

**Module** : Foundation Doctrines  
**Session 6** : Water Baptism  
**Focus** : Meaning, Method, Significance

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## 1. WHAT DOES 'TO BAPTISE' MEAN?

The word baptise is the Greek word, '**BAPTIZO**', which means '**to dip, dip in, immerse, to submerge, to saturate, to overwhelm**' (viz. fully wet; cover wholly with fluid)<sup>1</sup>. The verb 'baptise' is derived from the root Greek word, '**BAPTO**', which means '**to dip**' (see Luke 16:24, John 13:26; Rev. 19:13). The compound, '**EMBAPTO**', also means '**to dip into fluid**' (see Matthew 26:23, Mark 14:20, John 13:26).

### We may define BAPTISM as follows:

To 'baptise' is to immerse or saturate something into something else. In the Bible, there are various kinds of baptisms, e.g., in the Holy Spirit, in suffering, in the Body of Christ and in Christ Himself (the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit).

### We may define WATER BAPTISM as follows:

Water baptism refers to an act of spiritual significance where someone is immersed or submerged in water by another and then taken out of the water.

[The spiritual significance of this is discussed under point 7 below]

## 2. WHAT IS THE BIBLICAL METHOD OF WATER BAPTISM?

As indicated above, water baptism implies that one is immersed into water and then taken out. **Total immersion into water** is the biblical method of baptism. John baptised Jesus, wholly immersing Him **IN** the waters of the river Jordan.

**Matt. 3:16(a)** After being baptized, Jesus came up immediately from the water;

**Mark 1:10(a)** Immediately coming up out of the water, ...

The Ethiopian eunuch was also baptised in water by complete immersion.

**Acts 8:38**

And he ordered the chariot to stop; and they both went down into the water, Philip as well as the eunuch, and he baptized him. When they came up out of the water, ...

In the two instances cited above, if baptism was simply by sprinkling a little water on the head, there would be no need to actually physically go into the water - which they did. Also, sprinkling is not in accordance with the meaning of the Greek word 'baptise', which suggests **complete submersion into water**. For his baptisms, John selected places like a river because of the abundance of water available.

**John 3:23**

John also was baptizing in Aenon near Salim, because there was MUCH WATER there; and people were coming and were being baptized.

### 3. WHAT ARE THE CONDITIONS FOR WATER BAPTISM?

#### a) REPENTANCE

**Mark 1:15**

and saying, "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel."

In the New Testament, water baptism started with John the Baptist. He demanded repentance before he baptised anyone.

**Mark 1:3-5**

THE VOICE OF ONE CRYING IN THE WILDERNESS, 'MAKE READY THE WAY OF THE LORD, MAKE HIS PATHS STRAIGHT.' " John the Baptist appeared in the wilderness preaching a **baptism of repentance** FOR the forgiveness of sins. And all the country of Judea was going out to him, and all the people of Jerusalem; and they were being baptized by him in the Jordan River, confessing their sins.

**Matt. 3:11(a)** As for me, I baptize you with **water** FOR repentance, ...

The word '**for**' highlighted is the Greek word '**eis**'<sup>2</sup>, which in its usage here suggests the meaning - 'because of' or 'on account of'. Thus, John baptised people on account of or because of their repentance from sin.

Peter preached the same principle:

**Acts 2:37-38** Now when they heard this, they were pierced to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, “Brethren, what shall we do?” Peter said to them, “**Repent**, and each of you **be baptized** in the name of Jesus Christ **FOR** the forgiveness of your sins; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.

## b) **BELIEF OR FAITH IN JESUS CHRIST**

Belief in Jesus Christ, God’s Son, is a necessary pre-requisite for salvation. The Philippian Jailor was told to simply believe and he would be saved. He was baptised afterwards.

**Acts 16:29-34** And he called for lights and rushed in, and trembling with fear he fell down before Paul and Silas, and after he brought them out, he said, “Sirs, what must I do to be saved?” They said, “**Believe in the Lord Jesus**, and **you will be saved**, you and your household. And **they spoke the word of the Lord to him together with all who were in his house**. And he took them that very hour of the night and washed their wounds, and immediately **he was baptized**, he and all his household.

**Mark 16:16** He who **has believed and has been baptized** shall be saved; but he who has disbelieved shall be condemned.

{**Note**: In Mark 16:16, belief in Jesus is set forth as a requirement for salvation; baptism is a necessary step in perfecting one’s obedience, fulfilling all righteousness and hastening one’s progress to maturity; the second half of the verse only sets forth disbelief as resulting in damnation – and not disbelief coupled with non-baptism.}

**Acts 8:12** But when **they believed** Philip preaching the good news about the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, **they were being baptized**, men and women alike.

c) **AN UNDERSTANDING OF SALVATION AND AT LEAST SOME INSIGHT INTO THE NECESSITY AND SPIRITUAL SIGNIFICANCE OF BAPTISM**

The commandment in **Matthew 28:19-20** says to '**teach** all nations, **baptizing** them ...' This passage does not allude to water baptism per se, but rather to baptism into the nature (name) of the Godhead - Father, Son and Spirit. Through 'teaching' apostolic doctrine, this baptism takes place. This baptism is discussed later, but we want to highlight the simple point here, that teaching or instruction is an essential requirement before baptism is to take place.

