

Wet?

Or

Baptized



by Mark W. Fenison, Ph.D

# Wet or Baptized

By

Mark W. Fenison, Ph.D.

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## Introduction

Every day people get wet. They take showers, baths, go swimming, and walk in the rain. What relationship with water makes its baptism rather than merely getting wet?

What constitutes the act of baptism? Is it how one makes contact with water? Is it the words that are said in or with water? Does it depend upon who baptizes you? There are so many conflicting ideas among professed Christendom about baptism.

### **Different Modes**

For instance, many differ concerning the mode of baptism. Should one be baptized by sprinkling water upon the head, or should that water be poured? On the other hand, should it be by immersion rather than sprinkling or pouring? Should the mode of baptism be left to the desire of the candidate or does it matter how one is baptized?

### **Different Candidates**

The question of the correct mode is but the beginning of confusion among Christians over baptism. For instance, what about the proper candidate for baptism? Can infants be baptized or is it for believers only? What about godfathers? Can babies be baptized by proxy faith or does it really matter?

### **Different Purposes**

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Then the question of the correct design for baptism is a major matter of difference. What is God's purpose for baptism? Is baptism symbolic or sacramental? Does it obtain figurative or literal remission of sin? As you can see, this is a very significant point as the very question of salvation is at stake here.

## **Different Administrators**

Finally, who has authority to baptize others? Can anyone baptize or must the administrator be a believer? Can any believer baptize or must it be an ordained minister? Is the baptism of one church as good as any other church, or must it be administered by churches that believe and practice the fundamentals of the New Testament faith and practice? Who do you go to for baptism?

## **Wet or baptized?**

People get wet many times a week (shower, bath, swimming, rain, etc.), but what are the essential ingredients that make baptism different than merely getting wet?

If you find the answer to that question in the Scriptures, then you have found what Scriptural Baptism is. Any other practice only gets you wet.

## How Important is Baptism?

Many profess to be Christians today but have never been baptized, and frankly, don't believe baptism is that important or even applicable in the age we live.

### Water Baptism is Age Long

Mt. 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:  
20 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.*

The baptism in this commission is water baptism because it is something that one man administers to another man - “Go ye....baptizing **them**...”

This is a commission to “teach” all nations, and is not limited to just Jews or the apostles. The Greek term translated “teach” means “to make disciples” and therefore water baptism is part of disciple making among all nations.

This commission is “even unto the end of the world.” The words “the world” translate the Greek term *aeon*. This Greek term refers to a period of time. Jesus uses this term in the book of Matthew only in two ways; (1) The present period of time that concludes with His coming in judgment, and (2) the period of time following the second coming of Christ:

Mt. 12:32 *And whosoever speaketh a word against the Son of man, it shall be forgiven him: but whosoever speaketh against the Holy Ghost, it shall not be*

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*forgiven him, neither in this world,* [Greek aion]  
*neither in the world* [Gr. aion] *to come.*

The phrase “*end of the world*” is only used by Christ in the book of Matthew and it consistently refers to the end of this present age which is terminated by his coming in judgment (Mt. 13:39, 40; 24:3; 28:20).

Therefore, Matthew uses this phrase to mean only one thing - the current age that is terminated by the coming of Christ in judgment.

The book of Acts demonstrates the early churches and apostles were obedient to this command (Acts 2:41; 8:12, 13,16, 36,38; 10:47-48; 11:16; 16:15,33; 18:8; 19:3,4,5).

Therefore, water baptism is an essential part of the Great Commission until Jesus returns.

## Part of following Christ

To “make disciples” means to make followers of Christ. One cannot follow Christ or be “Christ like” = “Christian” without water baptism.

Matt. 3:13 ¶ *Then cometh Jesus from Galilee to Jordan unto John, to be baptized of him.*

Baptism was sufficiently important to Jesus that he walked approximately 60 miles from Galilee to the place where John was baptizing in Jordan.

The only kind of people Jesus gathered around himself as “disciples” were baptized believers (Jn. 4:1-2; Acts 1:21-22).

The only kind of people Jesus sent into the world to represent and witness for Him are those who followed this same pattern:

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Joh 17:18 *As thou hast sent me into the world, even so have I also sent them into the world.*

He entered his public ministry by submitting to baptism and that is the very first step for evangelized persons to take after receiving the gospel (Mt. 28:19; Acts 2:41)

Acts 2:41 *As many as received the word were baptized...*

## Rejecting baptism is Rejecting God's Counsel

Luke 7:29 *And all the people that heard him, and the publicans, justified God, being baptized with the baptism of John. 30 But the Pharisees and lawyers rejected the counsel of God against themselves, being not baptized of him.*

The above text refers to the preaching by Jesus. Jesus made and baptized more disciples than John The Baptist (Jn. 4:1-2).

Baptism is "*the counsel of God*" and those who submit to baptism "*justify God*" or declare him to be righteous, as baptism is a public testimony that one has repented of sin against God and that God is right and you are wrong (Mt. 3:6-8). That is why it is called the "baptism of repentance" because John required the "fruits of repentance" (Mt. 3:8) and faith in Christ (Jn. 3:36; Acts 19:5) before baptizing a person.

Baptism is His commandment until the end of this age (Mt. 28:19-20). Baptism is part of being Christ like = "Christian." Baptism is part of discipleship (Mt. 28:19).

Disobedience to God's commandments is evidence of a lack of love for God:



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*1 John 2:3-5 And hereby we do know that we know him, if we keep his commandments. He that saith, I know Him, and keepeth not His commandments is a liar, and the truth is not in him. But whoso keepeth His word, in him verily is the love of God perfected.*

One cannot consistently claim to be a follower or disciple of Christ or claim to love God and reject baptism.

If scriptures place that much importance on baptism, it should be important to every child of God.

Therefore, if God's Word places such importance upon baptism then you can be certain that God's Word provides all that is necessary to define what it is, and what is essential to distinguish it from merely just getting wet.

## The Right Mode of Baptism

It is proper to begin with the mode of baptism since this requires us to define the word we are studying - *baptism*.

All words translated “*baptize, baptism, Baptist, baptizing*” all are derived from the Greek root term *bapto*. In the New Testament we are given the verb, noun and participle forms (*baptizo, baptisma, baptismos, etc.*).

However, did you know that there is not one single solitary modern English translation of the Bible that translates any of these terms? No, not one!

Instead translating, they all transliterate these terms. Do you know the difference between *translation* and *transliteration*? A *translation* provides the equivalent *meaning* of a term from one language to another. Therefore, to *translate* a word from Greek to English provides an English term(s) that is equivalent to the meaning of the Greek term.

A *transliteration* gives the equivalent *sound* of a term from one language to another. To *transliterate* is to provide proper enunciation of the Greek term into English sounds.

In other words, our English Bibles do not tell you what the Greek term *bapto* and all of its derived nouns, participle and verbs mean. They only tell you how they sound in English! This fact is obvious when the Greek verb and its English equivalent are compared to each other:

B α π τ ι ζ ω  
B a p t i z e

As you can plainly see the final letter “ω” is dropped and the English “e” is substituted to make it a proper English word. We are given the spelling and sound, but not the meaning. Why?

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## Why No English Translation of this Term

That is right! With the exception of the very first English translation (Tyndale's version) there are no English versions that translate this term. Think about that! Why would every single solitary English translation of the New Testament refuse to give a translation of the Greek terms “baptizo, baptisma, baptimos”?

Is it because there are no historical sources that provide the meaning and usage of these terms during the writing of the New Testament? No! As we shall shortly see, there are an abundance of source materials that provide both the meaning and usage of these terms.

Is it because there are so many different ancient meanings that its meaning could not be determined? No! As we shall see all lexicographers agree about its ancient usage and meaning when the New Testament was written. Why do they all refuse to translate these terms?

