

BAPTISM

The word - baptidzo in its various forms is rarely translated; for example, when reading an English translation of the Greek New Testament one is reading English words which are a skilled translators best choice for the contextual meaning of the Greek words. However, in most cases, when the Greek word - baptidzo or one of its forms occurs, it is transliterated rather than translated, leaving it up to the reader to substitute some meaning for the word.

Whole groups of people who claim to be Christians with love for others split from one another because of their interpretations of the meaning of this word. Many will have no fellowship with those of a different opinion on water baptism. Some adhere to only one meaning of the word, e.g. immersion in water, and reject any other possible meanings, failing to recognize that to immerse is just that. In which case the one being baptized would die.

Others focus their attention on the mode of baptism and debate the merits of sprinkling versus immersion, building what they believe to be solid doctrine on prepositions, for example, the Greek preposition - ek which one takes to mean "away from" and another takes to mean "out of." Prepositions are a poor basis for doctrine.

In A Debate on Christian Baptism published by A. T. Skillman & Son there is an example of how carnal these arguments can be about the mode of water baptism. It is that of a woman who was baptized by immersion. Later on she mentioned to one of the elders that a small part of her face had not gone under the water. After some discussion with the Pastor, she was baptized again to ensure that her entire body was "immersed."

Many times the necessity for and the mode of water baptism are stressed more and seem to be more important than the great doctrines of the Word, such as the sovereignty of God, the deity and humanity of Christ, His substitutionary death, the total depravity of man and redemption by grace.

Since one of the basic meanings of the word, in its various forms, is "to dip" or "to immerse," much of the time this meaning is taken to be to "dip in water" or to "immerse in water," which is simply not true. This is evident in a few interesting quotes from Greek literature which clearly show that the word does not convey this meaning and surely does not always mean immersion in water:

Aristophanes - "Magnes...shaved his face and baptized it with tawny colors."

Dion Cassius - "Those from above baptizing the ship with stones and engines."

Aelian - "Having baptized with precious ointment a garland woven with roses."

Anonymous - "The bladder was baptized by floating on the surface."

Over one hundred meanings for the forms of - baptidzo exist in Greek literature; to list just a few:

washing, dyeing, poisoning, sinking, drawing water, overwhelm, terrify, deep in debt, wound (with a weapon), etc.

These meanings lead to the conclusion that the word means for one thing to be immersed in, to be identified with or to come under the control or influence of another thing.

Dr James W. Dale did extensive study and research in his book *Classic Baptism* where he defines this word thus:

"Whatever is capable of thoroughly changing the character, state, or condition of any object, is capable of baptizing that object; and by such change of character, state, or condition does, in fact, baptize it."

This meaning of “thoroughly changing the character, state or condition” appears in every use of the word, for example, when a ship sank it was immersed in or was identified with the sea. If a garment was dyed it was dipped in or identified with the dye. If one was poisoned, one came under the influence of or was identified with the poison. A person deeply in debt was immersed in or identified with the debt. A person terrified was immersed in or identified with the fear. In all these cases the “character, state or condition” of the object or person has been thoroughly changed. The root meaning of the Greek word suggested by many Bible Scholars, is “identification,” which probably best expresses the concept of one object or person being identified with something or someone else.

The meaning of a word in Scripture is not only indicated by its secular use but, more importantly, by how the Holy Spirit uses the word in the Scriptures. Here also the word - baptidzo cannot mean to dip or immerse in water. Look, for example, at Romans 6:3-5 where the Holy Spirit uses the meaning of “identification” to reveal the wonder of His grace:

Rom 6:3 Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death? 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. For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection:

There is clearly no water in the context. To even suggest that we were baptized into Jesus Christ by someone else using water is to rob the text of God’s grace. We are identified with Christ in His death, His burial, His resurrection, and His life. In addition, the allied phrases used by the Holy Spirit such as “baptized into,” “buried with,” and “planted together” all speak of this identification. If Romans 6 is speaking of water baptism then water baptism is absolutely necessary for regeneration, and grace is no longer grace.

Another example:

Isa 21:4 My heart panted, fearfulness affrighted me: the night of my pleasure hath he turned into fear unto me.