Before water baptism, there should be some degree of teaching/ discussion/ education, especially concerning salvation, repentance and belief in the Lord Jesus Christ. An examination of the following instances where new believers were baptised will reveal that some measure of instruction occurred before baptism - in some cases it is implied and in others it was an instruction: **[Acts 2:41; 8:12; 8:36-39; 9:17-18; 22:16; 10:48; 16:14-15,33,34]**. After having heard the gospel of salvation, in most cases, baptism followed **within a few hours after conversion and was never delayed for more than a few days**, e.g. Cornelius and the Philippian jailor and their respective households were baptised on the same day of their initial salvation experience; Paul was baptised in the Holy Spirit and then in water three days after his conversion.

**Acts 9:17-19**

- 17 So Ananias departed and entered the house, and after laying his hands on him said, "Brother Saul, the Lord Jesus, who appeared to you on the road by which you were coming, has sent me so that you may regain your sight and **be filled with the Holy Spirit.**"
- 18 And immediately there fell from his eyes something like scales, and he regained his sight, and **he got up and was baptized;**
- 19 and he took food and was strengthened.

#### 4. WHO CAN BE BAPTISED IN WATER?

Any person, of ANY CHRONOLOGICAL AGE, i.e. young or old, who fulfils the above three conditions for baptism may be baptised. This naturally raises the issue of infant baptism. Based on the following facts, **infant baptism is not a biblical practice**:

- Jesus modeled acceptable baptism. He was not baptised as an infant, but the Scriptures only indicate that He was brought to Jerusalem by His parents to be **'presented'** to the Lord.

**Luke 2:22** And when the days for their purification according to the law of Moses were completed, they brought Him up to Jerusalem to present Him to the Lord.

- The two incidents in the book of Acts where whole households were baptised does not include infants in the light of the following:

In both the cases of Cornelius and his household (**Acts 10 and 11**) and that of the Philippian jailor and his household (**Acts 16:29-34**), everyone present in the house, as the Scriptures report, heard and intelligently understood the message of the Word preached, they were all baptised in the Holy Ghost and spoke in tongues, and were all saved, before being baptised in water. Infants are not capable of intelligently responding to the preached word and then make a decision to be saved. Thus, we can conclude that there could not have been infants in these households.

#### 5. WHEN SHOULD AN INDIVIDUAL BE BAPTISED IN WATER?

Read point 3 (c) above again.

**There should not be too much of a delay in being baptised.**

**Acts 22:16** 'Now why do you delay? Get up and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on His name.'

Scripturally, BAPTISM occurred within a few hours after conversion and was never delayed for more than a few days.

## 6. WHO CAN BAPTISE SOMEONE ELSE IN WATER?

Traditionally, responsible people of reasonable spiritual maturity within the Church baptise others in water, e.g. the Senior Minister, an elder, etc. But generally, from a biblical perspective, this is not a hard and fast rule. Basically, any son of God who understands the importance and significance of water baptism may baptise new believers. One need not wait for a special service or ceremony, although this is now common practice in the Church of God. It is fine to do so, but it is not a biblical rule. It may also take place anywhere, wherever a sufficient amount of water is available for complete immersion. I would advise though that, where possible, the baptism be administered by a mature believer and it be performed publicly with at least one witness. Again, no hard and fast rule here because in the case of Paul, Ananias who baptised him seems to be the only witness (Acts 9:17-19). The same could be said of the Ethiopian eunuch being baptised by Philip in water along a deserted road (Acts 8:38). Where the one to be baptised is part of a local church, the Senior Minister/Elder of that church will usually direct the protocols governing the actual baptism, either administering him/herself or delegating this responsibility to someone else.

**An Aside:** Jesus did not baptise anyone, but His disciples did (John 3:22; 4:1,2).

**John 3:22** After these things Jesus and His disciples came into the land of Judea, and there **He was spending time with them and baptizing.**

**John 4:1,2** Therefore when the Lord knew that the Pharisees had heard that Jesus was making and baptizing more disciples than John (although **Jesus Himself was not baptizing, but His disciples were**).

In the city of Corinth, Paul only baptised Gaius, Crispus and the household of Stephanus (1 Cor. 1:13-17). Paul used this fact as an argument to neutralise any kind of idolisation of himself in the minds of the people to the degree where they discredit other credible persons whom God was using in their context.

**1 Cor. 1:11-17:** For I have been informed concerning you, my brethren, by Chloe's people, that there are **quarrels among you**. Now I mean this, that each one of you is saying, **"I am of Paul," and "I of Apollos," and "I of Cephas," and "I of Christ."** Has Christ been divided? Paul was not crucified for you, was he? Or were you **baptized in the name of Paul?** I thank God that I baptized none of you except Crispus and Gaius, so that no one would say you were baptized in my name. Now I did baptize also the household of Stephanas; beyond that, I do not know whether I baptized any other. **For**

**Christ did not send me to baptize, but to preach the gospel, not in cleverness of speech, so that the cross of Christ would not be made void.**

Division within the church of the city of Corinth established itself around people expressing loyalty to certain apostles. In this context, Paul raises the issue of him only having baptised a few people and reminding them that none were baptised in the name of 'Paul'. Baptisms, in the culture and times of the New Testament, were also used generally to indicate that **the person being baptised was submitting himself to the entirety of teachings/doctrine of the person in whose name he was baptised (e.g. in the name of the Lord Jesus)**. Hence, Paul reminds the Corinthians that they were not baptised in the name of 'Paul' and by implication, asserting they were baptised in the name of 'Christ' (see 1 Cor. 1:13).

