name we are baptized. It speaks of an allegiance, adherence, obedience, and trust. It is that act by which inward discipleship finds an outward expression in a formal way. By baptism, a disciple is espoused to Christ, and is consecrated.

“Baptism is the contract of our espousal to Christ, and His salvation” (Matthew Henry).

“According to our Lord’s institution in the Great Commission, baptism in the name of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Ghost, is an integral part of the process of discipling the nations, and is therefore an essential mark of discipleship” (Andrew Murray, a Paedobaptist).

10. But baptism is not merely “an essential mark of discipleship.” Baptism is not an addition to discipleship. Baptism is that by which discipleship is consummated.
11. Discipleship comes to fruition, and receives its vindication in the observance of all things which Jesus has commanded. Baptism is an indispensable mark of the church.
12. The phrase, “to be baptized into the name of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit”, conveys the idea that the relationship is established with the triune God, as revealed in the Word of God.
13. The word “name”, in Scripture, is more than a convenient way to address someone. In Jewish society, the name conveys the character of the person the name reflects.
14. The name of the triune God reflects the character of God. The “name” is synonymous with the person. To call upon the “name” of the Lord, is to call upon the Lord as He is revealed.
  - *Romans 10:13 For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.*
  - *Acts 4:12 Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved.*
  - *Proverbs 18:10 The name of the Lord is a strong tower: the righteous runneth into it, and is safe.* The meaning is that God is a strong tower.
15. In Matthew 28, Jesus is teaching that baptism is the formal establishment of a relationship with the triune God as He is revealed in the gospel as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.
16. The gospel, by which we are made disciples, is decidedly Trinitarian. This means that a person cannot make an honest confession, with belief in, and subjection to, the triune God, apart from regeneration.
17. A person who submits to baptism ought to be saying, “I believe in the Triune God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. God in mercy has brought the message of salvation to me, in person. He has opened my eyes to my sinful condition, and my need of divine forgiveness. I know I am a sinner. I know I need a Saviour. I believe that Jesus died for me a substitutionary death at Calvary. Having heard the gospel, I do receive God the Father as my creator, my sustainer, and my provider. I acknowledge Him as the One to whom I should now live. I believe, and receive the truth that Jesus Christ is the Saviour of sinners. I am baptized, I enter formally and freely into a relationship with the One God who is Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.”
18. “Baptism is the sovereignly instituted symbolic action, by which the person baptized, solemnly, consciously, and publically declares his wholehearted reception of, and submission to the living God who is Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, as He is revealed in the gospel” (Albert N. Martin).

19. The essence of baptism is that the recipient is so well informed of the gospel that he identifies himself with the Triune God.
20. What is most important is the content of the gospel preached, not the conduct of the ritual that is performed.
21. In the Epistles, baptism is expanded. The death of Christ for sin becomes the believer's death to sin, symbolized in baptism.

- *Romans 6:1 What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound? 2 God forbid. How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein? 3 Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death? 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. 5 For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection: 6 Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin.*

***Special Note.***

Observe that baptism is not identified with crucifixion, but with the burial of Christ and His resurrection.

- *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.*
22. There are many blessings for those who are united to Christ, including baptism, which speaks of an inward circumcision by which the Old Man was stripped away, and a New Man emerged.