The Hebrew old testament was translated into Greek by Hebrew scholars in the third and second century BC. This translation is called the Septuagint, usually abbreviated LXX, and is a valuable source as an aid to understanding how the Hebrew experts equated Hebrew word meaning to Greek word meanings. In this case the word “affrighted” in the LXX is - baptidzei and clearly shows they used the word with the meaning of “identified with or controlled by fear.”

or

Heb 9:10 Which stood only in meats and drinks, and divers washings, and carnal ordinances, imposed on them until the time of reformation.

The word “washings” is the Greek word - baptismois and refers to ceremonial cleansings, such as the red heifer, and the Day of Atonement which were not by immersion, but by sprinkling, compare Heb 9:19 - 21. These “baptisms” were imposed on them **until** the time of reformation, that is, until Christ came and fulfilled the law and washed away their sins.

or these two,

Mat 20:22 But Jesus answered and said, Ye know not what ye ask. Are ye able to drink of the cup that I shall drink of, and to be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with?

Luk 12:50 But I have a baptism to be baptized with; and how am I straitened till it be accomplished!

Here it is clear that the word *baptisma* has nothing to do with immersion or dipping in water, but the fact that our Lord is identified with His suffering and death in our place.

or,

Mark 7:4 And when they come from the market, except they wash, they eat not. And many other things there be which they have received to hold, as the washing of cups, and pots, brazen vessels, and of tables.

The word “wash” is *baptisontai* and the word “washing” is *baptismous* both forms of *baptidzo* and clearly can not mean that each time they came from the market place they immersed themselves in water before they ate, or that they immersed their tables in water.

or,

Luke 11:38 And when the Pharisee saw it, he marvelled that he had not first washed before dinner.

The word “washed” is *baptidzo* and clearly cannot mean that the Pharisee had expected Christ to have immersed Himself in water before He ate.

or

1 Cor 10:1-2 ¶ 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; And were all baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea;

Clearly the children of Israel were identified with Moses, the cloud and the sea. In fact, they passed through the sea on dry ground and they surely were not “baptized unto Moses” with, or in water.

Many times Christians are told they are commanded to be water baptized. However, the only passage that has *baptidzo* in the passive voice (that which is done to you) as a command to be baptized is Act 2:38 and the modifier “with water” is not present in the text.

Act 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.

Here Peter is speaking to the “house of Israel” telling them not to be identified with the law of Moses but with Jesus Christ because of the fact of the remission of their sins through His finished work. It may be they symbolized this with water, however, that is unlikely because of the multitude present. If we limit this to water baptism only, we again make water baptism necessary for the remission of sins and thereby reduce the work that Christ has accomplished for His people.

The existence of a command to be water baptized is usually connected with the so called “Great Commission” in Matthew:

Mat 28:19-20 Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: 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.

First of all, the command in the passage is *teach* or make disciples, not to be baptized in water, in fact, water is not in the context. The command in this passage is to make disciples of all nations identifying them with the Father, and with the Son, and with the Holy Spirit.

If the passage means to baptize them with water in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, it is of more than passing interest that not once in the New Testament was this ever done. Though it is not mentioned in these passages whether or not water is present, the baptisms are always in the name of the Lord, or the Lord Jesus, never in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit;

for example;

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.

It is strange indeed that the disciples did not baptize using the formula normally used today in water baptism. It may be that they understood the passage commanded them to teach in such a way as to identify those taught with the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, but it is more reasonable to understand that since the church was not in view in the Gospels this injunction is primarily for Israel after the church age. It is clear that the disciples never did leave Jerusalem and go into all the world.

Although they are seldom considered when the subject of baptism is discussed, there are five other passages that refer to Christ's commission to His disciples just before He ascended. These should not be reduced to a level of less importance because man has labeled the one in Matthew as "the great commission." They are:

Mark 16:15-16 And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned.

Here, as in Matthew, the command is to *preach* the gospel in all creation. Only in the next phrase does the word baptism occur. If the baptism in this passage is with or in water then, without question, only those who are water baptized will escape damnation and once again the work of Christ has been reduced to nothing.

Some suggest that since the passage does not couple baptism with the unbelief of the damned this indicates that the baptism in this passage is only an act of obedience and is thus not absolutely necessary for the "saved." However, the passage teaches just the opposite, only those that believe, that is His sheep, are the ones baptized by the Holy Spirit into the body of Christ. Belief and baptism of the Holy Spirit are inseparable that is why this baptism can not be coupled with unbelief.