The reasons are theological and pragmatic. For example, King James provided rules for the translators of the KJV, and rule number three demanded they use ecclesiastical terms instead of translating the Greek terms.<sup>1</sup> Newer versions avoid translating the Greek terms because (1) the vast majority of Christendom practice something contrary to its historical meaning; (2) the proper translation would unchurch most of

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<sup>1</sup> *"The old ecclesiastical words to be kept; as the word church, not to be translated congregation, &c "* **McClintock & Strong's Cyclopeda of Biblical, Theological, and Ecclesiastical Literature**, Edited by John McClintock & James Strong, 1895 and in the introduction to the KJV 1611 edition the translator's says: *"Lastly, wee have on the one side avoided the scrupulositie of the Puritanes, who leave the olde Ecclesticall words, and betake them to other, as when they put washing for Baptisme, and Congregation in stead of Church:"* - **KJV Introduction to 1611 edition**

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Christendom,<sup>2</sup> (3) There would be outrage from the vast majority of Christendom; (4) There would be insufficient sales to make a profit.

Every Greek Lexicon provides the same ancient meaning and usage of baptizo and its other forms:

*“Plunge under, submerge, dip, immerse”*

Not one Greek Lexicon denies this is its ancient meaning and usage. Not one Greek Lexicon gives sprinkling or pouring as its legitimate historical meaning or usage.

The greatest Pedobaptist leaders in history have fully acknowledged it meant immerse in the first century:

## **Presbyterian**

**John Calvin**, himself a Pedobaptist, who wrote some very hard things against those who practiced baptism by immersion, wrote these words:

*Whether the person baptized is to be wholly immersed, and that whether once or thrice, or whether he is only to be sprinkled with water, is not of the least*

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<sup>2</sup> 2. If most of Christendom is wrong about its practice of baptism, then they are all without scriptural baptism. No church in the New Testament was composed of an unbaptized membership. Baptism was the prerequisite for church membership in the New Testament. In Matthew 28:19-20 baptism precedes assembling them to teach how to observe all things. If most of Christendom is without baptism, then their churches are no churches at all.

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*consequence: churches should be at liberty to adopt either according to the diversity of climates, **although it is evident that the term baptize means to immerse, and that this was the form used by the primitive Church.** (Calvin's Institutes, Book III, Chapter 15, Part 2, Section 19.)*

Notice he believed that *climate* could dictate the mode rather than its New Testament meaning and usage. But who gave Calvin the right to say that?

## Lutheran

**Martin Luther** -"*I could wish that the baptized should be totally immersed according to the meaning of the word.*"

**Philip Schaff** -"*Immersion and not sprinkling was unquestionably the original normal form of baptism. This is shown by the meaning of the Greek word and the analogy of the baptism of John which was performed in Jordan.*" (**History of the Apostolic Church**, p.568).

## Methodist

**John Wesley** -commenting on Rom 6:4- "*We are buried with Him- alluding to the ancient manner of baptism by immersion*" (*Explanatory notes Upon the New Testament*, p. 376)

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**George Whitefield** -commenting on Rom 6:4- "*It is certain that the words of our text is an allusion to the manner of baptism by **immersion***".

## Episcopalians

**Conybeare and Howson** -commenting on Rom 6:4-": *This passage cannot be understood unless it is understood that the primitive baptism was by immersion."*

Indeed, the Greek language has specific terms that mean sprinkle (rantizo) and pour (epicheo) and these words are found in the Scriptures, but are never once used to describe this ordinance.

## Associated with a burial

Rom. 6:4 - *Therefore we are **buried** with him by baptism...*

Col. 2:12 - ***Buried** with him in baptism...*

The Biblical context prevents any other view than immersion. Baptism is associated with Christ's burial. Christ's body was not sprinkled or poured into the ground. His body was submerged into the ground or placed into a tomb underground.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> See Thayer's Greek English Lexicon of the New Testament, Abbott-Smith Greek Lexicon of the New Testament, Baurer, Arndt and Gingrich, **A Greek English Lexicon of the New Testament and other early Christian Literature.**

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The Bible also identifies baptism as a type of the resurrection of Jesus Christ (1 Pet. 3:21). Just as water lifted the ark up in the Old Testament as a "*figure*" of the resurrection of Christ, so also, when the believer is lifted up out of the water, it is a "*like figure*" of the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Only baptism can provide the "*figure*" of the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

As one old preacher said, "*sprinkling and pouring are just fine, as long as, you sprinkle and pour enough water to bury the candidate in water.*"

Those who were sprinkled or poured upon simply got wet and are yet without scriptural baptism.

### Archeological Evidence

Archeologists have confirmed that Jewish and Greek cities had pools and public baths that were more than sufficient to immerse. Jerusalem had large pools to perform immersions. Archeologists have found artifacts that even picture the Jews immersing Temple furniture in these pools for ceremonial cleansing.

*Five professional archaeological studies carried out in the last twenty five years which are cited widely and regularly in the relevant scholarly literature agree on the same conclusions on the archaeological and literary evidence. [Sanford La Sor 1987; Lothar Heiser, 1986; Jean-Charles Picard, 1989; Malka Ben Pechat, 1989; Everett Ferguson, 2009]*

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*On the basis of archaeological and textual evidence, Sanford La Sor (1987) considers it likely that the archaeological evidence favors total immersion. Lothar Heiser (1986), likewise understands the literary and pictorial evidence to indicate total immersion - Jean-Charles Picard (1989), reaches the same conclusion, and so does Malka Ben Pechat (1989).*

*The latest comprehensive survey of previous studies and examination of the archaeological and literary evidence in combination, a study by Everett Ferguson (2009), confirms the findings of La Sor, Heiser, Picard, and Pechat.*

Some object that it is not possible for twelve apostles to immerse 3000 in one day as recorded in Acts 2:41. However, there are records of greater numbers being immersed by fewer administrators in one day.<sup>4</sup>

### **The Historical Meaning/Usage of Baptizo**

*“Let it then be clearly understood that a Metaphor is confined to a distinct affirmation that one thing is another thing, owing to some association or connection in the uses or effects of anything expressed or understood. The two nouns themselves must both be mentioned, and are always to be taken in their*

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<sup>4</sup> Even if Romans 6 and Colossians 2 are interpreted to be a metaphorical baptism rather than literal water baptism the idea is a “burial.” Metaphors must originate with and represent literal ideas or else the metaphor is meaningless.



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*absolute literal sense, or else no one can tell what they mean*" - E.W. Bullinger, **Figures of Speech Used in the Bible**. p. 735

Therefore, since no one in the first century was ever literally sprinkled or poured into tombs, then metaphorically this cannot be understood as anything other than baptism being a submerging or immersion into whatever element one is surmising or interpreting the text (water, Spirit, earth, milk, etc.).

However, in Romans 6 Paul is arguing that Christians are not those who believe God's grace promotes sin (vv. 1-2). The first proof he offers is water baptism. Baptism is a public testimony that the professed Christian identifies with Christ's death and resurrection. Baptism is called "the baptism of repentance" because repentance of sin is required prior to baptism. John the Baptist required the "fruit of repentance" prior to baptism (Mt. 3:8) and faith in Christ (Jn. 3:36; Acts 19:5). The New Testament church was commissioned to preach "repentance" (Lk. 24:47) to all nations.

Both our justification and sanctification are publicly expressed in the act of baptism. Baptism provides a public expression of our identity with Christ's death and burial due to sin. By faith we died to sin when Christ died and his burial is proof that he died. By faith we live to righteousness because Christ arose from the grave proving His victory over sin, death and hell. Hence, in the public act of water baptism we are expressing our own death with Christ to sin and our own life with Christ to righteousness by the power of his resurrection.