## 7. WHAT IS THE SPIRITUAL SIGNIFICANCE OF WATER BAPTISM?

### ❖ **BAPTISM IS A BOLD DECLARATION OF ONE'S REPENTANCE FROM SIN AND BELIEF IN THE LORD JESUS CHRIST**

John demanded from certain Scribes and Pharisees that they produce evidence of their lives being transformed through repentance before he baptised them.

**Matt. 3:7-8** But when he 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? **Therefore bear fruit in keeping with repentance**;

The Pharisees and Scribes were essentially hypocritical, parading spirituality and right standing with God, yet living lives divorced from what they verbally proclaimed. Hence, John insisted they provide evidence of true transformation before he would baptise them.

In John's mind, those being baptised had already repented and received forgiveness of sin. Thus the act of baptism was an external, outward symbolic seal or indication, which confirmed an already attained inward transformation through repentance. With this in mind, read Romans 6:1-7 cited below under the next point.

❖ **IN BAPTISM, WE IDENTIFY WITH JESUS' DEATH, BURIAL AND RESURRECTION - RECKONING OURSELVES DEAD TO SIN, BEING RAISED UP TO A WALK IN NEWNESS OF LIFE AND FILLED WITH THE PROPHETIC HOPE OF A BODILY RESURRECTION.**

**Romans 6:1-7**

**N.B.**



WHAT shall we say then? **Are we to continue in sin** so that grace may increase? **May it never be!** How shall we who died to sin still live in it? Or do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus have been baptized into His death? Therefore we have been buried with Him through baptism into death, so that as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life. For if we have become **united with Him in the likeness of His death**, certainly we shall also be in the likeness of His resurrection, knowing this, that our old self was crucified with Him, in order that our body of sin might be done away with, so that we would no longer be slaves to sin; for he who has died is freed from sin.

Verse 2 indicates that as result of our salvation, we have 'died to sin', i.e. sin has lost its appeal to us. We are no longer under the power of sin. It has lost its attraction and lure. Literally, a dead man is unresponsive to any temptation to do evil or sin. Similarly, when are dead to sin, sin has lost its capacity to seduce us into disobeying God. Verse 6 indicates that our old man, which is a reference to our old sinful nature, was crucified with Jesus on the cross. See also 1 Peter 2:24:

**1 Peter 2:24**

And He Himself bore our sins in His body on the cross, so that we might die to sin and live to righteousness; for by His wounds you were healed.

Therefore we are not slaves to sin; we are not ruled by sin; we are not dictated to and motivated by the sinful nature; we are dead to sin as a result of believing in Jesus and His work on the cross. Christ died, was buried and arose on the third day. **Romans 6:1-7** indicates that we have been baptised into His death (symbolised by the complete immersion into the water) and that **we are united with Him in the LIKENESS of His death.**

The Greek word **homoioma**, translated 'likeness', is explained below:

**Likeness = homoioma<sup>3</sup>**

- = that which has been made after the likeness of something
- = a figure, image, representation
- = resemblance, such as amounts almost to equality or identity



Going under the water in baptism, prophetically and symbolically affirms the fact that we have fully identified with the death of Christ and the power or effect that His death brings, i.e. right standing with God and death to the old nature of sin. You affirm the fact that when Jesus died, so did you also, and that you indeed are dead to sin - sin having no attraction to you anymore, and thus no power over you. Being raised up out of the water symbolically testifies to the fact that we are walking in newness of life - committed to living a righteous life before God. Water baptism does not produce the condition of being dead to sin; your belief in Jesus and repentance from sin does. Water baptism affirms this reality and harnesses empowering grace upon you to live out this reality.

Water baptism is one of three sacraments we celebrate in the New Covenant. The other two are marriage and the celebration of the Lord's Supper (Often called 'Communion' or 'Table of the Lord'). Through the rite of a sacrament, GRACE is transferred which enables or empowers the believer to live effectively as God's son in the earth. For example, in marriage, the husband represents Christ and the wife, the Church. The natural marriage has a far greater symbolic representation of this Divine relationship between Christ and His Church, and subsequently can attract to it the empowering grace of God. In the celebration of the Lord's Supper, grace for forgiveness, health and long life is also imparted. Similarly, there is a spiritual transaction or counterpart that occurs when a person is baptised in water. Divine grace is supernaturally released to capacitate the one being baptised to start to live out practically their already attained inward position of being dead to sin and no longer under the rule of satan. The act of water baptism is a hugely powerful and supernatural thing.

