

The church:

Definitions & Baptisms

The church, what is it?

The first thing we must do, I believe, is to define what we are talking about. Jesus said, **“I will build My church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it”** (Mt. 16:18 KJV). So we are talking about the Lord’s church and not our own. It does not belong to us; it belongs to Him; it is His church. It does not belong to any man other than the Lord Jesus Christ Himself!

Now, the word **“church”** in Greek, *ἐκκλησία*, *ekklesia*, means literally, “the called out ones.” The prefix *ek* meaning “out,” and *klesia* from the root meaning “to call” or “the called.” So then, the church is “a people who are called out.”

In the scriptures of the original Greek New Testament, as well as in the Greek Septuagint version of the original Hebrew “Old Testament” (which was the translation that the New Testament church used primarily and that the apostles often quoted from in writing the New Testament scriptures in Greek), the word *ekklesia* is used in a number of ways. We must understand them all and be able to interpret properly which way it is being used if we are to interpret properly the scriptures; and build with **“gold, silver, precious stones”** instead of **“wood, hay, stubble”** (I Cor. 3:10-15 KJV). It is essential if we are to receive reward and blessings both now and forever rather than to suffer loss and judgment both now and forever.

The word *ekklesia* was originally used in the Septuagint version of the Old Testament scriptures to refer most often to a group of people called to assemble together. Consequently, it is used in the New Testament to refer sometimes to a secular, non-Christian gathering in a public place, often translated “assembly” (Acts 19:32, 39, 41), as well as for the physical gathering of God’s people, translated “**church**” (Acts 7:38 KJV; I Cor. 11:18) or “**congregation**” (Acts 7:38 NAS).

However, in the New Testament, *ekklesia* is usually used to refer to the spiritual group of God’s people, whether assembled or not assembled, the children of God, the ones called out of darkness into His marvelous light, out of sin and into righteousness, out of unbelief and into faith, out of Satan’s kingdom and into the kingdom of God! In this latter sense, the word “church” is used concerning four different size groups, each progressively larger size group usually consisting of a number of the smaller size groups. First, the word “church” is used several times to refer to a small group of Christians that gather regularly in a house (I Cor. 16:19b); or secondly, a larger group that gathers in a larger place (I Cor. 11:18-22); but it is most often used to refer to either all the non-assembled Christians that live in a city (I Cor. 1:2; 16:1, 19a); or to all the people of God that live in heaven and in earth combined (I Cor. 10:32; 12:27-28; 15:9; Heb. 12:12-29).

In Ephesians, Paul writes that God has put all things under the feet of the Lord Jesus and “**gave Him to be the head over all things to the church, which is His body, the fulness of Him that filleth all in all**” (Eph. 1:22-23 KJV). We read similarly in Colossians of Christ that, “**He is before all things, and in Him all things hold together. He is also head of the body, the church; and He is the beginning, the first-born from the dead; so that He Himself might come to have first place in everything**” (Col. 1:17-18 NAS). Then Paul wrote, “**Now I rejoice in my sufferings for your sake, and in my flesh I do my share on behalf of His body (which is the church) in filling up that which is lacking in Christ’s afflictions**” (Col. 1:24 NAS).

It is very significant that the word *ekklesia* is never used for a building; and very interesting that William Tyndale, who in 1525 was the first to translate the New Testament from the original Greek into English and print it, translated *ekklesia* uniformly “**congregation**,” and translated the Greek word for heathen temples in Acts 19:37 as “**churches**,” which still remains today in the King James Version. A root of the Greek word used for “**churches**” here,

hieron, meant “a sacred place” and “a temple for the worship of god.” The word “church” in English is believed to have come from the Greek words for “house of the Lord,” *oikos*, meaning “house,” and *kuriakon*, “of the Lord [kurios].” The word *kuriakon* does not appear in the Greek Old Testament at all, and when it appears two times in the Greek New Testament, it does not refer to a house or a building, but is a possessive term referring to either the “**Lord’s supper**” (I Cor. 11:20) or the “**Lord’s day**” (Rev. 1:10). The word “house” has always referred to both people, such as the “**house of Israel**” (Lev. 10:6) or the “**house of David**” (II Sam. 3:1), as well as a place of worship (Gen. 28:17; Ex. 23:19), such as eventually the temple building (I Chr. 6:32). Although the phrase “*oikos kurios*,” “**house of the Lord**,” appears many times throughout the Greek Old Testament in referring to a building, primarily the one true place of worship which was a type of the temple in heaven that we are to come to now during this New Testament period (Ex. 23:19; Deut. 23:18; I Sam. 1:7, 24; I Ki. 3:1; I Chr. 22:14; II Chr. 3:1; 36:7, 10, 14, 18; Ezra 1:5; Hag. 1:2), it never appears in the New Testament. The phrase “*oikon tou Theou*,” “**house of [the] God**,” also appears quite often throughout the Greek Old Testament, similarly referring to the tabernacle or the temple; but when it appears in the New Testament, it never is referring to a building of the New Testament, but only to either the tabernacle of the Old Testament (Mt. 12:4; Mk. 2:26; Lk. 6:4) or to the people of God during this New Testament period (Heb. 10:21). Thus we can see that although the Greek word translated “church” in many modern English Bibles, *ekklesia*, was never used for a building in scripture (in either the Greek Old or New Testaments), but most often referred to the people of God, by 1525 the word “church” began to be used for a building in English, but even then only as a heathen temple. Unfortunately, the word “church” not only came to have the dual meaning of “the people” as well as “a building,” but by 1828 in Webster’s first edition of the American Dictionary of the English Language, “church” came to have nine different meanings; thus our language has been corrupted, and the true meaning of scriptures consequently confused!

