

Truth and Spirit Ministries

Water Baptism

By Denise Bostic

Regarding water baptism, should ministers baptize in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Ghost or in the name of Jesus?

The confusion over whether believers should be baptized in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit or in the name of Jesus only has come about within the Body of Christ mainly because of the teaching of those that hold to the [Oneness theology](#). Their lack of understanding and rejection of the [Trinity](#) has led them to teach believers that they should not be baptized in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit but rather in the name of Jesus *only*.

Instead of believing that there is one God that exists in three Persons (as the Trinitarians do), those that hold to the Oneness theology believe that there is only one Person within the Godhead that reveals himself in three ways. From Genesis to Revelation however, we find that God has revealed himself to man as three divine and distinct Persons that is one God. Knowing this truth will help us to understand the words of Jesus and why he commanded all believers to be baptized in the name of the Father, Son *and* Holy Spirit. (*Matthew 28:18-20*)

Being baptized in water is an act of obedience to the Lord's command but it is also making a public confession. According to the Bible, water baptism is a symbolic act where believers are making a declaration that they have repented of their sins and received forgiveness of them through faith in Christ. (*Acts 2:38*) On a deeper level, it represents our being baptized into Christ's death (through the Cross) and being raised from the dead through the glory of the Father so that we can live a new life in him through the power of the Spirit. (*Romans 6:3-4, 7:6*)

The particular manner in which one should be baptized in water has been made clear in the New Testament. Baptism should be by total immersion in water. In fact the word baptize comes from the word "baptizo" which means *immersion or submersion*. [907, Joseph Thayer's Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament] This definition has a much greater meaning as we will learn.

We find it recorded in the book of Matthew that when Jesus commanded his disciples to "go into all the world and preach the gospel" and "to make disciples of all nations," he also told them to "baptize them in the name of the *Father, Son and Holy Spirit*." Here, Jesus himself is verifying the truth that three, distinct Persons do exist within one God. We have not only the testimony of Jesus but also the godly men that wrote the Bible under the divine inspiration of the Holy Spirit. These scriptures teach us that there is

indeed more than one member of the Godhead. (*Moses in Genesis 1:26, Isaiah 6:1-8, John 14:26, 15:26, Paul in 2 Corinthians 13:14, 1 Peter 1:2, 1 John 5:7 KJV*)

Some believe that there is a contradiction between being baptized into the name of the Father, Son and Spirit and in the name of Jesus. As we study the Word in depth however, we will see that this is not a contradiction but a lack of knowledge on the part of those that do not understand what the words “in the name of” actually means. In Acts 2:38 the phrase “in the name of Jesus Christ” is actually translated in the Greek as “*on (epi) the name of Jesus Christ*.”

The Young’s Literal Translation brings this out clearly and reads, **“Reform, and be baptized each of you *on the name of Jesus Christ*.” (Acts 2:38)**

The phrase “on the name of Jesus Christ” means that we must be baptized “on his authority” or in the way that he commands. The Lord has commanded all to be baptized into the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. (*Matthew 28:19*)

In Matthew 28:19 the phrase “in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit” is translated as “*into (eis) the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit*.”

The American Standard Version brings this out clearly by stating, **“Go ye therefore, and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them *into the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit*.”**

God wants believers to be baptized into all three members of the Godhead. When we are baptized into all three members, this also means that we are (immersed, submerged) into an abiding and personal relationship with the **Father, Son and Holy Spirit**. This statement is fully supported by other scriptures throughout the New Testament. (*John 14:15-23, 15:1-10, 1 Corinthians 12:13, 1 John 1:1-4*) The New Testament does not teach that we have a relationship with Jesus only but with the Father and Holy Spirit as well. Because the Bible teaches us to be baptized into all three- Father, Son and Holy Spirit, this serves as proof that there are indeed three distinct persons but one God. (For more information about the Trinity, read the Fact or Fiction, [Is the Holy Spirit a Person or Force?](#))

I would like to mention one last thing. Those that hold to the Oneness theology teach that water baptism is essential to salvation but the word of God does not support this. They are basically teaching that baptism is a “work” of salvation. However, God’s free gift of salvation is by grace. It is based on the perfect work of Christ; therefore it doesn’t require any additional works by us. It is not the symbolic act of being baptized in water that saves us; the Bible makes it clear that we have remission of sin and redemption through the blood and body of Christ. (*Matthew 26:28, Hebrews 9:22, Ephesians 1:7, Colossians 1:14, Revelation 5:9*) It is by grace and faith in Christ that we are saved then, not works. (*Ephesians 2:4-9*)

Evidently one can be saved and go to heaven if they are unable to be baptized in water. For example, someone may be saved but be on their death bed, fighting in a war or about to crash in a plane or car. In these cases, individuals would not have time to be baptized in

water. (A good biblical example of this would be the story of the thief on the Cross. He was saved without being baptized in water. (*Luke 23:39-43*) If believers are not in these situations however, they should follow the example and command of Jesus and be baptized in water.