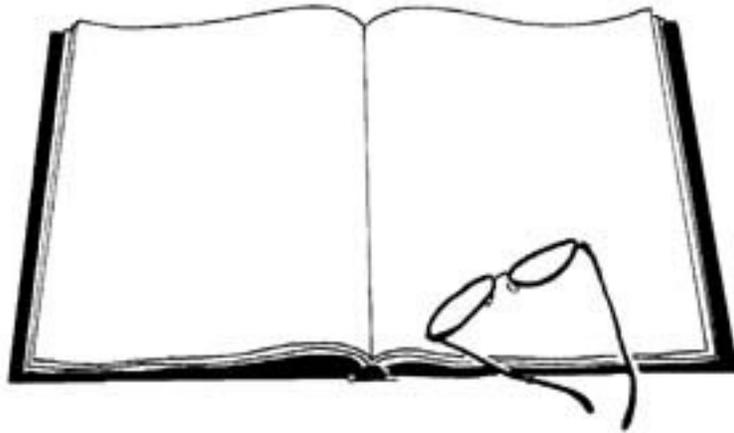


Alamo City Apostolic Church

The “What the Bible Says” Discipleship Series

Unit 4



What the Bible Says About

WATER BAPTISM

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WHAT THE BIBLE SAYS ABOUT WATER BAPTISM

Lesson objective:

To familiarize the student with the meaning and purpose of water baptism. To examine the different baptismal modes and formulas for Biblical correctness. To discover the Biblical position on the essentiality of baptism to salvation.

Key verse:

Mark 16:16

He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned.

SECTION 1: WHAT IS BAPTISM?

Water baptism is probably the most important ceremony in which you will ever participate. It is more than just a religious rite or tradition; in baptism, your sins are forgiven, and your “old man” is buried with Jesus Christ, just as we studied in the lesson on repentance.

“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 2:38)

“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” (Colossians 2:12).

In addition, water baptism is a part of the new birth of which Jesus spoke in John 3:5.

“Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.”

Many churches deny that water baptism is a part of the new birth, claiming instead that when Jesus spoke of being “born of water”, He was referring to the amniotic fluid of the womb. Let’s take a good look at this. Jesus never wasted words; in fact, He cautioned against the use of idle words (Matthew 12:36). Since every human being that has ever been born into this world was born of the amniotic fluid, why would Jesus then list this as a requirement to enter the kingdom of God, since it had already obviously been fulfilled? If you take a good look at the context of this passage, you will find that Jesus was not speaking of natural childbirth, as He specifically stated that “ye must be born again” (John 3:3, 7). He was not telling Nicodemus what he had already done; He was telling him what he needed to do. Therefore, He could not have been speaking of the amniotic fluid. We will prove conclusively, as the lesson goes on, that He was speaking of water baptism.

“There was a man of the Pharisees, named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews: the same came to Jesus by night, and said unto him, Rabbi, we know that thou art a teacher come from God: for no man can do these miracles that thou doest, except God be with him. Jesus answered

and said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God. Nicodemus saith unto him, How can a man be born when he is old? can he enter the second time into his mother's womb, and be born? Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again” (John 3:1-7)

Water baptism is also an identification with Jesus Christ. His name is pronounced over us when we are baptized.

“And now why tarriest thou? arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord” (Acts 22:16).

SECTION 2: THE NECESSITY OF WATER BAPTISM

The Scripture is clear regarding the fact that you absolutely must be “born of water” in order to enter the kingdom of God. Jesus stated this in the passage we have just read from John chapter 3. He also said, in Mark 16:16, that he that believes and is baptized shall be saved.

“He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned” (Mark 16:16).

The Apostle Peter agreed completely with Jesus in his writings. This is what he had to say about baptism:

“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” (I Peter 3:21).