It is also significant that the Greek word *συναγωγή*, *synagoge*, synagogue, means either “a gathering, a bringing together, an assembly of people” (Num. 16:3; 20:4; 27:17; Josh. 22:16; Acts 13:43) or “a place of gathering, a place of assembly” (Gen. 1:9; Mt. 4:23; 6:2, 5). Although it is used primarily for the Jews in both the Old and New Testament scriptures, it is used even once in the New

Testament for an assembly of Christians by James (Jam. 2:2), “the apostle who maintained unbroken to the latest possible moment the outward bonds connecting the synagogue and the church” (Trench’s Synonyms of the New Testament). Therefore it is not difficult to understand how it has become a contributing factor in the dual meaning of the word “church” (although unscriptural), referring both to “the people” and to “the place of worship.” When we also realize that the word “synagogue” became used primarily for the religious buildings of the system that arose during the Jewish Babylonian exile (which took place in several phases), we can also come to understand how the word “church” has become used primarily for the buildings of the various Babylonish systems that have arisen during the Babylonian exile of Christians (which has many different phases and exilings).

So then, we have found that the true church of the Lord Jesus Christ is the people of God, often referred to in the scriptures as the body of Christ, with Christ as its head. It is a living organism that we will find is organized, but it is not an organization of man, but of God. It is the spiritual group of people who exist all over the world and in heaven who are indwelt by the Spirit of Jesus Christ (Eph. 3:14-21). The church is not a physical building, but a spiritual building, a “**spiritual house**” not made up of physical stones but “**living stones**,” which Peter says have “**been born again**” and are “**now the people of God**,” a “**holy nation**,” a “**holy**” and “**royal priesthood**” (I Pet. 1:22 - 2:10 NAS).

The church throughout the scriptures is also referred to in many other ways, and is descriptively called, “**the household of God**,” “**the building**,” a “**holy temple**,” and a “**habitation [dwelling, NAS] of God**” (Eph. 2:19-22 KJV); the “**church**,” the “**church of God**,” the “**churches of Christ**” (I Cor. 1:2; Rom. 16:16); the “**body of Christ**” (Eph. 4:12), the “**bride**” of Christ, His “**wife**,” “**the Jerusalem from above**,” “**the holy city**,” the “**new Jerusalem**” (Gal. 4:26; Rev. 19:7; 21:2, 9).

The Lord’s church, How do we enter?

Now, how do we enter the body of Christ, His church? Again Paul wrote: “**For by [Gk. εν, en, in] one Spirit we were all baptized [Gk. εβαπτισθημεν, ebaptisthemen, indicative passive form of βαπτίζω, baptizo, meaning “immersed”] into [εισ, eis, into] one**

body, whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free, and we were all made to drink of [*εισ*, into, KJV] one Spirit” (I Cor. 12:13 NAS). So we see that we enter the Lord’s church, the true church, the people of God, the body of Christ, by being immersed “into” it by being immersed “in” the Holy Spirit. The scripture says, “there is one body, and one Spirit**” (Eph. 4:4), so knowing this, we could say, “We were all immersed in the Holy Spirit [and thus] into the body of Christ”; or by rearranging the structure of the sentence without changing the meaning, we could say, “We were all immersed into the body of Christ by being immersed in the Holy Spirit.”**

Our next question might be then, “Who baptized us, that is, who immersed us in the Holy Spirit [and thus] into the body of Christ?” In other words, who put us in the true church of the living God? The answer can be found in the gospel according to Matthew the apostle when we read that John the Immerser said, “**I immerse [baptizo] you in [en] water into [eis] repentance, but He who is coming after me is mightier than I . . . He [Himself] will immerse you in [en] the Holy Spirit and fire**” (Mt. 3:11 lit.). Here again the Greek participle *en* means “**in**,” but is sometimes translated “**by**” or “**with**,” which makes properly understanding these and similar scriptures about the Holy Spirit somewhat difficult until we know this! (Jn. 1:33; Acts 1:5; 11:16; I Cor. 12:13). Sadly, the simplicity of the truth of scripture is often confused. Again, the Greek word *eis*, translated “**for**,” could be translated, “immerse into repentance.” The element in which John baptized was water; the element in which Jesus baptizes is the Holy Spirit; and consequently, Jesus immerses us into His church and we become members of His body.

Next, we might ask, what part does water baptism play in entering the Lord’s church? Did not John the Baptist connect water baptism and spirit baptism? Yes, and so did Peter when he said, “**Repent, and let each of you be baptized in [εν, en] the name of Jesus Christ for [εισ, eis, into] the forgiveness [remission] of your sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit**” (Acts 2:38 NAS). We must understand that this is exactly what Jesus meant when He said, “**Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again [ανωθεν, anothen, lit. “from above,” but sometimes used in repetition, therefore “again” is acceptable (Gal. 4:9)] he cannot see the kingdom of God.**” Then when He further explained this He said, “**Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God**” (Jn. 3:3, 5 NAS).

Now, lest one think this is not referring to water baptism, please check the context. After Jesus ended His discourse on being born of water and the Spirit in verse 21, immediately we are told that He baptized with His disciples in Judea, verse 22. In the next verse we have John the Baptist again baptizing in Aenon, because there was much water there. Then we have a discussion between John's disciples and the Jews about purification which we are told was about water baptism. Immediately after this discourse in verse 36, we read that, "**Jesus was making and baptizing more disciples than John (although Jesus Himself was not baptizing, but His disciples were)**" (Jn 4:1-2 NAS).

You see, dear reader, when Jesus spoke about being "**born of the water,**" He was not speaking about being born of the amniotic fluid of your mother's womb. The context disproves this, and so does common logic. The Lord would not state a fact of our natural birth as a requirement of our spiritual birth; neither would He combine something that occurs in our natural birth together with something that happens in our spiritual birth as requirements of entering His spiritual kingdom. That would confuse us. The teaching of confusion is of Babylon. Neither did Jesus mean figuratively that He was referring to the Word because we read where Paul said that Jesus will sanctify the church "**and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word**" (Eph. 5:26 KJV). One does not use something literal like "**the Spirit**" and something figurative in the same sentence. We could never understand anything if the Lord did this in His Holy Word! Please note that Paul explained his figure of speech, "**the washing of water,**" immediately and in the same sentence when he added, "**by the word.**" To take the phrase, "**of water**" in John 3 out of context is like saying that because Jesus said, "**I am the door**" in John 10:7, 9, and in Revelation 3:20, "**Behold, I stand at the door and knock,**" that He was knocking on Himself. Nonsense! Water is literal, the Spirit is literal, and the Blood is literal, and that is what the same author of the scripture, an apostle, John, meant when he said, "**This is the one who came by water [His baptism] and blood [His death], Jesus Christ; not with the water only, but with the water and with the blood. And it is the Spirit who bears witness, because the Spirit is the truth. For there are three that bear witness, the Spirit [who descended at His baptism like a dove] and the water [of His baptism] and the blood; and the three are in agreement**" (I Jn. 5:6-8 NAS). These three are the beginning, anointing for the duration of, and ending of the 3 1/2 years of His earthly ministry.