Luk 24:45-48 Then opened he their understanding, that they might understand the scriptures, And said unto them, Thus it is written, and thus it behoved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day: And that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. And ye are witnesses of these things.

Here in Luke our Lord never mentions baptism of any kind. Regardless of what conclusions one draws from this omission, it is clear that the "commission" is the preaching of repentance and remission of sins. If water baptism is a requirement for the Church it is strange that the Holy Spirit does not have Luke at least mention this necessity here.

John 21:17-24 He saith unto him the third time, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me? Peter was grieved because he said unto him the third time, Lovest thou me? And he said unto him, Lord, thou knowest all things; thou knowest that I love thee. Jesus saith unto him, Feed my sheep. Verily, verily, I say unto thee, When thou wast young, thou girdedst thyself, and walkedst whither thou wouldest: but when thou shalt be old, thou shalt stretch forth thy hands, and another shall gird thee, and carry thee whither thou wouldest not. This spake he, signifying by what death he should glorify God. And when he had spoken this, he saith unto him, Follow me. Then Peter,

turning about, seeth the disciple whom Jesus loved following; which also leaned on his breast at supper, and said, Lord, which is he that betrayeth thee? Peter seeing him saith to Jesus, Lord, and what shall this man do? Jesus saith unto him, If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee? follow thou me. Then went this saying abroad among the brethren, that that disciple should not die: yet Jesus said not unto him, He shall not die; but, If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee? This is the disciple which testifieth of these things, and wrote these things: and we know that his testimony is true.

In this extended passage dealing with one of our Lord's last meetings with His disciples the command is "feed my sheep." Clearly this was of great importance to Him and for us. It is strange that if water baptism is so important for His sheep that He does not even comment on it during this last time with His followers.

Acts 1:7-9 And he said unto them, It is not for you to know the times or the seasons, which the Father hath put in his own power. But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth. And when he had spoken these things, while they beheld, he was taken up; and a cloud received him out of their sight.

And here again just before He left, His commission to His disciples was to "witness unto me." Clearly the commission is the same but there is no reference to baptism which is difficult to understand if He considered water baptism a command or a requirement in Matthew.

Acts 10:40-43 Him God raised up the third day, and shewed him openly; not to all the people, but unto witnesses chosen before of God, even to us, who did eat and drink with him after he rose from the dead. And he commanded us to preach unto the people, and to testify that it is he which was ordained of God to be the Judge of quick and dead. To him give all the prophets witness, that through his name whosoever believeth in him shall receive remission of sins.

It is clear that the disciples understood His commission was to "preach" and "testify." Once again it is difficult to understand why there is no mention of baptism, especially if baptism is a requirement for the Christian.

These passages do not suggest there is a problem with the commission in Matthew but rather they emphasize the truth that the baptism in that passage is not water baptism but that of the Holy Spirit and is necessary for all as pointed out in Mark 16.

In addition to the passages speaking of our Lord's commission to His disciples there are also those dealing with His commission to Paul as not only the apostle to the gentiles but the apostle to the Church.

Ac 9:15 But the Lord said unto him, Go thy way: for he is a chosen vessel unto me, to bear my name before the Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel

Ro 15:16 That I should be the minister of Jesus Christ to the Gentiles, ministering the gospel of God, that the offering up of the Gentiles might be acceptable, being sanctified by the Holy Ghost.

1 Cor 1:17-18 For Christ sent me not to baptize, but to preach the gospel: not with wisdom of words, lest the cross of Christ should be made of none effect. For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved it is the power of God.

Gal 1:15-16 But when it pleased God, who separated me from my mother's womb, and called me by his grace, to reveal his Son in me, that I might preach him among the heathen; immediately I conferred not with flesh and blood

Ga 2:2 And I went up by revelation, and communicated unto them that gospel which I preach among the

Gentiles, but privately to them which were of reputation, lest by any means I should run, or had run, in vain. Gal 2:7-8 But contrariwise, when they saw that the gospel of the uncircumcision was committed unto me, as the gospel of the circumcision was unto Peter; (For he that wrought effectually in Peter to the apostleship of the circumcision, the same was mighty in me toward the Gentiles:)

Eph 3:8 Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ;

1Ti 2:7 Whereunto I am ordained a preacher, and an apostle, (I speak the truth in Christ, and lie not;) a teacher of the Gentiles in faith and verity.

