

March, 2007

Pause Ponder Profit

Is There a Baptismal Formula?

by Weldon E. Warnock

Has the Lord prescribed a formula that is to be said when one is baptized? Some say "yes" and quote Matthew 28:19 for scriptural proof. The passage states, "Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost." However, in analyzing the passage we observe that it tells us what to do, not what to say.

The American Standard Version translates the verse, "baptizing them into (emphasis mine) the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit." The preposition translated "in" (KJV) and "into" (ASV) is from the Greek word *eis*. The ASV is the more correct rendition.

A footnote on Matthew 28:19 in Williams' translation says of the preposition "into" that it "expresses transfer of relationship." Hence, in scriptural baptism we are baptized into a relationship with the Godhead — the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, Arndt-Gingrich say "the one who is baptized becomes the possession of and comes under the protection of the one whose name

he bears" (A Greek-English Lexicon, p. 575).

Vincent states, "Baptizing into the name has a twofold meaning. 1. Unto denoting objector purpose. . . . 2. Into denoting union or communion with, as Rom. 6:3, 'baptized into Christ Jesus; into his death;' i.e. we are brought by baptism into fellowship with his death" (Word Studies, Vol. 1, p. 149). Foy E. Wallace said, "Into the name of the Father, Son and Holy Ghost denote the state, or relationship, the baptized person enters. This condescension of God to put the name of the Godhead on the act of baptism imparts to the institution the importance and the solemnity of the name it bears" (Bulwarks of the Faith, Part 2, p. 28).

The "name" into which we are baptized in Matthew 28:19 is not a designation, but is the expression of the sum total of the divine Being, namely, his characteristics and attributes. Such meaning is seen in the model prayer, "Hallowed be thy name" (Matt. 6:9). A. Lukyn Williams wrote, "So being baptized into the Name of God implies being placed in subjection to and communion with God himself, admitted into covenant with him. It is to be observed that the term is 'name,' not 'names,' thus denoting the unity of the Godhead in the trinity of Persons" (Pulpit Commentary, Matthew, p. 645).

To insist that "Father, Son and Holy Spirit" is to be said over a person's head just before baptism is to treat the expression as a charm and adds another prerequisite to baptism. Admittedly, we can say what we are doing, and I generally do, but I also recognize that in so doing I am following a customary practice that is arbitrary and optional. Whether we do what Matthew 28:19 teaches is not discretionary, but whether we say it or not, is!

(Continued on page 2)



Brother R.L. Whiteside wrote, "Any one who reads the Bible should know that the power of life and death is not in the mouth of the administrator of baptism. . . . The one who is being baptized may be thoroughly prepared in heart to render acceptable obedience; but if the preacher does not say the right words, the baptism is useless! Can any thoughtful person believe it? It is putting as much power in the preacher as any Roman Catholic ever placed in his priest" (Reflections, pp. 244-245).

In the book of Acts baptism is "in" and "into" the name of Christ. We notice:

Acts 2:38. "Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins." The preposition "in" is from the Greek word *epi*, meaning "upon; on the ground of." Thayer comments on *epi* in Acts 2:38, "so as to repose your hope and confidence in his Messianic authority" (Greek-English Lexicon, p. 232). Hence, Peter says to repent and be baptized on the ground of Jesus' Messianic authority.

Acts 8:16. ". . . only they were baptized in the name of Lord Jesus." The Greek word for "in" here is *eis*. It is translated "into" in many other versions. It suggests relationship. The same is true in Acts 19:5 where "in the name of the Lord Jesus" is "into the name of the Lord Jesus." This same concept of relationship is set forth in 1 Corinthians 1:13 where Paul said, "Is Christ divided? Was Paul crucified for you? Or were ye baptized in (*eis*, into) the name of Paul?"

J.W. McGarvey said that "into the name of the Lord Jesus" is but an abbreviation for 'into the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit' (Acts, Vol. 2, p. 151). R.L. Whiteside wrote, "This (into the name of the Lord Jesus, *wew*) is the same as saying that they were baptized into the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit" (Reflections, p. 247).

Obviously, when we baptize into the name of Jesus we are baptizing into the name of the Godhead.

Acts 10:48. At the household of Cornelius we read that Peter "commanded them to be baptized in the name of the Lord." Here, the preposition "in" is from the Greek word *en*. It denoted "in the name" or "by the authority" of the Lord.

Observe there is no uniform pattern of expression in these passages in Acts. Acts 2:38 has "in (upon) the name of Jesus Christ," Acts 8:16 and 19:5 have "in (into) the name of the Lord Jesus," while Acts 10:48 has "in the name of the Lord." Therefore, when we are baptizing a person in the name of the Lord, we are baptizing him into the name or relationship of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Parenthetically, the "Jesus only" people make Acts 2:38 a necessary formula for baptism, totally missing the point of what "in the name of Jesus Christ" means.

Actually, to be baptized "in the name of the Lord" is the authority for baptism and "into the name of the Lord Jesus" or "into the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit" is the result of baptism.

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Baptism Is Essential

by James A. Brown

Many people in the religious world today have different views regarding baptism. Some see it as just a ceremony whereby a baby is given a name and a special blessing from God. Others see it as “an outward sign of an inward grace” i.e., something you do to convince the world that you are already saved. To others it is a ceremony which puts one into some denominational church. But how does the Bible view baptism? What we read in the New Testament about baptism, or any other subject, is nothing less than the word of God (1 Thess. 2:13; 2 Tim. 3:16-17). How we see baptism, how our parents viewed baptism, or what is taught by the denominational world about the subject is to be set aside in favor of what God’s word says.

There are two views held in regard to the design and purpose of baptism; (1) baptism is essential, and (2) baptism is not essential. The New Testament presents baptism as essential for the remission of our past sins (Acts 2:38). The general denominational view, as expressed in their writings, is that baptism is not essential, i.e., it has nothing whatsoever to do with the remission of man’s sins—the salvation of man’s soul. Obviously baptism cannot be “essential” and “non-essential” at the same time.

Please, study the three short Bible references below and be honest in answering the questions. You will find that baptism is essential in order to: have your sins washed away, put on Christ, and enter the body of Christ.

When a person is baptized he . . .

Washes away his sins,

Acts 22:16 And now why are you waiting? Arise and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on the name of the Lord.

Puts on Christ,

Galatians 3:27 For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ.

And enters the body of Christ.

1 Cor. 12:13 For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body--whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free--and have all been made to drink into one Spirit.

If a person is not baptized . . .

Has he washed away his sins?

Has he put on Christ?

Has he entered the body of Christ?

“One either believes the Bible or he does not.

Which is it with you?”

Are You In Christ?

by James A. Brown

Consider these blessings that are yours, *if you are in Christ.*

•“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with *every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ.*” Eph. 1:3

•“*In whom (Christ) we have redemption* through His blood, the forgiveness of sins.” Col. 1:14

•“Therefore I endure all things for the sake of the elect, that they also may obtain *the salvation which is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory.*” 2 Tim. 2:10

Yes, these blessings are yours *but only if you are in Christ.*

How do you get into Christ? You cannot get into Christ without faith, Heb. 11:6. You cannot get into Christ without repenting of your sins, Acts 17:30. You cannot get into Christ without confessing Christ, Rom. 10:9-10. You cannot get into Christ without baptism, Acts 2:38; because baptism is the dividing line between being out of Christ and being in Christ. Paul said, “*For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ.*” (Gal. 3:26-27)

So you see, in order to enjoy the blessing of salvation in Christ (2 Tim. 2:10) you must be baptized into Christ (Gal. 3:27). **Are you in Christ?**



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