Jesus is our primary example, and He included us when He insisted that He Himself be baptized in water by saying, **“In this way it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness,”** and then as He was coming up out of the water of baptism He was anointed with the Holy Spirit for ministry (Mt. 3:15-17 NAS). He then was declared by the Father’s voice from Heaven that He was His Son! What a beautiful demonstration of being **“born of water and of the Spirit,”** being **“born from above”** so as to be declared by our Heavenly Father as His children!

You see, we are born into the spirit realm in a similar way as into the natural. In the natural we have the natural seed, then a natural birth through water followed immediately by receiving the breath of life. In the spiritual birth, the Word of God is the incorruptible seed that works in our hearts until we are brought to repentance (I Pet. 1:23); then we are born of the water (water baptism — the covenant sign (Gen. 9:9-17; 17:9-14; Acts 7:8; Rom. 4:11; Eph. 1:13; Col. 2:11-12), which is a portrayal of what’s next; and then we are born of the Spirit (Spirit baptism, the birth of spiritual life and reality; Jn. 3:3-8; Gal. 4:29; Rom. 6:3-4).

This was God’s method in type in the Old Covenant when we read that they **“all were baptized into** [*εἰς, eis*] **Moses** [a type of Christ] **in** [*ἐν, en*] **the cloud** [a type of the Holy Spirit] **and in** [*ἐν, en*] **the sea** [a type of water baptism] . . . **and all drank the same spiritual drink . . . Christ”** (the Spirit of Christ, the Holy Spirit, I Cor. 10:1-4; compare with 12:12-13).

This harmonizes perfectly with what Peter the apostle taught and practiced when he opened the door of salvation, first to the Jews. He said to those who asked what they were to do: **“Repent, and be immersed every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. For to you is the promise, and to your children, and to all who are afar off, as many as the Lord our God shall call. And with many other words he earnestly testified and kept on exhorting them, saying, ‘Be saved from this crooked generation!’ So then, those who gladly received his word were immersed; and there were added that day about three thousand souls”** (Acts 2:38-41 lit.). Again, when he opened the door (singular, because there is only one door, Jesus, Jn. 10:9) of the church with the keys of the kingdom to the Gentiles, the Holy Spirit fell on them as he spoke of salvation in Jesus’ name, and he then **“ordered them to be immersed in the name of Jesus Christ”** (Mt. 16:18-19; Acts 15:7; 10:43-48 lit.).

Peter further explained about baptism when he wrote, **“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. And 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”** (I Pet. 3:20-21 NAS).

Baptism is absolutely essential according to Jesus and the New Testament apostles. Jesus said, also, **“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”** (Mk. 16:15-16 KJV). And He also said, **“All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and [of] the Son and [of] the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always [all the days], even to the end of the age”** (Mt. 28:18-20 NAS).

Paul, the apostle, wrote, **“Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into His death? Therefore we are [were] 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 [the] resurrection”** (Rom. 6:3-5 KJV). Please note that as one arises out of the water in water baptism, it is described as arising into a new life; this is exactly why Jesus used the expression of being **“born of the water.”** This new life is made real by receiving the Holy Spirit, and this is why Jesus said you must **“be born of water and the Spirit.”** Together, this being born of the water and of the Spirit make up being born-again, **“from above”**; the commandment and the faith being given from the Father above, in heaven, and the Spirit sent from above, and both received here below, now (Jn. 3:3-5).

Again Paul writes, **“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; having been buried with Him in baptism, in which you were also raised up with Him through faith in the working [operation] of God, who raised Him from the dead”** (Col. 2:11-12 NAS).

Continually throughout the book of Acts we find examples given to us of the necessity and practice of immediate baptism by

immersion as commanded by our Lord Jesus Christ when people are being brought to God. On the day of Pentecost (Acts 2:38-41), by Philip the evangelist's ministry to the city of Samaria and then to the Ethiopian eunuch (Acts 8), in Paul's own conversion (Acts 9:1-18 & 22:6-16), with Cornelius and his kinsmen and near friends (Acts 10; 11), by Lydia and her household (Acts 16:14-15), by the Philippian jailer and his household (Acts 16:25-34), and the disciples at Ephesus (Acts 19:1-7); in all these scriptural conversions we have God's record of people being born of water and the Spirit in order for them to enter the kingdom of God, the Lord's church.

Now, let us consider several other important aspects concerning water baptism. It is important to note that baptism was given as a command, not an option! Peter commanded it of the Jews on the day of Pentecost, and it is even stated as such to the Gentiles years later, for it is written, "**He ordered [commanded] them to be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ**" (Acts 2:38 & 10:48 NAS). Paul also was ordered to be baptized by Ananias, a devout disciple, who brought him into the kingdom of God (Acts 22:16).