**❖ BAPTISM IS SYMBOLIC OF THE CIRCUMCISION OF THE FLESHLY NATURE, AND A DECLARATION OF THE INCAPACITY OF THE DOMAIN OF DARKNESS TO ENSLAVE YOU ANY LONGER**

**Colossians 2:9-14**

- 9 For in Him all the fullness of Deity dwells in bodily form,  
 10 and in Him you have been made complete, and He is the head over all rule and authority;  
 11 and in Him you were also circumcised with a circumcision made without hands, in the removal of the body of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ;  
 12 having been BURIED WITH WITH IN BAPTISM, in which you were also raised up with Him through faith in the working of God, who raised Him from the dead.  
 13 When you were dead in your transgressions and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He made you alive together with Him, having forgiven us all our transgressions,

- 14 having cancelled out the certificate of debt consisting of decrees against us, which was hostile to us; and He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross.
- 15 When He had disarmed the rulers and authorities, He made a **public display of them**, having triumphed over them through Him.

In the scripture passage above, baptism is symbolically likened unto the circumcision from the fleshly or Adamic nature. Baptism does not produce the condition of being dead to sin, for the person is already dead to sin as result of accepting and believing in Jesus Christ as His Lord and Saviour, repenting from sin and believing in the finished work of Jesus on the cross. Like the death and resurrection of Jesus essentially disarmed and triumphed over satanic rulers and authorities, and also made a PUBLIC display of them, **baptism asserts to the entire domain of the heavenlies, both the angelic realm and the demonic realm, and obviously to those people witnessing the baptism, that you have repented, are dead to sin, are justified by the Blood of Christ, that satan has no legal grounds to accuse you of your former life.** Baptism is simply an outward seal symbolically and publicly testifying that the believer has died to sin, is thus circumcised in his heart from carnal living, and is living a 'resurrected life' in righteousness before God.

Note that in Col. 2:12, we engage in the act of baptism, identifying with the death, burial and resurrection of Christ **BY FAITH**. 1 Peter 3:20-21 uses Noah's ark as a type of baptism that saves us. Noah built the ARK by FAITH (Heb.11:7). Baptism saves us in the sense of what it represents. **Faith is necessary to affirm and access the resident spiritual reality within baptism** (more on this later).

The one being baptised must in his heart express faith in God, who has instituted water baptism as a tangible prophetic declaration of being dead to sin, but alive to God, and like Jesus did at His baptism, be in a **prayerful posture** of heart, consciously **calling on God's name** (nature and authority).

**Luke 3:21** Now it came about when all the people were baptized, that **Jesus was also baptized**, and **WHILE HE WAS PRAYING**, heaven was opened, ...

**Acts 22:16** 'Now why do you delay? Get up and **be baptized**, and wash away your sins, **calling on His name.**'

Scripturally, **baptism does not have anything to do with qualification for church membership.** You are a member of the Church, which is the Body of Christ (not a building) when you get saved

(Acts 2:47). We are baptised into Christ (Galatians 3:27), not into a church. Although 'baptism into Christ' may not be a reference primarily to water baptism per se, but it is an incipient stage of it.

### ❖ BAPTISM IS ALSO A NECESSARY STEP IN THE PATH OF 'FULLFILLING ALL RIGHTEOUSNESS'

**Matthew 3:13-15** Then Jesus \*arrived from Galilee at the Jordan coming to John, to be baptized by him. But John tried to prevent Him, saying, "I have need to be baptized by You, and do You come to me?" But Jesus answering said to him, "Permit it at this time; for in this way it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness."

One essential difference to note here in connection with Jesus' baptism: He was not baptised as a result of repentance from sin, because He was sinless (1 Peter 2:21-22). In His own words, He wanted to be baptised, to fulfil all righteousness. The Gift of Righteousness is imputed to us at salvation (Rom.5:17). It is a gift received, not something that we can earn or work for. But once we are positionally righteous in Christ, we are to PRACTISE righteousness (1 John 3:7; 2:29). We are to grow into this righteousness practically and experientially in every department of our lives. In this respect, righteousness is compliance to God's predetermined standards for how men should live in every aspect of their lives. It also includes "conformity to God's moral character, doing that which is right in God's eyes and in accordance with His revealed will" (Dr Sagie Govender). Jesus permitted Himself to be baptised to 'FULFIL ALL RIGHTEOUSNESS' - He did what was right in God's sight and in accordance with His revealed will. In being baptised in water, He set an example for us in embracing it as a necessary step in our growth toward spiritual maturity/perfection (Heb. 6:1,2) as we seek to fulfil ALL righteousness. Water baptism is doing that which is right in God's sight. It is an expression of righteous obedience to a very clear command of scripture. Water baptism is righteous compliance to a standard of behavior predetermined by God Himself. When you practise any form of righteousness, GRACE is attracted to you in your obedience. Grace reigns through righteousness (Rom. 5:21).

Note that Jesus said that it was 'fitting' for US (plural, not 'me' singular). In allowing Himself to be baptised, Jesus established a pattern and an example for us to follow. In baptism, our outward obedient engagement in this practice fulfills or brings to completion the already attained inward righteousness.

## 8. IN WHOSE NAME MUST WE BAPTISE?

### WHY DO SOME BAPTISE IN THE NAME OF THE FATHER, SON AND HOLY SPIRIT AND YET OTHERS BAPTISE IN THE NAME OF JESUS ONLY?

In Matthew 28:19, Jesus Himself instructed us in whose name the baptism of nations should occur. Matthew 28:19 is not a direct reference to Water Baptism, but immersion into the 'NAME' (nature, will, authority and representation) of the entirety of the Godhead.