In Colossians 2:11-13 Paul is proving that both circumcision and baptism identify new life found only in Christ. However, no outward rite literally obtains new life in Christ but is merely an outward sign, (Rom. 4:11) or a "shadow" of Christ (Col. 2:17). The Old Testament symbols have been completely

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abolished (Col. 2:14-16). The only circumcision today is the circumcision of the heart or new birth which baptism bears witness with.

Baptism is the New Covenant symbol (1 Pet. 3:21) that outwardly and publicly identifies us with the burial and resurrection of Christ from whence our new life is literally and actually obtained.

*Dr. Gill refers to 10,000 being baptized in one day in the River Swale by a monk named Austin - mentioned in Foxe's Book of Martyrs. He also mentions 20,000 Russians being baptized in a day in the tenth century, mentioning that the ancient Russian church only baptized by immersion. But apart from the apostles, were there not the seventy to assist - whilst it is a well-known fact of Baptist history that the actual act of baptizing has not been totally limited to ministers?*

*Gill also refers to ample amounts of water in Jerusalem private baths for ceremonial uncleanness; many pools in the city; various places in the temple, the dipping room for the high priest, the molten sea for the common priests, the ten brazen lavers, etc.*

*Dr. Robinson, Biblical Researches in Palestine (1841), lists the Pool of Bethesda, Solomon's Pool, the Pool of Siloam, the Upper Pool, the Pool of Hezekiah and the Lower Pool of Gihon, giving the ample dimensions of each. - B.A. Rambottom, Immersion: **The True Meaning of Baptism***

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## The Origin of Pouring and Sprinkling

As previously shown by Calvin's quotation, climate was an early reason for changing baptism from immersion to pouring and then to sprinkling. Therefore it was a matter of exposure to climate extremes that gave rise to sprinkling and pouring.

Probably no better authority than the well known Roman Catholic theologian Cardinal James Gibbons says it best:

*For several centuries after the establishment of Christianity, Baptism was usually conferred by immersion; but since the twelfth century, the practice of baptizing by infusion has prevailed in the Catholic Church, as **this manner is attended with less inconvenience than baptism by immersion.** - Cardinal James Gibbons*

Immersion requires "*much water*" (Jn. 3:23). Therefore, immersion was often inconvenient. What authority did they have to alter God's ordinance for the sake of convenience?

However, there is a deeper reason underlying both climate extremes and convenience.

When some started believing that salvation was literally obtained through baptism, then it was obvious that the sooner you baptized someone, the sooner they would be saved. Hence, the logical point to baptize was at the earliest age - infants.

The practice of baptizing infants is the original reason that is responsible for the change of mode from immersion to pouring. Originally they immersed infants and the Orthodox Catholic Church continues the ancient practice of immersion. Roman Catholics were afraid, especially in colder climates, that if you immersed infants, they might get sick and die.

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However, the same argument was soon said about pouring. It was objected that pouring involved too much water, and thus too much of a chance for babies to get sick. Hence, sprinkling was substituted for pouring. In addition, it was more convenient to pour and sprinkle because it required less water than immersion.

The root of this error is found in the belief that regeneration and remission of sins is obtained in the act of baptism. One error led to another error - infant baptism, which led to another error - pouring and sprinkling. Therefore, it should be no surprise that the change from immersion rests wholly upon human traditions rather than upon God's Word.

### **Triune Immersion?**

Is baptism to be performed by immersing the candidate three times face forward? Some well meaning Christians think so and history shows that some have been doing this for a long time. It is true that triune immersion has an ancient history, but so do many other unbiblical traditions.

Their Biblical basis for believing and practicing triune immersion has been Matthew 28:19-20 where baptism is in the name of the Trinity.

However, both the English and Greek grammar in Matthew 28:19-20 does not support this practice. For instance, the singular "name" instead of "names" is used implying a singular act. This idea might have some support if Christ had used the plural "names" or had inserted "then" before each of the Persons of the Godhead.

However, the grammatical structure in Matthew 28:19-20 lends no support to the doctrine of triune immersion.

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Moreover, such a practice distorts the gospel of Christ. Triune immersion pictures three deaths, three burials and three resurrections. Neither the Father nor the Holy Spirit died, nor were buried, and rose again. Jesus certainly did not do so three times. The emphasis of scripture is that Christ did this “once” and it is sufficient (Heb. 10:10-14).

In the Old Testament, Moses was forbidden to enter the Promised Land because he distorted a gospel type. Moses’ guilt was that he struck the rock three times. Paul tells us that this “rock” represented Christ (1 Cor. 10:4). In striking the rock more than once, he perverted the gospel truth that Jesus died once for all. However, this is exactly what triune immersion does in type.

In the New Testament, the writer of Hebrews argues that if Christ’s death was not sufficient to save a person completely from their sins then it would be impossible to resave them, as that would require recrucifying Christ upon the cross again, and such a repetition puts Christ to open shame (Heb. 6:4-6). However, this is precisely what triune immersion is teaching in type.

Finally, there is not one example of triune immersion in scripture. There are examples where the candidate is said to “go down into the water” and “to come up out of the water” but this is once and never do we read it done repeatedly as in triune immersion.

Furthermore, the emphasis of baptism has nothing to do with the posture of Christ upon the cross but on his burial and resurrection (Rom. 6:4; Col. 2:12). Neither Christ nor anyone else is “buried” face forward, as practiced by the triune immersionists.

Triune immersion misrepresents the Godhead, distorts the gospel and contradicts the clear teaching of scripture that he died “once” for all.

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The significance of a type is the truth it is designed to convey by its visible form. Pervert the visible form and you pervert the truth it is designed to convey. Triune immersion by its repetitious form perverts the essential truth of the gospel that Christ died but once, was buried and rose again once and once is entirely sufficient. The repetition denies the sufficiency of “once for all” (Heb. 10:10).

## The Right Candidate

Who is the proper candidate for baptism? Are unbelievers or believers the proper candidates for baptism?

Those who believe that *literal* remission of sin and regeneration are obtained in baptism are conceding that the proper candidates for baptism are unregenerate sinners.

When people began to think that regeneration and remission of sins are *literally* obtained in the act of baptism, thus saving a person, the natural conclusion was that the earlier you baptized a person, the earlier they were saved - hence infant baptism was conceived.

## Gospel Faith before Baptism

Which comes first? Does faith in the gospel precede baptism or does baptism precede faith in the gospel? Can you find anywhere in scripture where unbelievers were baptized? No!

Baptism in the Scriptures always follows but never precedes personal repentance and faith.

*“Believe and be baptized....”* - Mk. 16:16

*“Repent and be baptized.....”* - Acts 2:38

*“Then they that gladly received the word were baptized...”* - Acts 2:41

*“....see here is water, what doth hinder me to be baptized? And Philip said, if thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest. And he answered and said, I*

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*believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God.” - Acts 8:36-37*

John demanded evidence that real repentance had already occurred before he would baptize anyone and that is precisely why his baptism was called the “*baptism of repentance*”:

*“But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees come to his baptism, he said.....Bring forth therefore fruit of repentance.” - Mt. 3:7-8*

These scriptures clearly demand that repentance and faith in the gospel must precede baptism. This is impossible for infants. Equally impossible is to find any precept or example of the baptism of infants in Scripture.

## **Regeneration at the Point of Faith**

When is a person born again? Are they born again at the moment they repent of their sins or not until they are baptized? Are they born again at the moment they believe in the gospel or not until baptism? Since repentance and faith are required prior to baptism, if regeneration occurs at the point of repentance and faith then it does not occur in baptism.