Another aspect of water baptism is that although converts usually received water baptism before the Spirit baptism as instructed by Peter in the first record of God's command to us, this is not always the case. In the conversions of Cornelius and his company, the Holy Spirit was given first, before water baptism (Acts 10). The circumstances made this necessary as Peter and the rest of the Hebrew Christians were very reluctant about ministering to the Gentiles, so in God's time He gave Peter a vision and then spoke to him to go and minister to Cornelius, an Italian Gentile. Peter understood the meaning of the vision, that God was not cleansing everything that could be put in one's mouth, but "**God has shown me that I should not call any man unholy or unclean**" (Acts 10:28-29 NAS). Then God gave him and the other Hebrew Christians another sign by giving the Gentiles the Holy Spirit just as He had the Jews on the day of Pentecost, that is, with a wonderful outpouring accompanied with the receiving of the gift of tongues. Since the Gentiles had received the reality of the baptism in the Holy Spirit, Peter asked who could forbid water in order that they also receive the picture of this spiritual baptism and the sign of the New Covenant, water baptism (Acts 10:47). He had to defend his actions before those of the circumcision when he returned to Jerusalem; so he related the whole affair, how God had given to the Gentiles the gift of the Holy Spirit just as he had them; and

therefore he defended his action to the Jewish believers with the question, **“Who was I that I could stand in God’s way?”** (Acts 11:17 NAS). Those of the circumcision then acknowledged that by the Gentiles receiving the Holy Spirit, proven by the sign of also receiving the gift of tongues, that God had granted unto them **“repentance unto life”** (Acts 11:18 KJV; I Cor. 14:22), not “a second work of grace,” nor “power for service,” but had obtained salvation and were to be accepted in the New Covenant! Although we find this example in scripture of Spirit baptism preceding water baptism (and for the just cause we have discussed), whenever instruction is given in scripture as to how people coming to Christ are to enter into Him, water baptism is commanded first, and then Spirit baptism. However, in this day of lukewarmness, lack of real commitments, and true discipleship, the scriptural method is not only not used, but repentance, water baptism, and Spirit baptism may one or all be ignored. We are never told in scripture to have people ask Jesus into their hearts, although this is a most vital accomplishment of conversion, because this method so often either fails or is incomplete as to all of the purposes of God. Rather, we are told to instruct them about repentance toward God and from sin, water baptism (which is their confession of faith before man that Jesus died for their sins, was buried, and was raised again from the dead), and the receiving of the Holy Spirit, usually ministered by the laying on of hands (which not only accomplishes the receiving of Jesus into one’s heart, but these and many other things as well). A new convert is then well on the way of learning the six basic doctrines of Christ given to us in Hebrews 6:1-3, which are:

- [1] **“repentance from dead works,**
- [2] **and of faith toward God,**
- [3] **of the doctrine of baptisms,**
- [4] **and of laying on of hands,**
- [5] **and of resurrection of the dead,**
- [6] **and of eternal judgment.”** (KJV)

Without these foundational principles, these A,B,C’s of the Christian life, God says we cannot **“go on unto perfection!”** Because they are so ignored, neglected, and rejected today, is it any wonder why we have so much immaturity, carnality, and backsliding; so much spiritual infant mortality?

Water baptism, as we have stated, is our testifying before

man of our faith in what God has done in Christ to save us from our sins and prepare us for all eternity. Jesus commanded His disciples to baptize new converts and said, **“He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned”** (Mt. 28:19-20; Mk. 16:16 KJV). It is therefore a fulfillment of what God requires when Jesus said, **“Whosoever therefore shall confess me before men, him will I confess also before my Father which is in heaven. But whosoever shall deny me before men, him will I also deny before my Father which is in heaven”** (Mt. 10:32-33 KJV). And again, **“Whosoever shall be ashamed of me and of my words, of him shall the Son of man be ashamed, when he shall come in his own glory, and in his Father’s, and of the holy angels”** (Lu. 9:26 KJV).

The importance of water baptism can especially be seen overseas. In India for example, where the Hindus have millions of gods, they think nothing of it if someone says they have asked Jesus into their heart, just one “god” among their millions. But, when one takes the public stand of water baptism, all know the seriousness of their decision, and they are then considered by the unbelievers as real Christians and subject to all kinds of persecution. This vital decision and the results are also true among the monotheistic Moslems.

In Nepal, predominantly Buddhist and Hindu, it was for years only after someone was water baptized that they were considered Christians by the believers or the government. What makes this remarkable is that for many years it was against Nepalese law for anyone to change their religion; they were subject to one year’s imprisonment. Therefore, many were imprisoned for becoming a Christian. Also, it was three years imprisonment for anyone evangelizing, plus three more years for a total of six if you baptized anyone. What makes it thrilling is to realize how vital, how pure, and how much more apostolic the church in Nepal was — was until recently when some of the law was changed and its enforcement relaxed, and now every sect of Christianity has invaded with their divisive doctrines! Moreover, what makes it amazing is that although the founding apostle to this nation spent over 10 years in prison under horrible conditions on three separate occasions because of these original laws, he travelled abroad and saw the church in our country and others many times and consequently did not particularly want the law changed, because it resulted in a purer, more committed church! What a powerful witness to the truth of God’s Word!

What can we learn from Philip’s ministry about baptism, the only record of a New Testament evangelist (Gk. *ευαγγελιστας*, *euaggelistas*, bearer of the *euaggelion*, “good news”) in all of the Word of God? (Acts 8; 21:8; 6:1-6). One, we learn that after Philip preached to the city of Samaria, the Lord working with him and confirming the word with signs following, that they “**gave heed**” to Philip as they had to Simon, the sorcerer, and then believed the good news “**concerning** [Gk. *περι*, *peri*, “what relates to, can be said about”] **the kingdom of God, and the name of Jesus Christ**” (Mk. 16:20; Acts 8:6, 10, 12 KJV). They did not believe into Christ, but believed things concerning Christ. And here we must bring out a very simple but profound truth, and that is the difference between believing “about” Christ and believing “into” Christ. We know a lot about many historical figures, but we do not have a personal relationship with them, and yet we may believe “in” them if we agree with their life and teaching, or we may not believe “in” them if we do not accept their philosophy or life style. However, when the scriptures state that people believed or are to believe “in” Christ, it often uses the Greek participle *eis*, meaning “into” (Jn. 3:16, 18, 36). There is a very significant difference. For example, let us suppose someone is drowning and they see a lifeboat. They may “believe in” lifeboats, but they will still drown and be lost unless they “believe into” the life boat — get into the lifeboat! One is strictly intellectual, an understanding of the purposes of lifeboats, the other is the real experience of being saved by one. So, too, is it with Christ! We must get “into” Christ, not just believe “in” Him, His teaching and purposes to save us but without commitment “to” Him; but we must get “in+to” Him, and get “into” Him by His way, not ours; nor according to our mistaken church traditions, understanding, or instruction about scripture, or culture; but according to His understanding of His Word, as revealed by His Holy Spirit! His Word says we must:

- [1] “**Repent**”;
- [2] “**be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for [eis, into] the forgiveness of [our] sins**”; and then,
- [3] “**receive the . . . Holy Spirit!**”

(Acts 2:38 NAS).