**Matthew 28:19**      Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, **baptizing them in the NAME of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit.**

God, who is Spirit, is one, yet three distinct persons, viz. the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. This aspect of God's composition is termed the 'Godhead' (theologians have coined the term 'trinity' to describe this).

Name = **ónoma** = Character, reputation, person<sup>4</sup>.

This word has primary reference to 'character' and 'authority.'

Doing an act 'in the name of God' means **'by the authority'** of that name. We **pray 'in the name of Jesus' - i.e. in the authority and nature of that name.** We need not actually say 'in the name of Jesus' when we pray. The greater truth is that the **spirit and content of the prayer must be in keeping with the name, nature, will and in the authority** of Jesus Christ.

The **same thought** can be applied to water baptism. The water baptism itself must be consistent with the person, character and nature of the entire Godhead. Whether or not we actually say 'I baptise you in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit' or 'I baptise you in the name of Jesus' is not the core issue, nor is it as important as the **baptism being consistent with the nature and will of the Godhead.**

Where the Greek preposition **'eis'** (in, into or unto) occurs after the verb **'baptizo'**, the word baptise is demonstrated in its more general implications – meaning **'to be identified with'**. Thus, baptism 'in the name of the Father, Son and the Holy Spirit' or 'in the name of Jesus' means **"in identification with that name and all that it stands for"**. Other Scriptures where the preposition 'eis' is used after the verb 'baptized' are Matt. 28:19; 19:3,5; Rom. 6:3; 1 Cor. 1:13; 12:13 and Gal. 3:27.

When Jesus was baptised, His baptism prophetically prefigured the presence, power and authority of the entire Godhead, in that:

1. He, the **SON**, was being baptised
2. The **HOLY SPIRIT** descended upon Him
3. The **FATHER** affirmed Him from heaven



### **Matthew 3:13-17**

- 13 Then Jesus arrived from Galilee at the Jordan coming to John, to be baptized by him.
- 14 But John tried to prevent Him, saying, "I have need to be baptized by You, and do You come to me?"
- 15 But Jesus answering said to him, "**Permit it** at this time; **FOR IN THIS WAY** it is fitting for us to **fulfill all righteousness**." Then he permitted Him.
- 16 After being baptized, Jesus **came up immediately from the water**; and behold, the heavens were opened, and he saw the Spirit of God descending as a dove and lighting on Him,
- 17 and behold, a voice out of the heavens said, "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well-pleased."

**'In this way' = houtō** = In this manner; on this wise<sup>5</sup>.

Jesus, by His own baptism, established a pattern for baptism; He set a 'way' or 'manner' for it.

In this manner was Jesus baptised:

- He was not an infant;
- He was righteous - dead to sin;
- He did so to fulfil all righteousness - suggestive also of a movement toward maturity;
- He was immersed in water;
- There was no 'in the name of' or other 'formula' spoken; but, ...
- There were indications of the nature and character of the entire Godhead - for example, the Father in His fathering role affirms and validates the Son for His obedience; the Spirit, in His typical function, alights upon the Son to empower Him; the Son, in his typical role, executes obediently the will of God.

The point to be made here is that the essence of the entire Godhead in some degree was obvious and evident. Baptism 'in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit' refers not so much to an expression or phrase used when we baptise someone, but **rather it refers more to an experience consistent with and reflective of Christ, the fullness of the Godhead**, than a mere

verbal pronouncement. **The verbal declaration, 'in the name of', is only valid if the person being baptised and the 'manner' of baptism does not contradict the spirit, nature and authority of the Godhead - the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.**

Also, In Matthew 28:19, where Jesus very clearly indicates that baptism must take place in the nature or authority of the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, is not conclusively a reference to water baptism, **since 'water' is not mentioned**. To counter this point of view, some argue, however, that in the case where Paul baptised John's disciples **'in the name of the Lord Jesus'** (Acts 19:5), and where Peter baptised Cornelius and his household **'in the name of Jesus Christ'** (Acts 10:48), no mention of water is also made, yet the context implies that water baptism is referred to. Thus, on this basis, one may conclude that while Matthew 28:19 does not explicitly refer to water baptism, it does not exclude an association with it.

It may very well be that, according to the hermeneutical principle of 'double reference', where a scripture can accurately be applied to more than one thing, Matthew 28:19 includes a reference to water baptism, but there is also **a greater application** that must not be overlooked, i.e. that we are called to baptise (immerse) nations into the nature and authority of the entire Godhead - Father, Son and Holy Spirit - through the systematic teaching of apostolic doctrine of ALL that we have been commanded (which is the next phrase of the command in verse 20).

### **Matthew 28:19,20**

- 19     **"Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit,**
- 20     **teaching them to observe all that I commanded you;** and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age."

I would personally regard this as another type of baptism altogether - (a baptism through consistent teaching of apostolic doctrine) - and not water baptism per se.