The Scriptures teach that at the moment one believes in the gospel they are born again:

*“Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God...” - 1 Jn. 5:1*



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Notice that the King James English demands that “*believeth*” and “*is born*” are both present tense showing identical action. This means they occur together at the same time.<sup>5</sup> You cannot believe without being born again and you cannot be born again without believing. This is why the New Testament teaches that one is saved at the point of believing:

*“...Sirs, what must I do to be saved? And they answered believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved.” - Acts 16:30-31.*

Paul realized that it was faith in the gospel that *literally* saved and remitted sins and that baptism only obtained remission of sins *figuratively*, as an external public witness of symbolic identification with the gospel. Knowing where the emphasis lies, he said to a bunch of saints who were arguing that their particular baptism was superior to the baptism of others due to a particular administrator:

*“I thank God that I baptized none of you.....For Christ sent me not to baptize, but to preach the gospel....For the preaching of the cross is foolishness*

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<sup>5</sup> In the Greek text the verb translated “*is born*” is found in the perfect tense as a completed action while the participle “*believeth*” is found in the present tense. However, this grammatical structure demands that the action of the participle is simultaneous with the action of the verb. If the participle had been a past or future tense it would have indicated that believing occurs prior to or after the action of the verb. The present tense shows the action of the participle occurred simultaneous with the action of the verb. The new birth is the logical cause of faith but there is no chronological order. There is no such thing as a regenerated unbeliever any more than there is such a thing as an unregenerate believer.

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*to them that perish, but unto us which are saved, it is the power of God.*" - 1 Cor. 1:14, 17-18

If Paul believed that literal remission of sins and literal regeneration were obtained in baptism he could never have said this, because the power of God would be found in baptism. However, he denied that the power of salvation is found in baptism but it is found in the gospel.

The thief on the cross is a clear example that the power of salvation is found through faith in Christ. On the other hand there are no Biblical precepts or examples where anyone was baptized without personal repentance and faith preceding that act.

It is true that one must be baptized *in order to* receive remission of sins and *in order to* be saved. However, that is not the issue. The issue is **how** does baptism remit sins and **how** does it save? Does it do so **literally** or **figuratively**? Peter answers this question when he says "*the like figure*" whereunto baptism doeth also now save us (1 Pet. 3:21).

## No Biblical Record of Infant Baptism

Not only are there no precepts or examples where unrepentant or unbelieving persons are baptized, but the Bible provides no precepts or examples where any infant was ever baptized.

Knowing there are no precepts or examples that support the baptism of infants, those who practice this idea rely upon inferences to support their doctrine and practice.

It is true that doctrine can be established upon what theologians call *necessary* inferences. A *necessary* inference is where the context supplies sufficient information that demands a conclusion that is not spelled out in explicit language.

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However, there are no scriptures that demand infant baptism is necessary.

An example used by Pedobaptist (infant baptizers) as a *necessary* inference, is when Christ encouraged “*little children*” to come unto him, and so the inference drawn is that this supports infant baptism. However, these passages say nothing about baptism whatsoever, and the fact that these “*little children*” are capable of heeding such an encouragement proves they are not helpless infants, but capable of exercising their own choice to come.

Another example of supposed *necessary* inference is the “*household*” baptisms in the book of Acts. However, when these passages are carefully examined, they are not found to be silent about the kind of candidates being baptized.

For example, in the household of Lydia, Luke says:

“...*entered into the house of Lydia: and when they had seen the brethren, they comforted them.*” - Acts 16:34

The term “*brethren*” is never used for infants but always for those sufficiently capable enough to exercise personal repentance and faith in the gospel. The household of Lydia consisted of either brothers or children old enough to repent and believe in the gospel.

This is also the case when we look at the jailors household:

“...*believing with all his house*” - Acts 16:34

Notice Luke did **not** say “*believing for all his house*” as the godfather proxy faith theology teaches. Again, there is no mention of infants, and sufficient evidence to deny such an inference.

However, the strongest argument presented by advocates of infant baptism is that they believe baptism under the New

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Covenant replaces circumcision under the Old Covenant. Infants were circumcised at eight days old and therefore, they believe this provides necessary inference that infants should be baptized under the New Covenant.

The problem is that the New Testament clearly denies that circumcision under the Old Covenant was instituted for salvation (Rom. 4:9-11) but only for a “sign” or symbol of salvation.

Rom. 4:11 And *he received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness of the faith which he had yet being uncircumcised: that he might be the father of all them that believe, though they be not circumcised; that righteousness might be imputed unto them also:*

Circumcision was then included under the Old Covenant ceremonial law which provided types or a “*shadow*” of salvation found in Christ (Heb. 10:1-4; Col. 2; 14-16).

Under the Old Covenant, literal infants of Israel were types of all born again children of God under the New Covenant. The new birth was typified by circumcision of an eight day old infant. Thus literal circumcised infants brought into the Old Covenant were types of spiritual born again children of God under the New Covenant. This type is clearly seen even in the Old Testament where Jeremiah explicitly denies that the “*least*” under the New Covenant will have to be catechized to know God:

Jer. 31:34 *And they shall teach no more every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the LORD: for they shall all know me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith the LORD: for I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more.*

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This very text is quoted by the writer to the Hebrews to distinguish the new covenant from the old covenant.

Heb. 8:8 *For finding fault with them, he saith, Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, when I will make **a new covenant** with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah:*

*9 Not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day when I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt; because they continued not in my covenant, and I regarded them not, saith the Lord.*

*10 For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, saith the Lord; I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts: and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people:*

*11 And they shall not teach every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord: for all shall know me, from the least to the greatest.*

The literal children of Israel were circumcised at eight days old and then their fathers were responsible to teach (catechize, confirm) them about the Lord. However, “*all*” under the New Covenant already know the Lord “*from the least*” and do not have to be catechized or confirmed. Hence, the “*least*” cannot be *literal* infants but rather *spiritual* infants. Nicodemus was an old man but he needed to be born again (Jn. 3:3-6) and when he was “*born again*” he became a *spiritual* infant in God’s kingdom who had to desire the sincere milk of the word to grow thereby (1 Pet. 2:2).

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## Dying Infants?

Many feel that if infants die without baptism they will go to hell, and thus, baptism is the means to remove original sin and save them from hell.

It is true that infants come into this world with a sin nature. This is clearly manifest by the fact that infants do not need to be taught to do wrong. That comes natural because they are born with a nature inclined toward evil. Every parent has witnessed this inclination to evil. Hence, they are born with a sinful nature and need to be born again.

However, does baptism provide anything to resolve the problem of original sin? If that were the case then why do those who are baptized as infants need to be later *confirmed* in personal faith? Apparently, after baptism they still possess a sinful nature, they still sin and they still die, all of which is due to original sin. Moreover, what about children who die in the womb or still born or aborted?

More importantly, the Scriptures furnish no evidence whatsoever that dying infants are in danger of hell.

When God cast Korah and all of his family alive into “*hell*” He preserved Korah’s children from that penalty. What a clear picture we have in the preservation of Korah’s children.

*And the earth opened her mouth, and swallowed them up together with Korah, when that company died, what time the fire devoured two hundred and fifty men: and they became a sign. **Notwithstanding the children of Korah died not.** - Numb. 26:10-11*

When David’s infant son born in adultery died he clearly expressed hope to see him again.

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*But now he is dead, wherefore should I fast? can I bring him back again? I shall go to him, but he shall not return to me. - 2 Sam. 12:23*

At his death, David did not go into mourning but washed up and ate and rejoiced because he knew where his son went and that he would "*go to him.*" Where did David expect to go at death?

*Thou shalt guide me with thy counsel, and afterward receive me to glory. Whom have I in heaven but thee?*  
- Psa. 73:24-25

The Bible clearly teaches that God does not punish children for the sins of their fathers but only for their own sins (Ezek. 18:4).