Today’s vernacular expression of stating that one “is into something,” meaning that one is very involved in some thing, or consumed by some thing, is very accurate and appropriate, and

we might well ask ourselves, “Am I really into Jesus (my very personal involvement with the very living person of the Lord Jesus Christ), or am I just into religion (Christianity, as a religious, moral, or philosophical teaching of Christ), or into some other worldly activity?”

Another important aspect that we can learn from Philip’s ministry to the Samaritans is that after they came to an intellectual acceptance of “**the good news about the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ,**” and were baptized in water, they still had not received the Holy Spirit, and thus were not yet fully into Christ (Acts 8:12 NAS). They had “**received the Word of God,**” but “**they had simply been baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus**” in water only, not the Spirit (Acts 8:14-16 NAS). They had done everything they had been told to do, thus far, but had not as yet had the Holy Spirit ministered to them (Gal. 3:5). (This is the present state of so many in the institutional church and those sitting under the traditions of men; and this is also the state of multitudes of those who have left the powerless rituals and lifeless agendas of church experience, and no longer attend the show.) But, praise God, when the apostles at Jerusalem heard about it, they sent men of God to pray and lay hands on them to receive the blessed Holy Spirit. It had to be some days before they arrived and “**then they began laying their hands on them, and they were receiving the Holy Spirit**” (Acts 8:17 NAS).

Please notice, here it is not called the “baptism of the Holy Spirit,” but a “**receiving [of] the Holy Spirit**”, because these terms are describing the same experience, but from different aspects (Acts 1:5; 8:15, 17, 19; 10:47; 11:16). However, because the receiving of the Holy Spirit is the same as being baptized in the Holy Spirit (the initial experience of being immersed in the Spirit of God), it does not mean that there is not more to receive. If one reads the scriptures carefully, one realizes that there is what is called a “pouring forth of the Spirit,” and a receiving of the gifts of the Spirit, usually tongues and prophecy. When the Spirit is spoken of as being “**poured out,**” “**coming upon,**” or “**falling upon**” someone, you will also notice that manifestations of the Spirit accompany the experience (Acts 2:17, 18, 33, 4; 10:44-46; 11:15; 19:6). This is actually a receiving of a particular “**anointing,**” meaning “a pouring upon,” of the Holy Spirit that is given for serving (I Jn. 2:20, 27; I Cor. 12: 7-11).

So we see, dearly beloved, the problem of confusion concerning experiences in the body of Christ today is usually the

result of the confusion, mixed-up meaning, and inaccurate meaning, of scriptural terms. And this may surprise you, but this is what God has judged necessary, because it is a product of our Babylonish systems. God is going to continue His judgment of confusion upon our language, our spiritual vocabulary, until we come out of these systems in order to build His church in unity, righteousness, and holiness according to His Word; until we are willing to see that “the local church” is not “our local church,” but “His local church,” (that is, all the born-again Christians in our locality, our local city); and we decide to work in harmony and love, pursuing righteousness and holiness in all that we do with everyone we can. Until then we will not be out of Babylon, our confusion, or be working in ways pleasing to God! Consequently, we will be building with a lot of “**wood, hay, [and] stubble**” instead of “**gold, silver, [and] precious stones,**” and we will regret our selfishness on the Day of Judgment, hang our heads in shame, and will suffer loss for it forever! (I Cor. 3:12-15).

Another term often used concerning the Holy Spirit is for one to be “**filled**” with the Spirit, or interestingly in one place, “**filled in [εἰς, ἐν] spirit**” — our spirits are to be filled up with God’s Holy Spirit (Eph. 5:18). This experience may or may not happen when one first receives the Spirit, and it is an experience that needs to be continually sought (Acts 2:4; 4:31; 9:17). Sometimes a person receives the Holy Spirit and a gift of the Spirit as well, and yet is not filled. This is the case when someone receives the Holy Spirit and the gift of tongues, and yet does not experience any particular change in spirit. They might even feel rather dry and unfulfilled. This is because they need to be filled in spirit, with the Spirit of God. However, praying with one’s spirit by praying in tongues edifies the believer, and thus facilitates being filled with the Spirit, and then the edified Christian can better edify the church (I Cor. 14:4, 15). Paul gives us some much needed instruction when by the Spirit of God he writes to us in the Greek present tense (that means, now), imperative (a command), passive (that means, it is to be done to us by someone else): this means we are now to submit ourselves to God and have the Holy Spirit fill us (Eph. 5:18). Paul here gives us some ways to help the Spirit do this for us. Namely:

- [1] “**speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs,**
- [2] **singing and making melody with your heart to the Lord;**

[3] **always giving thanks for all things in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to God, even the Father; and**

[4] **be subject to one another in the fear of Christ."**

(Eph. 5:18-21 NAS)

So we learn from Philip's ministry to the Samaritans that receiving the Holy Spirit is not automatic upon confession of the Lord Jesus nor after asking Him into one's heart as is so commonly taught today. Neither is it automatic after valid water baptism (although He may come in); but the Holy Spirit may well be waiting for us to see that He is ministered to the one coming to Christ, the same as He waits for us to proclaim Christ to someone who is lost and without the gospel. We need to note, also, that by the Lord sending the apostles to minister the Holy Spirit, the new converts were established upon the foundation of apostles and prophets, and their proper relationship with the rest of the body was assured (Eph. 2:20). This is important for any evangelist to know so that his work is scripturally fruitful and lasts.