Lest we create the impression that water baptism alone saves us, remember that Jesus said we must be born of water **and** of the Spirit (one birth, two elements). As Ephesians 4:5 says there is only one baptism, we must conclude that the baptism that saves us is a baptism consisting of two elements: the physical (water baptism) and the spiritual (baptism in the Holy Ghost). This agrees perfectly with the message Peter preached on the day of Pentecost, in Acts 2:38. We will study more about the spiritual element of baptism in the next lesson.

“One Lord, one faith, one baptism” (Ephesians 4:5).

“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 2:38).

SECTION 3: THE PURPOSE OF WATER BAPTISM

Let’s look at the purpose of water baptism. While baptism does have other purposes such as identification with Jesus Christ, it is safe to say that the primary purpose of water baptism is for the forgiveness of sins. The word rendered “*remission*” in the King James translation of Acts 2:38 comes from the word *aphesis* in the original Greek. This word not only means “remission” (sending away), but also “*forgiveness*”. We must be careful of a very common doctrine that teaches that forgiveness of sins is received at repentance (for a sinner who has not yet been baptized in water). This invalidates the core reason for baptism. If we study the Scriptures carefully, we will see that in repentance we **ask** God to forgive us, and in water baptism we **receive** His forgiveness, because we have obeyed His Word by faith. This position is validated by several English translations of Acts 2:38, as well as by the highly accurate *Reina-Valera* Spanish translation of the Bible. Biblically, forgiveness of sins is only achieved through a combination of faith, repentance, and water baptism in Jesus’ name.

“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 2:38).

Baptism washes away our sins (not the water that is applied to our bodies, but what it symbolizes: the blood of Jesus that is applied to our hearts). It is the answer to repentance; at repentance, we die to sin; in baptism, we bury the old man with his sins.

“And now why tarriest thou? arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord” (Acts 22:16).

“In whom also ye are circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, in putting off the body of the sins of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ: 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” (Colossians 2:11-12).

SECTION 4: THE BIBLICAL METHOD OF BAPTISM

Although much controversy surrounds the issue of which is the proper mode of baptism, it is really quite a simple subject. If we look at what was said in the original text, it leaves no doubt whatsoever as to which method is correct. The **only** method of baptism presented in the Bible is by immersion. In fact, the very word “baptism” comes from the Greek word *baptizo*, which literally means to “dip” or to “submerge”. Therefore, when Jesus and His disciples commanded baptism, they were literally commanding to dip or to submerge. If you had been present on the Day of Pentecost in Acts chapter 2, you would have heard Peter say, “Repent, and every one of you be dipped in the name of Jesus Christ, in order that your sins may be forgiven...” This is only logical, since (as we have already seen) both Romans 6:4 and Colossians 2:12 tell us that we are buried with Him by baptism. No one buries their dead by simply sprinkling a handful of dirt on them!

Let’s look at the following Scriptural accounts of baptism, to see if they are consistent with baptism by immersion. Remember, Ephesians 4:5 says there is only one baptism; therefore, if the John the Baptist and the preachers of the early church did it this way in these accounts, they did it this way all the time.

1. After He was baptized, Jesus “went up straightway out of the water”; this clearly implies that Jesus entered the water to be baptized, which would have been pointless had He not been baptized by immersion.
“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” (Matthew 3:16).
2. John the Baptist was baptizing in Aenon, near Salim, because “there was much water there”; this would have been unnecessary had he been baptizing by sprinkling.
“And John also was baptizing in Aenon near to Salim, because there was much water there: and they came, and were baptized” (John 3:23).
3. The Ethiopian eunuch was baptized in a place where there was water; doubtless, he had a bottle of water with him, as he was travelling through the desert, but the Scripture says he and Philip “went down both into the water”.
“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? And Philip said, If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest. And he answered and said, I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God. 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” (Acts 8:36-38).
4. Verse 39 says, “when they were come up out of the water...”; therefore, it is obvious that they went all the way down into the water.
“And when they were come up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord caught away Philip, that the eunuch saw him no more: and he went on his way rejoicing” (Acts 8:39).