Jesus said that those who are "*blind*" or not capable of seeing light are not held accountable for sin:

*Jesus said unto them, If ye were blind, ye should have no sin: but now ye say, We see; therefore your sin remaineth. - Jn. 9:41*

Infants have no "*light*" or ability to rationally discriminate and choose between right and wrong. Remember what God said to Jonah:

*And should not I spare Nineveh, that great city, wherein are more than sixscore thousand persons that cannot discern between their right hand and their left hand; and also much cattle? - Jonah 4:11*

*Moreover your little ones, which ye said should be a prey, and your children, which in that day had no*

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*knowledge between good and evil, they shall go in thither, and unto them will I give it, and they shall possess it.* - Deut. 1:39

Therefore, according to Jesus they will have no sin held against them if they die in that state.

Jesus spoke of “*little children*” populating heaven:

*But Jesus called them unto him, and said, Suffer little children to come unto me, and forbid them not: for of such is the kingdom of God.* - Lk. 18:16

Moreover, those who are cast into hell are said to be judged “*according to their own works.*” Eternal punishment in the lake of fire is the consequence of personal sin done in your own body. Infants have not committed any sin in their own body.

Hence, Scripture is completely silent about eternal punishment of infants, but it is not silent about God’s preservation of infants from *sheol*, as in the case of Korah’s children, or in the case of David’s illegitimate child. Neither is the Scripture silent about the basis for eternal punishment - “*their own works.*”

If baptism were necessary to procure the eternal safety of our infants from hell, we should not only find clear, and unambiguous commands in scripture for parents to baptize their children, but we should find many examples. What can be more urgent, and appealing to the hearts of parents than to procure the safety of their own children?

So what happens when an infant dies? The fact that they die, prove they are subject to death in Adam as death is “passed” down from Adam to his descendents (Rom. 5:12) due to his disobedience (Rom. 5:19).

Those who go to heaven must come through Christ as there is no salvation outside of Christ (Jn. 14:6; Acts 4:12). Yet, dying



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infants have no ability or opportunity in life to repent and believe in Christ. Hence, there is no individual personal basis that can be found in their own personal bodies for salvation or condemnation.

The answer is that they are saved just as they were condemned. They were condemned by one man's disobedience and they are saved by one man's obedience (Rom. 5:19) without exercising individual choice or works in their own bodies.

Those in hell will not outnumber those in heaven because where abounded, grace sin did much more abound:

*But where sin abounded, grace did much more abound:* - Rom. 5:20

Therefore, those who die in infancy or those who have been born in a state of mental incapability and die later are safe. They have no individual choices or deeds performed in their own body to be judged. Baptism does no good for the aborted infant or miscarried infant, or the infant that is full term and dies at birth any more than baptism does for anyone in regard to original sin. Baptism provides no literal salvation for anyone.

### The Right Design of Baptism

Why get baptized? The vast majority of professing Christendom believes that remission of sin is literally obtained in baptism. Do not the scriptures clearly state that remission of sin and salvation is obtained in baptism?

Yes, the Bible clearly states that remission of sin and salvation are obtained in baptism:

Mk. 16:16 *Believe and be baptized and thou shalt **be saved**...*

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,...*

Acts 22:16 *And now why tarriest thou? arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord.*

However, the real question is **how** does baptism remit sins and save? Does it do it *literally* or *figuratively*? There is but one scripture that explicitly answers this question:

1 Pet. 3:21 *The **like figure** whereunto even baptism doth also now save us (not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God), by the resurrection of Jesus Christ.*

Baptism saves us in “*figure*” just “like” Noah was saved in “*figure*” by water.

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Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord and was a servant of the Lord long before the flood ever came upon the earth as he was a preacher of righteousness as he built the ark:

Gen. 6:8-9 ¶ *But Noah found grace in the eyes of the LORD.*

*These are the generations of Noah: Noah was a just man and perfect in his generations, and Noah walked with God.*

2Pe 2:5 *And spared not the old world, but saved Noah the eighth person, a preacher of righteousness, bringing in the flood upon the world of the ungodly;*

Noah was literally saved by God's grace long before the flood ever came. However, the flood waters lifted up the ark above the death and destruction caused by the flood waters. The ark was a type of Christ and Noah and his family consisting of eight was types of those saved "in Christ." The waters lifting up the ark was a figure of the resurrection of Jesus Christ:

1 Pet. 3:21 *The like figure whereunto even baptism doth also now save us (not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God), by the resurrection of Jesus Christ.*

So baptism is a "like figure" with the ark of Christ's resurrection.

Yes, baptism saves and remits sins but not *literally*, only *figuratively*.

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## Symbol or Sacrament?

The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* clearly teaches that circumcision in the Old Testament is parallel to baptism in the New Testament as a sacrament:

*“CIRCUMCISION.....was a sign of the covenant between God and his people Israel and **prefigured the rite of Christian institution in baptism.**”* - p. 871 (emphasis mine)

*“527 Jesus circumcision, on the eighth day after his birth.....This sign prefigures that ‘circumcision of Christ’ **which is Baptism**”* - p. 133 (emphasis mine)

*“1150 Signs of the Covenant....Among these liturgical signs from the Old Covenant are circumcision.....The Church sees in these signs a **prefiguring of the sacraments of the New Covenant.**”* - p. 297 (emphasis mine)

The whole soteriological structure of Roman Catholicism rests upon this premise, and if this premise is wrong the whole salvation doctrine of Rome is proven to be wrong. Indeed, the whole system of Catholicism collapses if they are wrong about sacramentalism.

Rome asserts that justifying grace, regeneration and indwelling of the Spirit of God are conveyed in baptism and maintained by the other sacraments:

*“1275 Christian initiation is accomplished by three sacraments together: Baptism which is the beginning of new life; Confirmation which is its strengthening;*

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*and the Eucharist which nourishes the disciple with Christ's Body and Blood for his transformation in Christ.” - p. 324*

However, the dilemma for Rome is that Paul purposely uses circumcision in the case of Abraham in Romans 4:9-11 and denies that justification and remission of sins (Rom. 4:6-8) are received “*in circumcision*” but obtained by faith prior to, and without circumcision while Abraham was still “*in uncircumcision*.”

Since Rome claims that circumcision is parallel to baptism as a sacramental rite then Paul is completely repudiating the whole idea of sacramental salvation. Indeed, if the word circumcision were replaced with the word baptism as Rome suggests can be done then Romans 4:9-11 would read as follows:

*¶ Cometh this blessedness then upon the **baptized** only, or upon the **unbaptized** also? for we say that faith was reckoned to Abraham for righteousness.*

*How was it then reckoned? when he was **baptized**, or in **unbaptism**? Not in **baptism**, but in **unbaptism**.*

*And he received the sign of **baptism**, a seal of the righteousness of the faith which he had yet being **unbaptized**: that he might be the father of all them that believe, though they be not **baptized**; that righteousness might be imputed unto them also: - Rom. 4:9-11*

Their dilemma is obvious and increases with the fact that Paul sets forth Abraham as the pattern for “*all them that believe*” whether they lived before or after the coming of Christ. Thus Paul is clearly confirming the words of Peter:

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*To him give all the prophets witness, that through his name whosoever believeth in him shall receive remission of sins. -Acts 10:43*

The elect have always been justified by faith without connection to any external divine rites. Such external rites are nothing more than an external “*sign*” and visible “*seal*” of the imputed righteousness already received by faith in Christ (Rom. 4;11).

Hence, sacramentalism is proven to be false altogether and thus the whole doctrine of Rome comes crashing down.

### The Value of a Symbol

Just because gospel ordinances (baptism, Lord’s Supper) are symbolic in nature, does that reduce their significance? What is the Biblical significance of a symbol or figure?

The value or significance of a figure is found in its external form, as the form is designed to visibly convey truth(s) by its very external form. Therefore, to distort or change the visible form is to distort or change the truth it was intended to convey. Hence, if it is a salvation type then the perversion or distortion of the visible form would pervert and distort the gospel truth it was designed to convey.