2Ti 1:11 Whereunto I am appointed a preacher, and an apostle, and a teacher of the Gentiles.

In all of these passage where our Lord called Paul as the apostle to the uncircumcision the only mention of baptism is in I Cor where the Holy Spirit declares that Paul was not sent to baptize. How is it possible, if water baptism is a requirement for Christians, that it is not once mentioned in all of these passages dealing with Paul's commission to preach and to teach?

Sometimes it is suggested that since the Lord was baptized by John in or with water we should follow Him in water baptism. Many have even suggested that He was water baptized to institute water baptism as an ordnance for the Church. What He really did was to inform John that they were to fulfill the Scriptures concerning the mission of the forerunner who was to manifest Christ to Israel. There are many passages that exhort us to follow Him but none that even remotely suggest we follow Him in baptism any more than to follow Him in the observance of the Passover or in circumcision, all of which were part of His fulfilling the Law. However the Holy Spirit does point out:

Rom14:19 Let us therefore follow after the things which make for peace, and things wherewith one may edify another.

and surely the arguments that surround water baptism have not made for peace or for edification. What we have been called to do is to follow in His sufferings:

1Pe 2:21 For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps:

Think of it, He suffered for us, not for everyone, for us. The word "for" is the Greek word for substitution, He died in our place so that we live through Him. He, as the incarnation, submitted Himself to the will and purpose of the Father (not My will but Thine be done). In the same way we are to submit ourselves to Him, to do all things without murmurings and disputings knowing that it is God who works in us "to will and to do of His good pleasure."

Phil 2:13 For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure. Do all things without murmurings and disputings: That ye may be blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom ye shine as lights in the world;

How wonderful to realize that He is working in us to do of His good pleasure. Dear beloved Christian reader trust Him who does all things well, always remember:

Isa 26:3 Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee: because he trusteth in thee. Trust ye in the LORD for ever: for in the LORD JEHOVAH is everlasting strength:

Back to our discussion of baptism; for the Reader's information, here are the two verb forms and the three noun forms of the word and the number of times they are used in the Greek NT:

- verb, to immerse, to submerge, to identify
80 Times in the NT in 65 verses
1 Time Imperative - Acts 2:38

- verb, to dip repeatedly
3 Times, never in the imperative

- noun, washing
4 Times

- noun, immersion, identity
22 Times

- noun, baptizer
14 Times

If baptism with water is the only meaning for these words in Scripture, one is faced with many serious problems, not the least of which, is the mode of water baptism. If water baptism is that important why did not the Holy Spirit make the acceptable mode clear to everyone? Although it is possible He left it up to the choice of the believer, that seems unlikely since all the other precious doctrines of the Church are not left to the choice of the believer but are clearly identified in the doctrinal Epistles by the serious student of the Scriptures. Is the mode pouring, sprinkling, single immersion, triune immersion, face forward, backwards, babies, young people, adults only, etc., and who does the baptizing?

In addition to the problems with the mode of water baptism, is the much greater problem with many passages of Scripture which make no sense if baptism always means in or with water. Some of these passages are discussed below. The basic problem, the most serious problem, is whether or not water baptism is necessary for redemption. Rome says yes, but all Bible students realize this would blaspheme the finished work of Christ by adding something we do to what He has already done.

It would not be unreasonable to suggest that when the Holy Spirit is speaking about water baptism the word "water" is present in all the text, in fact, the word baptism demands the modifier if "with water" is the meaning. Here is a list of all these passages:

Mt 3:11 I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance: but he that cometh after me is mightier than I, whose shoes I am not worthy to bear: he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost, and with fire:

Mt 3:16 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:

Mr 1:8 I indeed have baptized you with water: but he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost.

Mr 1:9-10 And it came to pass in those days, that Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee, and was baptized of John in Jordan. And straightway coming up out of the water, he saw the heavens opened, and the Spirit like a dove descending upon him:

Lu 3:16 John answered, saying unto them all, I indeed baptize you with water; but one mightier than I cometh, the latchet of whose shoes I am not worthy to unloose: he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost and with fire:

Joh1:26 John answered them, saying, I baptize with water: but there standeth one among you, whom ye know not;

Joh 1:31 And I knew him not: but that he should be made manifest to Israel, therefore am I come baptizing with water.