SECTION 5: WHO MAY BE BAPTIZED IN WATER?

While it is certainly the will of God that everyone be baptized, we must also be aware that the Word of God has established certain prerequisites that must be met in order to qualify for baptism. First of all, a person must believe, as we already studied in our lesson on faith.

“He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned” (Mark 16:16).

“And Philip said, If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest. And he answered and said, I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God” (Acts 8:37).

Next, as we also studied in the lesson on repentance, a person must repent of his or her sins.

“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? Bring forth therefore fruits meet for repentance” (Matthew 3:7-8).

“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 2:38).

Because believing and repenting of one’s sins are prerequisites to baptism, it is not Biblically appropriate to baptize infants nor children too young to understand the meaning of baptism, and the need thereof. In fact, infant baptism is a practice that was instituted by the Roman Catholic Church long after Jesus ascended and the apostles died, and was therefore unknown to the early church.

SECTION 6: WHAT IS THE PROPER BAPTISMAL FORMULA?

We must pay close attention to the Biblical formula for baptism, for, as we will see shortly, it is crucial to obtaining the forgiveness of our sins. The fact that something is widely used does not necessarily mean it is correct. When it comes to matters as serious as how to be baptized, we must rely on the Bible as our sole authority, and not trust to tradition or post-apostolic church leaders.

In Matthew 28:19, Jesus commanded His apostles to baptize all nations “in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost”.

“Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost” (Matthew 28:19).

Unfortunately, many people today only repeat this commandment, without studying it carefully to make sure they really understand it, and therefore actually fail to obey the commandment.

In the first place, Jesus commanded to baptize *in the name* (singular, only one name) of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, and did not command that His words be *repeated*, which is what most denominations do today. “Father”, “Son”, and “Holy Ghost” **are not names**; they are *titles*; if someone baptizes using these titles, they have not baptized in any name!

To prove this point, let’s take a look at this sentence’s grammatical structure. If we were to diagram it, it would look something like this:

...in the name
| of the Father
| of the Son
| of the Holy Ghost

“Of the Father”, “of the Son”, and “of the Holy Ghost” are all prepositional phrases that refer back to one singular name (“in the name”). We are now going to prove that the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost is Jesus.

According to Isaiah 9:6, John 5:43, John 10:30, and John 14:6-10, the Father dwelt in the body of Jesus, thus making Jesus the Father manifested (made visible) in the flesh (II Corinthians 5:19; I Timothy 3:16); therefore, the name of the Father is clearly Jesus.

“For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counseller, The mighty God, the everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace” (Isaiah 9:6).

“I am come in my Father's name, and ye receive me not: if another shall come in his own name, him ye will receive” (John 5:43).

“I and my Father are one” (John 10:30).

“Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me. If ye had known me, ye should have known my Father also: and from henceforth ye know him, and have seen him. Philip saith unto him, Lord, shew us the Father, and it sufficeth us. Jesus saith unto him, have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known me, Philip? he that hath seen me hath seen the Father; and how sayest thou then, Shew us the Father? Believest thou not that I am in the Father, and the Father in me? the words that I speak unto you I speak not of myself: but the Father that dwelleth in me, he doeth the works” (John 14:6-10).

“To wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation” (II Corinthians 5:19).

“And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory” (I Timothy 3:16).

According to Matthew 1:21, Jesus, as the human body in which the Father manifested Himself, was also the Son, born of a woman; therefore, beyond a shadow of a doubt, the name of the Son is Jesus (Mark 1:1).

“And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name JESUS: for he shall save his people from their sins” (Matthew 1:21).

“The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God” (Mark 1:1).

What is the name of the Holy Ghost? We can find out, beyond a shadow of a doubt, by studying this sequence of Bible verses:

- 1) Jesus is Lord (Philippians 2:10-11)
- 2) There is only one Lord (Ephesians 4:5)
- 3) The Lord (Jesus) is the Spirit (II Corinthians 3:17)
- 4) There is only one Spirit (Ephesians 4:4); therefore, the name of the Holy Ghost (Holy Spirit) is clearly Jesus.