This is one reason why baptism must be by immersion as it is designed to be a visible form of the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus Christ (Rom. 6:4; Col. 2:12).

Ask Moses how serious it is to distort a gospel symbol? Paul tells us that the “*rock*” which Moses smote in the wilderness which provided Israel with water in the wilderness was a type or symbol of Jesus Christ:

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*And did all drink the same spiritual drink: for they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them: and that Rock was Christ. - 1 Cor. 10:4*

Paul uses direct language of a metaphor where linking verbs are found such as “*is, are, am, was.*” For example, when Christ said “*I am the door....am the light of the world...am the true vine*” these all use the language of a metaphor and you simply replace the linking verb with the word “represent” and you have the true understanding of the figure of speech. So the words “*that Rock was Christ*” mean “*that Rock represented Christ.*”

If you will remember the story, Moses was commanded to smite the rock the first time. That symbolized Christ being smitten for our sins that we may partake of the water of life.

However, the second time he was commanded only to speak to the rock rather than to smite it. But Moses lost his temper and smote the rock two more times. For that act of disobedience he was not permitted to enter the Promised Land. Why? Not because he was a lost man. He was not permitted to enter the **type** of heaven because he violated the **type** of salvation.

Christ was smitten by God but “once” (Heb. 10:10, 14) and “once” was wholly sufficient to satisfy all of God’s demands for eternal life (symbolized by the water from the rock). Smiting the rock repeatedly symbolized Christ being recrucified over and over again and thus put Christ to open shame (Heb. 6:6).

That is precisely what Mass is all about. It is the denial that his death on the cross was totally sufficient for our salvation but rather in addition to the cross one must partake of an external rite that provides the literal body and blood repeatedly over and over again to obtain what was finished and completed by Christ’s death and resurrection “once” for all who believe.

How can a gospel type be perverted and how serious is it to pervert a gospel symbol?

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The gospel type can be perverted by (1) those who are permitted to participate in it - wrong candidates; (2) by the purpose for participating in it - wrong design; (3) by changing its visible form or its revealed specifications.

For example, the gospel is perverted in baptism when it is administered to the wrong candidate, for the wrong purpose by the wrong mode.

The Lord's Supper provides a type of salvation and type of practical sanctification. The cup provides a type of the Lord's blood for remission of sins while the bread provides several types dealing with practical sanctification. The "unleavened" provides a type of absences of known sin in the observers. The fact it is "*one*" bread provides a type of unity without schism with Christ among those observing it. Remember mere salvation is insufficient to observe the Lord's Supper worthily because the Corinthians were redeemed persons but still unfit to observe the Lord's Supper.

When a church opens the Lord's Supper to the lost, unbaptized, unchurched, public sinners or those who are not in practical unity with the observing church they fail to properly "*discern*" the types used in the Supper and thus pervert the truths which those symbolic elements are designed to convey.

## **Baptism Publicly Identifies with Christ**

It might be asked at this point, "*Why then do the scriptures place so much emphasis upon baptism if it does not literally save us?*"

We have considered the value of a Biblical symbol. However, baptism is significant for another reason in addition to symbolism. One of the earliest usages of the Greek word *bapto* was identification with something. One of the earliest uses of this term was in the dyeing industry where cloth was immersed



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into a dye so that it took on the color of the dye. Hence, baptism is designed to publicly *identify* the candidate with Christ, His gospel, His doctrine and His church.

Look at Matthew 28:19-20 or what most Christians recognize as the Great Commission.

Those Christ authorized to administer baptism are those who preach the same gospel and teach the same faith and order Christ commanded them. Indeed, Christ places this limitation upon the administrators of this commission - "*whatsoever I have commanded you.*" Christ never authorized anyone to baptize who did not identify with Christ, His gospel and his faith and practice. Those authorized by Christ in Matthew 28:19-20 are those who are like faith and practice with Christ in His gospel, baptism and faith and practice.

For example, suppose you wanted to be baptized and chose to be baptized by a Roman Catholic Priest. So you invited your friends to come see you get baptized. After being baptized by the Priest would your audience assume you were a Baptist or a Methodist? No! In your baptism you publicly identified yourself with the Catholic Church and its doctrine and practice. Moreover, that Priest would not baptize you if you did not identify with the doctrine and practice of the Catholic church.

So does it make a difference who baptizes you? Yes, it does, as baptism publicly identifies you with the doctrine and practice of the administrator and that is its very design in the Great Commission.

Jesus confined baptism in the Great Commission to administrators that identified the candidate with His gospel, His doctrine and practice and thus His churches.

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## Baptism Publicly Identifies with the Doctrine of Christ

Scriptural baptism publicly identifies you with the New Testament system of faith or what the scriptures define as “*the faith once delivered.*”

**First**, it identifies you with the gospel of Jesus Christ. Romans 6:4-5 affirms that the candidate is publicly identified with the “*likeness*” of Christ’s death, burial and resurrection which is the essence of the gospel of Christ (see 1 Cor. 15:3-4). Thus the basic truth of the doctrine of soteriology or doctrine of salvation is identified with publicly in baptism.

**Second**, baptism identifies you with the basic truth of new life in Christ:

Romans 6:4 .....*we are buried with him by baptism into death, that like as Christ was raised up from the dead...even so we also should walk in newness of life.*

Paul says that as many as were baptized into Christ “*have put on Christ*” (Gal. 3:27). The idea of putting on something is wearing it publicly for all to see. In baptism the old life is buried and the new life arises to walk like Christ. Baptism declares a changed life. Baptism identifies the candidate with the resurrection life of Christ. Hence, figuratively in baptism you publicly put on and declare that life to be yours. Thus proper baptism identifies you with the basic truth of the doctrine of sanctification.

**Third**, baptism publicly identifies you with the true God of the Bible. Not the god of the Unitarian or the god of the United

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Pentecostal denomination or the god's of the Mormon's, but the One true God of the Bible. The One true God manifested in three co-eternal and co-existent Persons. When you are properly baptized, this confession is publicly announced:

*Mt. 28:19.....baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost.*

Therefore, the basic truth of the doctrine of Theology is included in proper baptism.

**Fourth**, baptism publicly identifies you with the church of Jesus Christ, or the congregational body of Christ.

*Acts 2:41 Then they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were **added unto them** about three thousand souls.*

*42 ¶ And they continued stedfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers.....47 And the Lord added unto the church...*

The congregation of Christ was built and first pastored by Jesus Christ and not the Holy Spirit. His church had been consistently assembling since the baptism of John (Jn. 1:35-50) up to his ascension:

*Acts 1:21 Wherefore of these men which **have companied with us all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us,***

*22 **Beginning from the baptism of John, unto that same day that he was taken up from us, must one be ordained to be a witness with us of his resurrection.***

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In Acts chapter one, they assembled to select and fill the church office of apostle vacated by Judas. It was this same congregation that assembled in Acts 2:1 in “*one place*.” It is this same assembly the three thousand converts were “added unto” in Acts 2:41 and called “*the church*” in Acts 2:47.

On the day of Pentecost the congregation of Christ was publicly accredited, filled and empowered by “another Comforter” Who took up and continued the work begun by its first Comforter - Jesus Christ.

In the book of Acts, obedience to baptism always resulted in addition to the membership of an existing congregation or the constitution of new congregations. Baptism is the public commitment to be discipled in the teaching assembly of the administrator of baptism in order to learn how to “observe all things whatsoever I have commanded” - Mt. 28:20.

Proper baptism identifies you with the basic truth of the doctrine of Ecclesiology.