Joh 1:33 And 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 Ghost.

Joh 3:23 And John also was baptizing in Aenon near to Salim, because there was much water there: and they came, and were baptized.

Ac 1:5 For John truly baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost not many days hence.

Ac 8:36 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?

Ac 8:38-39 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. 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.

Ac 10:47 Can any man forbid water, that these should not be baptized, which have received the Holy Ghost as well as we?

Ac 11:16 Then remembered I the word of the Lord, how that he said, John indeed baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost.

Not only is there a clear indication that there is a difference between the water baptism of John and the baptism of the Holy Spirit, but the reason for this, John 1:31, is that John baptized with water to “manifest Christ to Israel” whereas we are identified with Christ by being baptized into the body of Christ by the Holy Spirit. Note in all cases where water and baptism are mentioned together one or more from Israel is or are present. Also note in the doctrinal Epistles after Acts, water and baptism are never mentioned together. Clearly few, if any, today are being baptized with water to manifest Christ to Israel.

It is clear from the Scriptures that we are not commanded to be baptized in or with water, no mode of water baptism is revealed by the Holy Spirit and water baptism is absolutely not necessary for redemption, salvation, or forgiveness of sin. It is nothing we do, it is God, and God alone, who has redeemed us and identified us (baptized us) into the body of Christ.

In the early days of the Church, the Word was not complete and the work was primarily to Israel. It was to them that John came baptizing with water to manifest Christ to Israel because of the remission of their sins. Water baptism became the physical expression for the Jewish people (who, as we know “seek a sign”) of their acceptance of the finished work of Christ for the remission of their sins and their identification with Him rather than with the law.

With the completion of the New Testament Scriptures including the doctrinal Epistles to the Churches as well as the movement of the preaching of the good news from Israel to the Gentiles, the practice of water baptism became less and less a part of the work of the ministry as the emphasis turned to teaching sound doctrine. This can be seen in many passages, none of which mention neither the necessity for or the mode of baptism with water, here are several examples:

Ac 2:42 And they continued stedfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers.

Ro 16:17 Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them.

1Ti 4:13 *Till I come, give attendance to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine.*

Ti 4:16 *Take heed unto thyself, and unto the doctrine; continue in them: for in doing this thou shalt both save thyself, and them that hear thee.*

Tit 1:9 *Holding fast the faithful word as he hath been taught, that he may be able by sound doctrine both to exhort and to convince the gainsayers.*

Think of that admonition to Timothy in 4:16, that by taking heed unto doctrine he would both save Himself and them that heard him. Clearly not to redeem himself or to “born again” himself, he was already redeemed, but to rescue both himself and them that hear him. We know from John 10 it is only His sheep that are able to hear His Word, those who are not already His sheep cannot hear.

John 10:26 *But ye believe not, **because ye are not of my sheep**, as I said unto you. My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me:*

Without question they do not become His sheep by believing but they believe because they are already His sheep. In fact it is His redeemed sheep He came to save:

Mt 1:21 *And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name JESUS: for he shall save **his people** from their sins.*

It is His people He came to save, it is His people that need to be saved, that is, delivered, from the guilt of sin, from the law, from error, from the fear of death, from the effort of being made perfect by the flesh, etc and this is only done by taking heed to doctrine.

These are wonderful truths in His Word and are often sorely neglected in the Church today. However, although we are exhorted to give heed to doctrine, the present discussion is not an attempt to establish all of what was contained in the Apostles’ doctrine but to determine whether or not that doctrine included water baptism. The answer is clearly, it did not.

Doctrine is indicated, alluded to, typified, and enhanced by all of Scripture, of course, but without the Epistles, Romans through Thessalonians, there would be no fully developed doctrine for the Church. No understanding of the grace and the purpose of God for the body of Christ. For one example, in these Scriptures we now have the revelation of the mystery, Christ in us, the hope of glory. A mystery that had not been revealed before. If water baptism were so important as to be a requirement for the believers it is astounding that nothing is said about it in all of these Epistles and, as a result, there is no fully developed doctrine of water baptism for the Church.

Why, in all of these Epistles is there not one mention of baptism with or in water, not one. Think of it, in the Epistle to the Galatians, the Holy Spirit’s great treatise on law and grace, there is only one mention of baptism, Gal 3:27, and that of “baptism into Christ.” The word in this verse is in the passive voice indicating the work of the Holy Spirit not a work of ours.