“That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father” (Philippians 2:10-11).

“One Lord, one faith, one baptism” (Ephesians 4:5).

“Now the Lord is that Spirit: and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty” (II Corinthians 3:17).

“There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling” (Ephesians 4:4).

To see if we have correctly interpreted Jesus’ commandment to baptize “in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost”, let’s see how the apostles obeyed it. If we find they consistently baptized in the name of Jesus Christ, then we know we are on the right track.

Interestingly enough, there are several examples in the Bible where the apostles and early church preachers obeyed Jesus’ commandment to baptize, but there is not a **single instance** where they baptized using the words “in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost”; *this never happened*. Without exception, when the apostles baptized, they baptized in the “name of the Lord”, in the “name of the Lord Jesus”, or in the “name of Jesus Christ”. Look at this list:

- 1) In the name of Jesus Christ.
“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 2:38).
- 2) In the name of the Lord Jesus.
“(For as yet he was fallen upon none of them: only they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus)” (Acts 8:16).
- 3) In the name of the Lord.
“And he commanded them to be baptized in the name of the Lord. Then prayed they him to tarry certain days” (Acts 10:48).
- 4) In the name of the Lord Jesus.
“When they heard this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus” (Acts 19:5).

- 5) Calling on the name of the Lord.
“And now why tarriest thou? arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord” (Acts 22:16).

Baptism using the titles “Father, Son, and Holy Ghost” was never practiced by the apostles nor by the early church; in fact, it was the so-called “apostolic fathers”, forerunners of the Roman Catholic Church, who began to baptize this way near the beginning of the second century A.D. – long after the death of all the original apostles.

Why is it so urgent that we be baptized in the name of Jesus? There are several reasons:

- 1) No other name has power to save.
“Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved” (Acts 4:12).
- 2) Someone who is baptized using the titles “Father, Son, and Holy Ghost” has not, as we have already proven, been baptized in any name, and, therefore, does not receive salvation, according to Acts 4:12.
- 3) The Bible says remission of sins comes “through his name”; therefore, unless you are baptized in His name, you do not receive the forgiveness of your sins.
“To him give all the prophets witness, that through his name whosoever believeth in him shall receive remission of sins” (Acts 10:43).

SECTION 7: DO I NEED TO BE REBAPTIZED?

Perhaps this lesson has raised some questions in your mind. You may be wondering, “Do I need to be rebaptized?” If you were not baptized in the name of Jesus, it is not a matter of “rebaptism”; the truth is, you were never Biblically baptized, for there is only one baptism (Ephesians 4:5), and, as we have seen, that baptism is in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. According to Acts 19:1-6, it is both proper and necessary for someone who has been baptized with another baptism to be baptized again in the name of Jesus.

“And it came to pass, that, while Apollos was at Corinth, Paul having passed through the upper coasts came to Ephesus: and finding certain disciples, 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” (Acts 19:1-6).

CONCLUSION

Consider this question straight from the Word of God, in Acts 22:16:

“And now why tarriest thou? arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord.”

Student Exercises – Unit 4
(Please complete, detach, and give to teacher)

Student name: _____

Date: ____/____/____

1. Which verse of Scripture commands us to be "born of water and of the Spirit"?

2. What is the primary purpose of water baptism?

3. What is one of the meanings of the Greek word *aphesis*?

4. Name two prerequisites to water baptism:

5. Identify the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, and give Biblical proof:

6. Did the apostles or early church preachers ever baptize using the titles "Father, Son, and Holy Ghost"?
Yes____ No____
If yes, give chapter and verse:

7. Have you been baptized in the name of Jesus Christ? Yes____ No____

8. If not, would you like to be? Yes____ No____