**Fifth**, baptism publicly identifies you with the doctrine of remission of sins. Indeed, baptism is often referred to in scripture as the “*baptism of repentance*.” Why? John the Baptist and all the apostles refused to baptize any unrepentant person (Mt. 3:6-8). Indeed the Great Commission is summarized by Luke in these words:

Luke 24:47 *And that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem.*

Baptism provides a public testimony of the remission of sins (Acts 22:16) and faith in Jesus Christ (Acts 19:5). The basic truth of the doctrine of Hamartology (the doctrine of sin) is identified with in baptism.

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**Sixth**, baptism is intended to publicly identify you with the hope of resurrection. In baptism you publicly identify with, and profess your own hope of a future resurrection of your body from the grave. Paul reasoned with some at Corinth who denied the bodily resurrection:

*If the dead rise not.....if in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable. But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the first fruits of them that slept.....Else what shall they do which are baptized for [lit. in reference to] the dead, if the dead rise not at all? Why are they then baptized for [lit. in reference to] the dead? - 1 Cor. 15:17,19-20,29*

Paul's argument is very simple. In baptism the believer publicly and symbolically identifies not only with the resurrection of Jesus Christ but the hope of his own resurrection from the dead. If there is no such thing as resurrection from the dead then why be baptized, as baptism is in reference to the resurrection of the dead?

Hence, the basic truth of the doctrine of Glorification, or the "*blessed hope*" is included in proper administration of baptism.

**Seventh**, and last, baptism is designed to publicly identify you with the system of faith and practice of your administrator. Submission to the administrator for baptism is considered by scriptures as submission to the system of faith represented by the administrator:

*.....baptizing them....teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you..... - Mt. 28:19,20*

*And they that gladly received his word were baptized; and the same day there were added unto them three*

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*thousands souls. And they continued steadfastly in the apostles doctrine* .... - Acts 2;41-42

Notice that Christ authorized the administrator of baptism to also be their teacher.

Hence, by submitting to an administrator for baptism, two things are signified: (1) You have chosen to publicly identify with this particular administrator; (2) You have made a public commitment to be taught by this administrator.

Even the rulers of the Jews recognized that submitting to one's baptism was an act of submitting to that person for discipleship. Gentiles who wished to be discipled in Judaism submitted to the Priests for ceremonial immersion.

It was these same Priests who were so familiar with such a rite that came unto John the Baptist and asked, "**Why baptizest thou then....?**" (Jn. 1:25). They understood that such a rite should be performed only by one authorized by God to make disciples. Submission to the baptism of John was public commitment to submit to his doctrine and practice. All who submitted to the baptism of John were identified as his "**disciples**" (Jn. 1:35; 3:25).

According to the precepts and examples in the New Testament, baptism is to be administered by someone who is a public representative of all the before mentioned truths. By submitting to such an administrator, you publicly identify with the essentials of "*the faith once delivered*" to the saints. Hence, this ordinance is designed to be a public symbol of New Testament Christianity as a **system of faith**.

During the New Testament era, baptism was administered by only those sound in the faith. However, today, baptism has not only been distorted, but those preaching "**another gospel**" and believing in "**another Jesus**", as well as, operating by "**another spirit**" (2 Cor. 11;4) are posing as authorized administrators of baptism.

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Your administrator is in charge of the baptism, not you. He is publicly identifying you with his beliefs, or else he would not baptize you.

What kind of system of faith and practice have you publicly identified yourself with? If that administrator does not teach these essential truths that baptism is designed to publicly identify you with, then you just got wet, and need to find an authorized administrator for baptism.

### The Right Administrator of Baptism

Who is authorized to administer baptism? Can anyone administer it? Some believe so!

However, neither John the Baptist or Christ believed one can administer it to themselves. We have no precept or example in Scripture for self-baptism. Jesus walked sixty miles to be baptized by one authorized and sent by God to baptize.

Neither do we have any scriptures that provide a precept or example of unbelievers administering baptism to others.

Who did Christ authorize to administer baptism? Matthew 28:19-20 speaks directly to that question.

*18 And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power (lit. Greek "authority" exousia) is given unto me in heaven and in earth.*

*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:*

*20 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.*

In verse 18 the issue of authority is directly addressed. Jesus claimed he had all "power." The Greek term translated "power" is *exousia* and refers to power found in authority. Christ claims to have "all" authority in heaven and earth. It is upon this basis of authority that He issue this commission in Matthew 28:19-20. He is delegating authority to certain people to administer this commission.

The question is who is He delegating this authority to? There are three classes of people found in this commission.



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1. “**Ye**” disciples of like faith and order with Christ
2. “**All nations**” the yet unevangelized
3. “**Them**” the evangelized but unbaptized and untaught

It is important that you do not confuse these three classes of people with each other.

Only those identified as “**ye**” are authorized by Christ to administer this commission. Christ did not authorize the unevangelized (“**all nations**”) to administer baptism. Christ did not authorize the evangelized (“**them**”) but unbaptized and/or untaught to administer baptism.

Second, what is He authorizing this “**ye**” to do? The answer to that question is found in the main verb “**teach**” in verse 19. The word “**teach**” is a translation of the Greek term *matheteusate* which literally means *make disciples*. Therefore, this is not merely a commission to evangelize the lost as all Christians can do that but to *make disciples* out from among all nations.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> The main verb “**make disciples**” or “**teach**” is modified or further described by three Greek participles “**go....baptizing....teaching**” as explanations how disciples are to be made. The first participle translated “**go**” is found in the Aorist tense which matches the tense of the main verb. What this means in Greek Grammar is that the action of going with the gospel precedes making disciples by baptizing and teaching (both present tense participles). In other words the Great Commission assumes they have already gone preaching the gospel and people are evangelized and those evangelized persons (“**them**”) are made disciples through baptism and teaching. The evangelized provide the materials for making disciples. This grammatical truth demands salvation prior to baptism and church membership (“**teaching them to observe**”) as seen in Acts 2:41-42 where the commission is first applied by the church at Jerusalem.

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Those authorized ("ye") are first to "go" with the gospel (Mk. 16:15) to "all nations" and only those ("them") who respond to the gospel by faith (Mk. 16:16) are proper candidates for baptism. This eliminates unbelievers and/or infants as proper candidates for baptism.

So, the only authorized administrators are those identified as "ye" in the Great Commission. Who are they? The context makes it clear who they are and are not.

## They are Disciples

Mt. 28:16 ¶ *Then the eleven **disciples** went away into Galilee, into a mountain where Jesus had appointed them.*

A close scrutiny of the entire context beginning with verse 7 will demonstrate that more disciples were present than merely the "eleven" on this mountain in Galilee. He appeared on this mountain after he had already revealed himself two previous times to the apostles in Jerusalem. This is after he had revealed himself to Peter and the other apostles fishing on the Sea of Galilee. This is the meeting place that he had told all his disciples in advance that they were to meet him. Indeed, this is the only place where "more than five hundred brethren" could have seen him all at one time (1 Cor. 15:6).

One must first be a disciple before he is able to *make disciples* or else the blind lead the blind and both fall into the ditch.

This commission defines what it means to make a disciple. The proper material for making disciples must be those who are first evangelized out from among all nations. In Matthew

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28:19-20 the evangelized are those identified as "**them**." The evangelized must then be baptized and then assembled in order to learn how to observe all things Christ commanded. This is the commission and this is the pattern followed in Acts 2:41-42

*41 Then they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls.*

*42 ¶ And they continued stedfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers.*

Notice the order in Acts 2:41-42 is parallel to the command given by Christ in Matthew 28:19-20:

1. "**Go**" preach the gospel - "as many as received his word"
2. "**Baptizing them**" - "were baptized"
3. "**Teaching them**" - "were added unto them"
4. "**To observe all things**" - "continued stedfastly in the apostles doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers."

The authority to do this is not given to "**all nations**" or to "**them**" but to those identified as "**ye**" or His disciples.