Peter's sermon in Acts 2, where he stated that baptism should take place in **Jesus' name** (Acts 2:38), his baptism of Cornelius and his household **'in the name of Jesus Christ'** (Acts 10:48), the baptism of those who believed in Samaria **'in the name of the Lord Jesus'** (Acts 8:16), and the incident recorded in Acts 19, where Paul baptised John's disciples **in the name of the 'Lord Jesus'** (Acts 19:5), does not contradict the commandment in Matthew 28:19, whether or not one accepts it as a reference to water baptism.

Read the context of Acts 19 in particular:

**Acts 19:1-5** IT happened that while Apollos was at Corinth, Paul passed through the upper country and came to Ephesus, and found some disciples. He said to them, “Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?” And they said to him, “No, we have not even heard whether there is a Holy Spirit.” And he said, **“Into what then were you baptized?”** And they said, **“Into John’s baptism.”** Paul said, “John baptized with the baptism of repentance, **telling the people to believe in Him who was coming after him**, that is, **in Jesus.**” When they heard this, they were **baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus.**

John’s entire ministry was transitional and also preparatory for the ministry of Jesus. John’s disciples had just been introduced to the saving grace of God through Jesus. Thus, Paul baptised them in the name or by the authority of Jesus. They were baptised, not in response to John’s teachings, but on account and as a result of the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Also, it must be borne in mind that ‘the fullness of the Godhead dwells in Christ (Colossians 2:9) - and in an earthly context, JESUS was the Christ, the SON of the Living God. Thus, there is no contradiction in baptising someone in water in the name of ‘Jesus’, in the name of ‘the Lord Jesus Christ’ or ‘in the name of the ‘Father, Son and Spirit’. The spirit of religious legalism will make more of this than what it warrants.

There are also times when water baptism is recorded without reference to ‘in whose name’ the person was baptised, e.g.

- John’s baptising of people in water (Matt. 3:6);
- Jesus’ disciples baptising of people in water (John 3:22; 4:2);
- John’s baptising of Jesus in water (Matt 3:16);
- Philip’s baptising of the Ethiopian Eunuch in water (Acts 8:36)
- Paul’s baptism in water (Acts 9:18; 22:16)
- Lydia’s baptism into water (Acts 16:15)
- Crispus’ and other Corinthians’ baptism into water (Acts 18:8)

This indicates that this is not as important as the issues of the heart are, in the person being baptised. Do not be caught up or hung up on ‘formulas’ - ‘in the name of this, or in the name of that’, as long as the requirements for baptism have been met and there is sincerity, with a manner and disposition reflective of Christ.



**I personally would baptise people** “in the name of **the Lord Jesus Christ**”, **OR** “in the name of the **Father, Son and Holy Spirit**”, **OR** “in the name of **CHRIST**” as led by the Spirit in a particular situation.

Dr Sagie Govender, an apostle of Christ, explains that the term ‘Lord’ is an Old Testament equivalent of ‘Father’; ‘Jesus’ is a description of the SON; and ‘Christ’ means ‘the Anointed one’, thus signifying a reference to the Holy Spirit. Thus, the phrase ‘Lord Jesus Christ’ incorporates the entire Godhead. Recall how Paul reminded the Corinthians that none of them were baptised in the name of ‘Paul’, and by implication, asserting that they were baptised in the name of **‘Christ’** (1 Cor. 1:13).

In any case, in Christ, the fullness of deity (Godhead) dwells.

**Col. 2:9**      **For in Him all the fullness of Deity dwells** in bodily form

Jesus was the Christ in His earthly representation as God’s Son (Matt.16:16). So baptism in the Name of Jesus, the Lord Jesus, the Lord Jesus Christ, or Christ, is synonymous with and not in contradiction to baptism in the Name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

**There is overwhelming evidence that most occurrences of water baptisms in Scripture were performed in name of Jesus or in the name of the Lord Jesus. This seems to be proper, for the entire symbolism of baptism relates to HIS death and burial primarily, and secondarily His resurrection.** Again, knowing the power and truth of the mutual and equal representation of all three persons in the Godhead in reference to each other - when mention is made of one - the other two are also referenced.

## **9. IN WHAT RESPECT DOES WATER BAPTISM SAVE YOU?**

Water Baptism saves you, for so says the Scriptures in Mark 16:16 and 1 Peter 3:21; and it is also implied in 1 Cor. 10:2. **As soon as we say ‘water baptism saves you’, many react negatively against this thought because of their limited view of salvation.**

Water baptism does not save us in the sense that it can be upheld as a requirement for salvation - as in being translated out of the kingdom of darkness and being translated into the Kingdom of God. In respect of water baptism saving you in reference to putting you in right standing with God, **it does not**, for the act of baptism already presupposes that you are already saved. Before a person is baptised in water, they are already in the Kingdom of God, because they have accepted



Jesus Christ as both Saviour and Lord, through their belief (faith) in Him and their repentance from sin.

### **So then, what do the Scriptures mean when it candidly says, 'baptism saves you'?**

Salvation has immediate, ongoing, and future dimensions. The Scripture says 'Believe on the Lord Jesus and you shall be saved'. This is an immediate and instantaneous experience. I AM saved now presently by virtue of my belief in Jesus. But also, the Scriptures teach that, "They that endure until the end shall be saved". This introduces a futuristic element in that, that which is a present reality will culminate in finality someday. We have been saved, we are being saved, and will be finally saved one day.

