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<http://www.awmsa.net/files/510%20Water%20Baptism%20web.pdf>

WATER BAPTISM IS AN ACT OF FAITH.

Mark 16:16 "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned."

MARK 16:16.

This scripture has led many to believe that water baptism is a part of salvation and that the born-again experience cannot be a reality without it.

This same kind of thinking would make seeing Jesus a prerequisite for salvation, based on John 6:40.

John 6:40.

And this is the will of him that sent me, that every one which seeth the Son, and believeth on him, may have everlasting life: and I will raise him up at the last day.

It is faith in the redemptive work of Christ that produces salvation - not our actions. However, James writes that faith without works is dead (Jas. 2:20).

Faith alone saves, but saving faith is never alone; it must be acted upon.

This is what Mark is referring to when he speaks of baptism.

Water baptism is a command of Jesus and is the initial action taken upon believing. Mark's statement could be rendered, "He who believes with saving faith (i.e. faith that produces actions) will be saved." In this sense, water baptism is very important. It is an opportunity to act on your new profession of faith. Anyone who refuses to follow Jesus' command to receive water baptism, may be suspected of not really believing.

Water baptism is a command, but keeping this command does not produce justification. Jesus administered forgiveness of sins without any mention of water baptism.

Philip told the Ethiopian eunuch, who asked Philip to baptize him, that if he believed with all of his heart, he could be baptized (Acts 8:37). Philip used water baptism only after an individual believed. This is also how Mark used water baptism.

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HOW TO BAPTIZE

Matthew 28:19 "Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost:"

MATTHEW 28:19

In the same way that this commission is to every believer, not just to ministers, the command to baptize is also for every believer. It is proper for any believer to administer the ordinance of water baptism.

Jesus commands us to baptize in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, yet there is no recorded instance where the believers did so. Instead, the instances of baptism that are recorded in the book of Acts, show people being baptized in the name of Jesus only.

Because of this noticeable difference, doctrines have arisen that teach there is no Trinity, and that unless water baptism is administered in the name of Jesus (only), with faith in the water baptism, a person cannot be saved. This is a false teaching that has led many people astray.

Water baptism is an outward witness of the inner change that has already taken place. In Acts 10:44-48, Cornelius and his friends were filled with the Holy Ghost and spoke in tongues, proving that they were already born again before they were baptized in water.

The harmony between the commission of Jesus and the practice of the early church is simple. When we baptize people in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, we are baptizing them in the name of Jesus because "in him (Jesus) dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead bodily" (Col. 2:9).

Therefore, baptizing in the name of either, the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, or the name of Jesus, is correct as long as Colossians 2:9 is understood.

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WATER BAPTISM Water baptism is a command of the Lord Jesus¹ and is the response we should make to the Gospel once we have been saved:² – but it is not, as some have taught, an essential requirement for salvation. This is evident from Scripture, where it is quite clear that there were many people who were born again before they were baptised in water – Cornelius and his friends for example,³ and some disciples whom Paul happened upon at Ephesus.⁴ Whilst water baptism is an important act both of obedience to God and as an outward witness of the inward change that has taken place, it plays no part whatsoever in obtaining salvation for us. Salvation can only be obtained by faith in the redemptive work of Jesus on the cross. It is faith in what Jesus has done that saves us, not faith + water baptism. Just as with Abraham, circumcision did not confer righteousness upon Abraham⁵ and was simply a sign that Abraham had previously (over thirteen years earlier) believed and been made righteous by faith, water baptism does not actually confer righteousness on us and is simply a sign that we, too, have believed and been made righteous by faith. When Jesus was baptised by John, He explained that He did it to fulfil all righteousness – which means, in essence, that He was baptised in order to demonstrate the righteous condition of His heart, by outwardly showing His obedience to His Father's will. In doing so, He established a blueprint for us all to follow. So, whilst water baptism cannot save us, it does have great benefit as an action that both resists the devil, and acts as a witness, identifying us as being one with Christ.