As we look at Philip's ministry to the Ethiopian eunuch, we wish to point out several things concerning our discussion of being born of water and the Spirit. When the eunuch asked for guidance in the scripture because he did not have the Holy Spirit to teach him, Philip started there at Isaiah 53:7 where the eunuch had been reading, and **"told him the good news, Jesus"** (Acts 8:35 lit.). This gospel obviously included water baptism for we find that as they came upon some water the eunuch said, **"Look! Water! What prevents me from being baptized?"** (v. 36 NAS). God in His love and providence had amazingly provided some water along a desert road. And God always will provide for us to obey His Word, no matter in what circumstances we find ourselves. Then the Holy Spirit is **"given to them that obey Him!"** (Acts 5:32 KJV). Notice also, that Philip and the eunuch both went down into the water for the baptism, and after the immersion they came up out of the water (vv. 38-39). My friend, can anyone ignore the relevancy, the immediacy, the importance, the method, the necessity of water baptism in being born again, after careful study, unless he is willfully blinded by his traditions and unscriptural allegiances? Oh, the credentials of man (licenses and ordinations of man-made organizations) that rob men of the credentials of God (true, powerful anointings of God)!

Several additional aspects of water baptism can be gained

from Paul's conversion (Acts 9:1-22; 22:3-16). In Paul's case, he was persecuting the church when he was apprehended by the Lord Jesus while walking on the road to Damascus. When an apprehensive Ananias was sent to a blinded, praying, fasting, spiritually hungering and thirsting Saul of Tarsus, God was teaching Paul and us. Although Paul was three days without Christ within (the living bread and drink), and without food or drink (physical nourishment), he was healed by Jesus when Ananias put his hands on him; and it was possibly at this time that Paul was filled with the Holy Spirit as Ananias had spoken. But, it was after this that he was told to "**arise, and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on His name**" (Acts 22:16 NAS). If Paul did not receive the Holy Spirit when Ananias first laid his hands on him, then it would have been immediately after his baptism in water that the Lord Jesus baptized Paul in the Holy Spirit. He may have received the gift of tongues then or else later, but we do know that this mature apostle had and used this precious gift more than all of the immature Corinthians (I Cor. 14:18). After being spiritually fed, Paul received something physically to eat. These facts should tell us a few things. Specifically, one is not "**born again**" when one finds out who Jesus is, but one must be born of water and the Spirit. Paul did not fall off a horse, but they led him by the hand as they walked to Damascus (Acts 9:8; 22:11). Those that hunger and thirst after righteousness, spiritually and physically, shall be filled (Mt. 5:6)! Water baptism is vitally important, and when done in faith, involves the washing away of our sins by calling on the name of the Lord Jesus. It is our part in the physical of what God does in the spiritual. It is not recorded that he received the gift of tongues at the time he was filled with the Holy Spirit, as it is not the evidence of this experience. The witness of the Spirit, the fruits of the Spirit, and the revelation of the Spirit within our hearts that Jesus Christ is indeed the Son of the living God are evidences of being born into the family of God, and of having been baptized, immersed, in the Holy Spirit (Rom. 8:16; I Jn. 4:7; 5:1-13; Gal. 5:19-24; I Cor. 12:13).

In the conversion of the men at Ephesus (Acts 19), we can learn also that the baptism of John the Baptist was similar to Christian baptism — both baptisms being for the remission of sins after repentance (Mt. 3:1-17; Acts 2:38; 19:1-7). However, whereas John's baptism could only point to Jesus who was yet to die and be raised from the dead, and to the Holy Spirit which was not yet given (Jn. 7:39), Christian baptism in the name of Jesus Christ the Baptizer makes the experience of being baptized in the Holy Spirit

(into the death, burial, and resurrection of the person of Christ) a wonderfully possible present reality! Notice also, since they had not even heard about the Holy Spirit, Paul knew that there was something incomplete about their water baptism, because if they had been baptized according to the commandment of the Lord Jesus recorded in Matthew's gospel, "**in [eis, into] the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost [Spirit],**" they would have certainly known about the Holy Spirit (Mt. 28:19 KJV). Then "**they were baptized in [eis, into] the name of the Lord Jesus. And when Paul had laid his hands upon them, the Holy Spirit came on them, and they began speaking with tongues and prophesying**" (Acts 19:5-6 NAS). Thus we can also learn that receiving gifts of the Holy Spirit is no indication of spiritual maturity as these Ephesians received them at the very time of their being born again, but it certainly is an indication of wonderful New Testament spiritual life!

At this point it would be good to bring out the fact that the words Jesus instructed the apostles to use in baptism, as recorded in Matthew 28:18-20 where they were commanded to baptize "into" the name of each of the three persons of the Godhead, is not in disharmony with what is recorded throughout the book of Acts where we only find it recorded that they baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus (Acts 2:38; 8:16; 10:48; 19:5; 22:16). Confusion concerning this issue arises because of: (one) a misunderstanding of the Godhead; and (two) a failure to remember that all scripture is given by inspiration of God, and that we need all of the Word of God because a true doctrine will not be found by only considering one or a few passages of scripture. The examples we find in the book of Acts are each a part of the truth, but not all of it. When we put all the instructions and examples together, understand the nature and doctrine of the Godhead, we will understand how to baptize and not be confused by those who see only a small part of the truth and want to emphasize that part to the exclusion of the part that they do not see nor understand. When Jesus told them to baptize in the name of the Son, He didn't need to mention His own name. But when the Jews needed to be baptized on the day of Pentecost, they needed to acknowledge Jesus as the Son of God, their personal Lord and Saviour. The Jews already believed in God the Father and God the Holy Spirit, but they had not been willing to acknowledge Jesus as God the Son; in fact they were responsible for crucifying Him, Peter said (Acts 2:36). So it was necessary for them and all the others recorded in the book of Acts who had the

same scriptural background to identify the Son as Jesus, Jesus Christ of Nazareth, and we would do well to do so today! But in doing this, we should not deny the distinct reality of God the Father and God the Holy Spirit, as some do who do not understand the Godhead.