At the initial salvation experience, your spirit is entirely renewed and regenerated; your body will be redeemed at the resurrection when you will be clothed with an imperishable immortal body; but in the realm of your soul (your mind, will and emotions), you are being saved daily – renewed daily. Your spirit has been redeemed, your soul is being redeemed, and your body will be redeemed.

**Salvation is an all-encompassing and ongoing experience, and not just a single event.**

**Baptism in water is a vital part of our ongoing salvation process.** It might not be strictly upheld as a requirement for salvation, in that it 'gets' us saved, but it most certainly positions one to 'going on to perfection' or to 'maturity' - which implies an ever-increasing and unfolding expression of the salvation experience. Like the thief who died on the cross, the person who has fully repented and believes in Jesus Christ will go to be with God when he dies, but will not, in this life, reach the heights of spiritual development determined by the Lord, since 'baptisms', together with other doctrines cited in Heb.6:1,2, is a fundamental foundational principle of spiritual life that is absolutely necessary for 'going on' or progressing 'unto perfection' (Heb. 6:1,2).

### **Mark's Statement :**

**Mark 16:16** He who has believed and has been baptized shall be saved; but he who has disbelieved shall be condemned.

In the first part of this verse, Mark places both belief (faith) and baptism as requirements to be saved, and yet in the latter half of the verse, he only cites 'disbelief' without mentioning non-baptism as that which will condemn a person. Mark is simply positioning baptism as an essential and necessary experience in the entire process of salvation. When you are baptised in water, you make a powerful declaration to powers and principalities that you are fully identifying with Jesus' death, in that you have accepted Him as Lord and Saviour and thus have died to self and your own

way of doing things. By being baptised, you are symbolically BURIED with Him in baptism, and this symbolically testifies to the fact that satan has no control over you. It is not that he had control over you before you were baptised, but, being baptised makes affirmative that experience.

### Peter's Perspective:

#### 1 Peter 3:18-22

- 18 For Christ also died for sins once for all, the just for the unjust, so that He might bring us to God, having been put to death in the flesh, but made alive in the spirit;
- 19 in which also He went and made proclamation to the spirits now in prison,
- 20 who once were disobedient, when the patience of God kept waiting in the days of Noah, during the construction of the ark, in which a few, that is, eight persons, were brought safely through the water.
- 21 Corresponding to that, baptism now saves you - not the removal of dirt from the flesh, but an appeal to God for a good conscience - through the resurrection of Jesus Christ,
- 22 who is at the right hand of God, having gone into heaven, after angels and authorities and powers had been subjected to Him.

In 1 Pet. 3:21, baptism is referred to as an anti-type or figure of salvation or a physical act corresponding to the spiritual reality of salvation. According to Rom. 6:3-14 and Colossians 2:12, baptism is a symbol of Christ's death and also prefigures our hope of a bodily resurrection.

Baptism corresponds to how Noah and his family were delivered. The water was both the means of judgement and the means by which they were saved. Well, actually, the ARK saved them, but the ARK was essentially a large boat, which without water, is non-functional and of no benefit. The ark of Noah is representative of Jesus. **Death represented both the judgement of God on sin, but also the death of Jesus represented our means of salvation.** Noah's ark is representative of Jesus Himself. Our faith and belief in Jesus, His death and resurrection is what saves us. Dr Sagie Govender<sup>6</sup> throws further light on Peter's passage:

- \* "According to Heb.11:7, Noah built the Ark by FAITH. He believed God that there was going to be a flood and built an ark according to God's commandment. The ark saved Noah from the flood - in essence it was Noah's faith that saved him and his family. Noah demonstrated his faith by building the ark. We see this in 1 Pet. 3:21a, "There is also an antitype which now saves us,....". Noah's building of the ark corresponds in likeness to **water baptism as being a work of FAITH**. We are saved by believing in the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus Christ. This is our faith. **But faith without works is dead. Baptism is one of the 'works'**. We demonstrate our faith through baptism. Baptism demonstrates that you believe that Christ

died, was buried and rose again. **Baptism demonstrates faith, which cannot be seen and gives one peace** (good conscience).

[Dr Sagie Govender: Accurate Building Concepts (Level 2) Notes; Lesson 18]

Baptism is symbolic of Jesus' death and points to His resurrection. In baptism, we identify with His death and affirm that we also are 'dead to sin' and 'alive to God'. Baptism also highlights our belief in the fact of Jesus' resurrection, the means by which we are justified – Rom 4:25 ('He was raised for our justification').

**1 Pet.1:13** Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His great mercy has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead

**Baptism, per se, does not save you, for the act of baptism presupposes an already existing reality of salvation and being 'dead to sin'. Rather, baptism saves you in respect of what it represents or corresponds to.** It is also a very necessary step of faith and non-negotiable part of our ongoing salvation experience or process.

Another analogy used in Scripture of how baptism symbolically saves is found in 1 Corinthians 10:1-2.