The Greek word for baptise is "baptizo" and its literal meaning is to cause something to be dipped into and then removed from a different medium. This word was used in various contexts in classical Greek literature. For example, in the 4th century BC, Hippocrates used the term to describe sponges being dipped and people being submerged in water, and later, in the first century BC, the Greek historian and essayist Plutarch used the term in a similar way to describe a body being immersed in the sea.

The qualification that to be baptised in water a person must first be saved, has important consequences. To be saved a person has to choose to be saved. No-one can be saved by accident, by someone else believing on his behalf, or because another person, (even God!) wants him to be. God has given us all free will and to be saved we must exercise it by believing in our heart and confessing with our mouth.⁶ If

we are to believe in our heart, we must have some basic understanding of what we are believing, and babies and very small children do not have this. (They would nevertheless go to be with the Lord if they died, because sin is not imputed to a child who does not have the capacity to decide to go against God's will.⁷) It follows then, that babies should not be baptised in water – for they have neither the ability to believe in their heart and confess with their mouth, nor to decide to witness to such belief by water baptism. That is why many people who have been through a baptismal ceremony as an infant and who later become Christians, decide to be “rebaptised” – although in truth it is not really a “rebaptism,” as the first “baptism” was not a true baptism in accordance with the teaching of scripture.

The New Testament model for water baptism entailed that the event took place very soon after a person was saved. The Ethiopian eunuch to whom Philip explained the Gospel as he was carried along in his chariot, was baptised immediately,⁸ and the Philippian jailor and his family who were saved when an earthquake hit the prison during the night, were baptised before the next day dawned!⁹ When Peter preached on the day of Pentecost, three thousand people were saved and they were baptised that same day¹⁰ – quite an undertaking – and there are other New Testament examples¹¹ which show that the normal expectation was for water baptism to follow shortly after a person was saved and had received basic teaching in the faith. We do not find any instances in Scripture where baptism occurred more than a few days after conversion and there is certainly no scriptural precedent to support a lengthy delay before undergoing what should be an early response of faith to the ending of an old life and the beginning of a new one. That is not to say, however, that if a person was born again many years previously and not baptised at the time, that it is now too late! It isn't – and it is certainly a step that should be considered very seriously.

As we have already seen, the meaning of the word “baptizo” is to cause something to be dipped into and then removed from a different medium. In the Acts of the Apostles, this method of baptism by ‘dipping’ or totally immersing a person in water and then bringing them out, is the only one described. Later, and for a variety of reasons, different practices were introduced, such as sprinkling or pouring water over the head. Whilst various branches of the church have accepted and adopted these practices, there is no scriptural basis for changing the only method of water baptism endorsed by both the Lord and the Apostles – total immersion.

In Matthew 28:19 we find Jesus on a mountain in Galilee giving the Great Commission to His remaining eleven disciples, and there, He gave further instructions as to how water baptism should be administered. “Go ye therefore and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the B ...”

The first thing to note here is that in the same way as the commission to teach all nations is given to every believer – not just ministers, the command to baptise is also given to every believer, not just ministers. It is therefore perfectly proper for any believer to administer water baptism.

Curiously perhaps, although Jesus commanded His disciples to baptise in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost, there is no recorded instance where the first believers did so! Instead, the examples of baptism that are recorded in the book of Acts¹² show people being baptised in the name of Jesus only. As a result, doctrines have come into being that unless water baptism is administered in the name of Jesus (only), combined with faith in that water baptism, a person cannot be saved. This is not what the Bible teaches and it has actually damned many people. There is however a simple explanation which harmonises the commission of Jesus and the practice of the early church. When we baptise in the name of Jesus, we are baptising in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost because “in Him (Jesus)

dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead bodily".¹³ Therefore, baptising in the name of either the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost or the name of Jesus is correct, as long as Colossians 2:9 is understood. In practice, many branches of the church do now administer water baptism in the name of the Father, the Son and The Holy Spirit. 12. Acts 2:38; 8:16; 10:48;