In closing this section on water baptism, it would be good to consider one of the most frequent attacks against it. That is, some say that to require water baptism as a part of salvation makes salvation of works and not of faith. Nothing could be further from the truth. We have a wonderful example given to us in the scriptures that refutes such false reasoning and unscriptural teaching. In II Kings, chapter 5, we read about Naaman the leper, the captain of the army of the king of Syria, who came down to Israel because of the testimony of a little Israeli maiden to be healed of his leprosy. The prophet Elisha gave him a word to go and wash seven times in the Jordan river where many years later God would have another prophet, John the Baptist, baptizing people for their cleansing from the leprosy of sin. The Greek Septuagint translation reads that after he **“baptized”** himself **“according to the word of the man of God,”** he was cleansed of his leprosy. Naaman did not earn the salvation of his body, and by his testimony the salvation of his soul, by baptizing himself; how much less do we earn our salvation by having someone else baptize us! He was saved by putting his faith in the words of a man of God, and his faith was fulfilled when he obeyed them. And I say unto you according to the scripture that **“faith without works is dead”**; and unless you obey the Word of God you will not be saved! (Jam. 2:20, 26 NAS; Jn. 3:36). Obedience is not dead works, but true, living faith in action! When Abraham obeyed the Lord by offering his son Isaac upon the altar, it was then **“the scripture was fulfilled which saith, Abraham believed God, and it was imputed unto him for righteousness: and he was called the Friend of God. Ye see then how that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only”** (Jam. 2:23-24 KJV). We are not saved by works, but unto good works, and by them we are justified as they prove that our faith is living, saving faith — not dead (Eph. 2:8-10). Again, Naaman was not healed by works, but because by faith he obeyed the Lord in water baptism. And since we now have the opportunity, we also will not be saved unless by faith we obey the Lord in water baptism — never! The only exceptions would be when a proper prayer of repentance and salvation is offered just before death, and there is no time nor water available at that time (Lk. 23:39-43); or there is total ignorance about water baptism; and such cases are extremely rare!

Questions

- Q: What is the church? (Please give the scriptural references for your answer to this and the following questions.)
- Q: How do we enter the church?
- Q: When should we baptize someone?
- Q: Who should do the baptizing, and why?
- Q: How should we baptize?
- Q: What is meant by “obedience of faith?” (Rom. 1:5; 16:26)
- Q: How does one receive the Holy Spirit, and is it “automatic”?
- Q: What are at least 15 special terms describing experiences of the Holy Spirit which are distinct and specific, and describe them?
- Q: Why does Paul say that there is one baptism when in fact there are a number of different baptisms mentioned in the scripture?
- Q: What are some of the other baptisms mentioned in the scripture?

Questions and Answers

- Q: How should we baptize?
- A: We should baptize according to the Lord’s instruction as found in Matthew’s gospel and the examples found in the book of Acts together with the understanding given in the other gospels and epistles; understanding the Godhead as composing three distinct beings: the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit — and identifying the Son as the Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore, to say, “I baptize you in the name of the Father, and of the Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, and of the Holy Spirit, for the remission of your sins. Amen!” is an excellent way to baptize. And it satisfies all but the most narrow of false theology (Mt. 28:19; Acts 2:38; 8:16; 10:48; 19:5; 22:16; Jn. 1:1; 8:16-18; 16:13-14; Col. 1:1-2; 2:2, 9). Also, we immerse one time with the person lying back because we are portraying the burial and resurrection of one person, Jesus the Son of God. To deny scriptural variations and to institute some sectarian form or method of baptizing is to deny the reality of what is to be accomplished, and to confuse and take captive for selfish reasons the babe in Christ.

Q: What are at least 15 special terms describing experiences of the Holy Spirit which are distinct and specific, and describe them?

- A:** 1. **“Born of the Spirit.”** Being born of the Holy Spirit is when one first receives the Holy Spirit, when the Holy Spirit joins with one’s human spirit and one receives a new life from above, from God, and becomes a new person spiritually. The Greek term *γεννηθη ανωθεν*, *gennethe anothen*, “born *anothen*,” can be literally translated “born from above,” from heaven, as well as “born again,” or “born anew,” and is when one becomes a true child of God and is the possessor of eternal life in Christ Jesus the Lord (Jn. 3:3-5; I Pet. 1:23 - 2:2).
2. **“Receiving the Holy Spirit.”** Receiving the Holy Spirit is the initial act of receiving the Holy Spirit into one’s own spirit and becoming born again (Acts 8:17; 10:47; 19:2).
3. **“Baptized in or with or by the Holy Spirit.”** Baptized in the Holy Spirit, from the Greek word *εν*, *en*, meaning preferably “in,” is also the initial experience of receiving the Holy Spirit, and describes to us that it is an immersion into the Spirit of God, thereby placing us henceforth in the person of the Holy Spirit, as well as He in us. Jesus is the baptizer, and His baptizing someone in the Holy Spirit is a completely spiritual baptism, symbolized in water baptism which is recorded in scripture as baptizing someone into Jesus (Mt. 3:11; Acts 1:5; 11:16; I Cor. 12:13; Rom. 6:3-5).
4. **“Filled with the Holy Spirit.”** Disciples are said to be filled with the Holy Spirit when God so fills the heart with His Spirit of love, grace, peace, joy and all of the fruit of the Spirit in such a fullness that divine life just flows out in word and deed. As we look at the examples in God’s Word we find an expression of boldness in worship and praise to God, preaching and singing to others in sharing the wonderful works and Word of God (Acts 2:4; 4:31; 9:17; 13:52; Eph. 5:18). We all need to seek this experience continually!
5. **“Anointing of the Holy Spirit.”** This term is descriptive of Jesus anointing or pouring out His Holy Spirit upon us, and although we do receive an anointing at conversion, it is an experience that may and should occur many times after our initially receiving the Holy Spirit. It is a more accurate term that could be used when describing what one receives after conversion when someone dramatically receives the gift of tongues, or any other gift for that matter, which some theology inaccurately calls “the Baptism of the Holy Spirit” or simply

“The Baptism” (I Jn. 2:20, 27; Lu. 4:18; Acts 10:38).