Here in the Epistle to the Galatians is God’s answer to those who would add some work of man to the finished work of Christ. It is here He deals with those who would add circumcision, a work of the law, to that which Christ has done, a work of grace. Although circumcision was required under law, there is no such requirement for water baptism or any other human act under grace, for any such requirement would make grace not grace.

In that light it is interesting then that some suggest water baptism in the New Testament replaces circumcision in the Old Testament. If this were so the Holy Spirit missed a tremendous opportunity to clearly set forth in the letter to the Galatians the necessity for and the mode of water baptism as a replacement for circumcision. Even suggesting this runs counter to the entire thesis of Galatians. Substituting the necessity for water baptism as a replacement for the

necessity of circumcision is merely a changing of human activity. In so doing one just as surely defiles the true meaning of grace.

This, of course, is not to say that if one desires to illustrate or symbolize in some physical way what he believes Christ has done for him, it is wrong to do so. Of course not, as long as it is not made an act of obedience, or an act of necessity or an act having salvific value.

If one wanted to use the physical element of water to show the coming of the Spirit, one would probably chose pouring. Or if he wanted to illustrate his cleansing from sin he would chose sprinkling. On the other hand if one wanted to illustrate his identity with Christ in His death, burial and resurrection, one would probably use immersion, once if unity with Christ is stressed, or three times if one wants to illustrate the formula one feels is expressed in Matthew. What is important is to understand that there is no command in Scripture to baptize with water or to be baptized with or in water.

Thus for us, though John baptized with water (to manifest Christ to Israel), we are baptized with the Holy Spirit.

Ac 11:16 Then remembered I the word of the Lord, how that he said, John indeed baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost.

In most cases to substitute water baptism for Spirit baptism is to make the ritual necessary for redemption as the Romanist do. To add some human act or work to that which Christ has done for us. Think of it, by Christ and Christ alone we are holy, unblameable, and unproveable:

Col 1:21 And you, that were sometime alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now hath he reconciled in the body of his flesh through death, to present you holy and unblameable and unproveable in his sight.

To add the ritual of water baptism as a requirement for redemption or the forgiveness of sin is to say that “the body of His flesh through death” was not enough. Such a thought is to blaspheme the name of Christ and His finished work.

Looking at some passages where water is not mentioned:

Acts 9:17-18 And Ananias went his way, and entered into the house; and putting his hands on him said, Brother Saul, the Lord, even Jesus, that appeared unto thee in the way as thou camest, hath sent me, that thou mightest receive thy sight, and be filled with the Holy Ghost. And immediately there fell from his eyes as it had been scales: and he received sight forthwith, and arose, and was baptized.

Paul was clearly told that two things would happen to him; he would receive his sight and he would be filled with the Holy Spirit. Two things did in fact happen to him; he received his sight and he was baptized. If this is water baptism the Holy Spirit departed from His normal use of the word by not adding the modifier “with water.” More than that, it should be obvious here that to receive the Holy Spirit was equivalent to being baptized (by the Spirit). If this is not true then either three things happened to him, or he was not filled with the Holy Spirit or the passage is not true.

another,

Ro 6:3-4 Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death? 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.

As mentioned before, if this is water baptism then, without question, one must be water baptized to be redeemed and we are back to Romanism. Not only that, we have concluded that Christ did not do enough for us. The passage

clearly says what we all should know, we are identified by the Holy Spirit with Christ in His death, burial and resurrection, His substitutionary death for us.

another, a problem passage,

1Co 1:13-17 Is Christ divided? was Paul crucified for you? or were ye baptized in the name of Paul? I thank God that I baptized none of you, but Crispus and Gaius; Lest any should say that I had baptized in mine own name. And I baptized also the household of Stephanas: besides, I know not whether I baptized any other. For Christ sent me not to baptize, but to preach the gospel: not with wisdom of words, lest the cross of Christ should be made of none effect.

There have been several suggested interpretations for this passage since it seems to be a direct contradiction of Mat 28:19. The most common is to suggest that since the word “baptize” is in the present tense, the passage means that God did not send Paul to baptize all the time, only some of the time, but to concentrate on the preaching of the gospel. That this is not a proper way to handle the Greek present tense can be illustrated by a simple example:

Suppose you are employed by the Intelligence Department and receive an order to go to such and such a country. You are commanded not to study the way they eat (present tense) but to determine what their plans are for the next war.