**1 Cor. 10:1-2**

- 1 For I do not want you to be unaware, brethren, that our fathers were all under the cloud and all passed through the sea;
- 2 and all were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea;

Note here that Paul says Israel was baptised into Moses in the cloud and in the sea. Being baptised in the cloud is a type of the Holy Spirit Baptism, and being baptised in the sea corresponds to water baptism. After being in slavery and bondage in Egypt for 430 years, Israel was delivered and exited that Egyptian system which held them in bondage. They faced the Red Sea as an obstacle in their path toward possessing and inheriting the Promised Land. Pharaoh, a type of satan, pursued them with the intent of destroying them and/or possibly enslaving them again. God opened the sea, and Israel walked through on dry ground. Pharaoh and the Egyptian army, who tried to follow them through an open sea, were drowned as God covered them in the waters. In this, Israel was saved and their enemy defeated, never having the capacity to enslave them again.

In a similar fashion, baptism saves us, in that **our baptism sets in stone the incapacity of satan's power to again enslave us in a life of sin and bondage. Just like partaking of the Lord's Supper affirms and activates the release of grace for every benefit afforded to us by Jesus' death on the cross, so too baptism affirms and activates what His death and our decision to receive Him as Saviour and Lord, does for us.** Utterly destroying the might of the Egyptian military power forever freed Israel from the possibility of future attacks when they settled in the Promised Land. Similarly, water baptism asserts the fact that satan, our enemy, has been thoroughly defeated in the death of Jesus Christ on the cross, and that our acceptance of HIM as Lord and Saviour has **rendered our instinctual tendency to sin DEAD, such that the enemy has no basis upon which to ever accuse us of sin again.** Our sin has been forgiven and the new nature of Christ has been installed into our spirits.

In the table below, Dr Sagie Govender<sup>7</sup> succinctly captures the imagery employed in this passage of scripture. He explains "the passage of Israel through the Red Sea is called the 'baptism into Moses'. This is a TYPE of water baptism".

	TYPE	ANTI-TYPE
1	Israel crossed the Red Sea separating themselves from the old leader Pharaoh, to follow the new leader Moses.	The Christian, through water baptism, symbolises that he is separated from the old leader satan to follow the new leader Jesus Christ after his new birth.
2	Israel was delivered by the blood of the Lamb before passing through the Red Sea.	The Christian is delivered by the blood of Jesus Christ before water baptism.
3	The Red Sea separated Egypt from the Israelites.	Water baptism demonstrates the Christian's separation from his old life to a new life.

Table Source: Dr Sagie Govender : Accurate Building Concepts (Level 2) Notes; Lesson 18

## **Paul's Testimony:**

Paul, in his defense before the Jews in the temple, gave a brief testimony of his conversion experience. He explains the following instruction given to him by Ananias:

**Acts 22:16** 'Now why do you delay? Get up and be baptized, and wash away your sins,  
calling on His name.'

Paul really surrendered to the Lord on the Damascus road three days prior to this (Acts 9:1-19). Three days later, Ananias prays for him and he receives his sight and is filled with the Holy Ghost, an experience that naturally requires salvation first. He is then given instructions to be baptised in water. So the statement, "be baptised, and wash away your sins" must be seen in context. Baptism does not wash away your sins as we know. This statement is a description of the symbolic character of baptism in that it signifies sins which have already been forgiven.

May all grace and peace abound to you as you submit obediently to water baptism and 'go on to perfection' (Heb. 6:1,2).

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## ENDNOTES

1. See #G 907 in Strongs, Thayer and Zodhiates:

Zodhiates, S. (2000, c1992, c1993). The Complete Word Study Dictionary : New Testament (electronic ed.), Chattanooga, TN: AMG Publishers, #G907

Strong, J. (1890) Strong's Exhaustive Concordance, S.T.D., LL.D., e-Sword X, Version 3.2 (11), Dictionary, #G907

Thayer, J.H. (1996), Thayer's Greek Definitions, Hendrickson Publishers, e-Sword X, Version 3.2. (11), Dictionary, #G907

2. See also Acts 2:38 – "For the forgiveness ...".

Zodhiates, S. (2000, c1992, c1993). The Complete Word Study Dictionary : New Testament (electronic ed.), Chattanooga, TN: AMG Publishers, #G1519

Note : 'Eis' has the primary idea of motion into any place or thing; also of motion or direction to, toward or upon any place, thing. "For" (as used in Acts 2:38 "for the forgiveness...") could have two meanings. If you saw a poster saying "Jesse James wanted for robbery", "for" could mean Jesse is wanted so he can commit a robbery, or is wanted because he has committed a robbery. The later sense is the correct one. So too in this passage, the word "for" signifies an action in the past. Otherwise, it would violate the entire tenor of the NT teaching on salvation by grace and not by works.  
(<http://www.biblestudytools.com/lexicons/greek/nas/eis.html>)

3. Thayer, J.H. (1996), Thayer's Greek Definitions, Hendrickson Publishers, e-Sword X, Version 3.2. (11), Dictionary, #G3667
4. Zodhiates, S. (2000, c1992, c1993). The Complete Word Study Dictionary : New Testament (electronic ed.), Chattanooga, TN: AMG Publishers, #G3686
5. Zodhiates, S. (2000, c1992, c1993). The Complete Word Study Dictionary : New Testament (electronic ed.), Chattanooga, TN: AMG Publishers, #G3779
- 6 . [www.apostolicforum.co.za](http://www.apostolicforum.co.za)
7. Ibid