6. “**Impartation** of the Holy Spirit.” This term is descriptive of someone receiving something, such as a gift of the Holy Spirit within himself (Rom. 1:11; I Thes. 2:8).
7. “**Falling upon** of the Holy Spirit.” This term is used to describe the Lord pouring out His Spirit upon people in a very dramatic way, in a usually sudden outpouring, and often with the accompanying impartation of some spiritual gift (Acts 8:16; 10:44; 11:15).
8. “**Pouring upon** of the Holy Spirit.” God is spoken of as pouring the Holy Spirit upon people when, from heaven, there is a great abundance of the Spirit being ministered to the people (Acts 2:17, 18; 10:45).
9. “**Renewing** of the Holy Spirit.” This term comes from the Greek word *ανακαινωσεως*, *anakainoseos*, which root *καινος*, *kainos* means “new, made superior, made of a new kind,” and the prefix *ανα*, *ana* means “anew, over again.” Thus, this word also describes the born again experience when our spirits are infused with the Holy Spirit and made completely new, in a way that they never have been before. “**If any person is in Christ, there is a new [kainos] creation; old things are passed away, behold, all things are become new [kainos]**” (II Cor. 5:17 lit.). Properly, it is not a renewing like a refinishing of an old table with a new finish, but is like the making of a brand new table, a new creation that never has existed before. Therefore, since the spirit of man is made “anew,” the term actually could be better translated an “anewing of the Holy Spirit” rather than “renewing” (Tit. 3:5).
10. “**Washed** in the Spirit.” This too is the experience that we all receive when we are born again. We are washed from all our sins and iniquities by the precious, cleansing blood of the Lord Jesus Christ, God’s own Son and His sacrificial Lamb! Hallelujah! Thank you, Jesus! (I Cor. 6:11; Tit. 3:5).
11. “**Sanctified** in the Spirit.” This term expresses a work of the Holy Spirit whereby one is moved by the Spirit to a closer and more consecrated relationship to God, becoming more holy, that is, like God in character. Sanctification includes many past experiences and a present process, and therefore will involve many future experiences (I Cor. 6:11; II Thes. 2:13; I Pet. 1:2; I Thes. 4:3-8; 5:23).
12. “**Justified** in the Spirit.” To justify means “to show, declare, render, or make righteous; to judge and declare guiltless and

therefore acceptable to God.” This also takes place when one is born-again (I Cor. 6:11 NAS; Rom. 5:17-21).

13. “**Sealed** with the Spirit.” This term describes the fact that when we receive the Holy Spirit we receive God’s mark of authentication — proof that we are His (Eph. 1:13; 4:30; II Cor. 1:22; Jn. 6:27).
14. “**Grieve** the Spirit.” We are admonished not to grieve (Gk.: *λυπεω, lypeo*, meaning grieve, to make sorrowful, or sad) the divine person of the Holy Spirit by disobedience to Him or His Word, or by unbelief, or wrong actions or attitudes towards others, especially the brethren (Eph. 4:30; Isa. 63:10 NAS; Gen. 6:5-6; Psa. 78:40; Psa. 95:10 KJV; Heb. 3:10, 17 KJV).
15. “**Quench** the Spirit.” Because the Spirit is often typified as fire which has a consuming power, we are instructed not to quench (Gk.: *σβεννυμι, sbennumi*, meaning quench, extinguish, suppress, stop, or deny) the power and moving of God’s Holy Spirit; whether in assembly or when talking with one another, as He moves among us and in us to purify, enlighten, enliven, and empower us (I Thes. 5:19; Deut. 4:24; Heb. 12:29; Mt. 3:11-12; Acts 1:8; 2:3).

Q: Why does Paul say that there is one baptism when in fact there are a number of different baptisms mentioned in the scripture?

A: In order to understand the scriptures properly, one must always examine them in the context in which they were given. Paul makes the statement that there is only one baptism in the context of a seven-fold basis of unity for all true believers. Paul wrote: “**There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all**” (Eph. 4:4-6 KJV). Therefore, he is talking obviously about our baptism into Jesus Christ, which consists of two counterparts, a baptism of water and a baptism of the Spirit; and means the same thing as when the Lord Jesus said Himself that one must be “**born again,**” and then explained it as being “**born of water and of the Spirit**” (Jn. 3:3, 5).

Q: What are some of the other baptisms mentioned in the scripture?

A: 1. The baptisms of the Old Testament — ceremonial and healthful physical washings for spiritual and physical purification and

- consecration (Ex. 29:4; Lev. 14:8, 9; 15; 16:26, 28; 17:15; 22:6; Num. 19; Heb. 9:10, *βαπτισμος*, *baptismos*, a washing, a purification by water, an act of dipping or immersion, a baptism).
2. The baptism of Naaman the Leper — for physical healing, and typifying sin (II Ki. 5:14, dipped; in Gk. Sept.: *εβαπτισατο*, *ebaptisato*, baptized, from *βαπτιζω*, *baptizo*, to baptize).
 3. The baptisms of Jewish traditions, the “tradition of the elders” — religious, physical washings (Mk. 7:4 lit., *βαπτισμος*, *baptismos*).
 4. The baptism in the cloud and in the sea into Moses, a type of our Christian baptism in the Holy Spirit and in water into Christ (I Cor. 10:1-4).
 5. The baptism of John the Baptist — a baptism of repentance for the remission of sins (Mt. 3:7, *βαπτισμα*, *baptisma*, baptism; Mt. 3:1-17; Lk. 7:29-30; Jn. 3:25 - 4:2; Acts 19:3-4).
 6. The baptism of suffering and persecution (Mk. 10:38-39; Lk. 12:49-53).
 7. The baptism of fire — a purging, refining, consuming work (Mt. 3:10-12; Lk. 3:16-17; Acts 2:3).

This is the end of The church, Chapter 1
For Chapter 2, visit www.JohnRothacker.org