If you interpret this command that you are not to study the way they eat all the time but to concentrate on their plans for the next war, you should be fired. Clearly, you are commanded not to study the way they eat, in the same way as in this passage we are told that Paul was not sent to baptize.

This can also be seen in other Scripture, for example:

Mat 7:18 A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit.

In this passage it is clear to all who read it that Christ is saying a good tree can not bring forth corrupt fruit. The “bring forth” for both the good and the corrupt tree is in the present tense and could not be translated “a good tree cannot bring forth corrupt fruit all the time,” or “neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit all the time.”

The most logical meaning of the passage in 1 Cor 1 is that although Paul did identify some Jews or those associated with Jews with himself, yet as a missionary to the gentiles, in this case the Corinthians, he was not sent to baptize, that is, in the context, to identify them with himself, but to preach the gospel. There is no contradiction with Mat 28:19 since the commission in Matthew was not for Paul or the church age as pointed out before.

Compare these two passages:

*John 1:33 And I knew him not: but he (The Lord Jehovah) 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 Ghost.*

*1 Cor 1:17 ¶ For Christ sent me **not to baptize**, but to preach the gospel: not with wisdom of words, lest the cross of Christ should be made of none effect.*

John was sent to baptize “with water” and Paul, the apostle to the gentiles, was sent “not to baptize,” whether with or without water. Note, the Holy Spirit added the words “with water” to John but said nothing about water to Paul. If water were included in the meaning of the word - baptidzo there would be absolutely no need to add the words “with water” resulting in a redundancy such as “to immerse in water with water.”

As discussed before, if baptism with water is the meaning to be taken the Holy Spirit adds the word “water.” Here is simply another clear indication that the meaning of the word - baptidzo as used by the Holy Spirit in the Scriptures does not in itself include water.

In the case of Paul there was no added modifier. Paul was not sent to identify the believers at Corinth with himself, or with Peter (Cephas), or with Apollos, but to preach the gospel that Christ had died for their sins according to the Scriptures, that He was buried and that He rose again.

several others,

1 Cor 12:13 For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit.

Ga 3:27 For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ.

Col 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.

If in any of these passages water baptism is meant why did not the Holy Spirit add the words “with water?” If we add water to the text then one is not redeemed, is not a member of the body of Christ and has not put on Christ if one is not water baptized. This is adding something we do to the finished work of Christ which is nothing but blasphemy.

Look again at the passage in Col 2. The expression “buried with Him in baptism” is used by many as an indication that we should be baptized and that this baptism should be by immersion. In that same light when we look at the previous verse:

Col 2:11 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:

should we not be circumcised? Clearly the circumcision is by the Holy Spirit just as in the same context, the baptism is by the Holy Spirit. We are identified with the circumcision of Christ just as we are identified with His death, burial and resurrection.

That which is of Christ can not be faked. Anyone can make a confession and be water baptized whether or not they are actually members of the body of Christ, but only the children of God can be, and are baptized by the Holy Spirit.

Think for a moment about the meaning referred to above, that of the Greek scholar James Dale, “Whatever is capable of thoroughly changing the character, state, or condition of any object, is capable of baptizing that object; and by such change of character, state, or condition does, in fact, baptize it.” Would anyone suggest that water baptism could do, would do or does do this? But without question, baptism by the Holy Spirit does do this. Finally consider:

*Eph 4:5 **One** Lord, **one** faith, **one** baptism,*

That **one** baptism is surely not the many different modes and applications of water baptism, but the **one** baptism of the Holy Spirit.

*1Co 12:13 For by **one** Spirit are we all baptized into **one** body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into **one** Spirit.*

This baptism is not a work of ours or anything we do, it is the work of the one God; Father, Son and Holy Spirit. He, and He alone, it is who redeemed us, who reconciled us, who justified us, who forgave all our sins and who identified us inseparably with Christ. He did this when we were His enemies, when we were not seeking Him, when we could do no good work, when we had turned to our own way and when we were not righteous, no not one. We are now complete in Christ. Wrongly holding to Christian tradition that baptism in or by water is commanded in the scriptures and is a Christian obligation obfuscates this glorious truth and strips one of a full understanding of the deliverance that is ours in Christ.

ARC.
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