### **They are Baptized Disciples**

All those he addressed in Mathew 28:18-20 had previously been baptized. Indeed, Jesus habitually gathered around himself and assembled with baptized believers:

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*Wherefore of these men which have companied with us all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us,*

*Beginning from the baptism of John, unto that same day that he was taken up from us, must one be ordained to be a witness with us of his resurrection. -*

Acts 1:21-22

John the Baptist had been sent before the Lord (Mk. 1:1-3) in order to prepare a people made ready for the Lord (Lk. 1:17b) to assemble around Himself to form into a New Testament congregation (Mt. 18:17-18). John baptized those who professed repentance (Mt. 3:8) and faith in the coming Christ preached by John (Jn. 3:36; Acts 19:5). Jesus baptized and made more disciples than John (Jn. 4:1-2).

Those identified as "ye" in the Great Commission were baptized disciples.

### **They are Churched Disciples**

It is impossible to “*teach them to observe all things*” without actually assembling together with “*them*.”

For example, how could they be taught how to observe Matthew 18:15-18 without first being incorporated into a congregation?

For example, how could they be taught to observe the Lord's Supper as instructed in Matthew 26:20-30 without assembling together in one place (1 Cor. 11:18,20)?

This is precisely what happened on Pentecost to the three thousand new converts who were baptized as Luke says they

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were “*added unto them*” (Acts 2:41) and the “*them*” are identified as “*the church*” (Acts 2:47).

Furthermore, from the baptism of John until the ascension of Christ there were constant additions to those constantly assembling with Christ:

*Wherefore of these men which have companied with us all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us, Beginning from the baptism of John, unto that same day that he was taken up from us, must one be ordained to be a witness with us of his resurrection.*

– Acts 1:21-22

Those being addressed were members of the congregation He built in Jerusalem, which had been constantly assembling (Acts 1:21-22) and this congregation assembled in “*one place*” in Acts 2:1 and was “*added unto*” in Acts 2:41 and called the “*church*” in Acts 2:47.

In other words, Jesus is commissioning His church to do exactly what he did to them! He evangelized, baptized and assembled them around himself for instruction in all things as a New Testament congregation and that is what they are commissioned to do and that is what they did in the book of Acts. The churches in Judea and Samaria (Acts 9:31; Gal. 1:22) and Antioch were all products of obedience to the Great Commission by the membership of the first church organized by Christ in Jerusalem (Acts 8-11).

He is not authorizing baptized believers existing outside the membership of a New Testament congregation. Indeed, baptized believers are still the object of the Great Commission that need to be brought into the teaching assembly where they learn to “*observe all things*” Christ commanded.

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Christ did not authorize any reader of Matthew 28:19-20 to make disciples. There is no vertical authority found in this text. Christ is not directly authorizing readers of the scripture to do these things.

Christ is not authorizing any baptized individual or individuals to administer baptism. He is addressing a **plural** “*ye*” that are members of an existing congregation of baptized believers. He is not addressing or authorizing anyone outside the membership of an existing congregation.

In the book of Matthew he has already affirmed that such authority has been given to His church (Mt. 18:15-18). It is in the capacity of an existing congregation they are being authorized (Mt. 18:19-20) to exercise the “*keys*” of the kingdom. By definition an *assembly* requires more than one person and therefore must be at least “*two or three*” for an assembly to exist.<sup>7</sup>

Every administrator of baptism in the book of Acts was a member of an existing congregation. Even Ananias in Acts 9 was a member of the church at Jerusalem which had been scattered by the persecution of Saul.

There is no authority in Matthew 28:19-20 for self-made churches any more than there is for self-made disciples or self-baptism or self-teaching or self-ordination or self-anything. This is authority given to an existing congregation with its

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<sup>7</sup> Matthew 18:19-20 is addressing an already existent “*church*” in verse 17. The contextual continuation from verse 17 is proven by the word “again” in verse 19. Christ is merely confirming that He personally stands with His church in the proper use of the keys in verses 17-18 no matter how small the congregation may be. In order to be a congregation it takes more than one person, as one person is not an assembly. The proper use of the keys is conveyed by the phrase “in my name” or according to my authority when they assemble.

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ordained ministry to reproduce after its own kind through a threefold process.

## They are Disciples of Like Faith and Order

Those commissioned had already been discipled by Christ in the "*all things*" He commanded to be observed.

The commission explicitly states "*teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you.*" Those commissioned were like faith and order with Christ and their commission is restricted to making disciples that are like faith and order with Christ. They were like faith and order in the same gospel (Jn. 3:16) and in the same baptism (Jn. 4:1-2; Lk. 7:29-30) and in the same doctrines and practice (Jude 3; Acts 2:42).

Jesus never authorized anyone to baptize who preached "*another gospel*" than what he preached. Jesus never authorized anyone who administered another kind of baptism other than what he administered and commissioned to the end of the of the age. Jesus never authorized anyone who departed from "*the faith once delivered.*"

Those who preach another gospel, teach another faith and administer another baptism and claim to be brethren are to be avoided and removed from the fellowship of true churches of Jesus Christ:

2 Thes. 3:6 ¶ *Now we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye withdraw yourselves from every brother that walketh disorderly, and not after the tradition which he received of us.*

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Christ would never authorize anyone to baptize that the Apostles would instruct the churches to “*withdraw yourselves from.*”

Therefore, those commissioned to baptize are those who follow Christ in the same gospel, same baptism and same doctrine and practice. Those who follow a Master are called "disciples" and those who depart from a Master's doctrine and practice are called heretics.

## They are Ordained Disciples

In the scriptures, every administrator of baptism was an ordained male. Every administrator in the New Testament was set apart and authorized to baptize.

John the Baptist was ordained personally by God (Jn. 1:33 “*sent*” lit. an authorized sent representative). The Twelve were ordained personally by Christ (Mk.3:14; Jn. 4:1-2). Philip was ordained by the church through the apostles (Acts 6:5-6). Paul was authorized and sent out as a missionary by the church at Antioch (Acts 13:1-4) and reported back to the sending church after every missionary tour.

There are no examples in scripture that contradict that baptism is to be administered by an ordained male. Silence cannot be used to overthrow repeated examples of Scripture (e.g. Ananias or those scattered upon the persecution by Saul). Church history says that Ananias was the first ordained pastor of the church at Damascus (Acts 9:10-18). Philip is given as an example of those intentionally scattered by the church in Acts (Acts 8:4-5 with 11:19-22). Barnabas is given as another example of those sent out under the authority of the church in Jerusalem (Acts 11:22). In Acts 11:22 the words “*sent forth*” represent a Greek



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term that means an authorized sent forth representative. In other words, Barnabas was “ordained” by the church to act as their authorized representative.<sup>8</sup>

If the ordinances could be administered by anyone, then, why “ordain” anyone? It ought to be reasonable to understand that ordination is intended to qualify who may administer the ordinances and thus protect the gospel and ordinances from distortion. The Biblical qualifications for ordination are designed to make sure that the ordinances are administered by those who are like faith and order with Christ as that is the restriction provided in the Great Commission "*all things I have commanded...*"

### They are Biblical Ordained Disciples

Significantly, the Lord is specifically addressing the ordained representatives of the church in Matthew 28:16-20 when he gives the Great Commission. The "*eleven*" are specifically separated from the rest (v. 16) because they were the first ordained representatives set in the congregation by Christ (1 Cor. 12:28; Eph. 2:20). Christ regularly addresses the

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<sup>8</sup> Significantly, the scattering in Acts 8 was not haphazard, but a directed scattering by the church. The Apostles did not flee (Acts 8:1-4). Those "*scattered*" were ordained men as Philip is given as an example. In Acts 11:20 the scattered are identified as male preachers as the Greek term for male in contrast to women and children is used to describe them (Acts 11:20). Ananias would fit that pattern. Indeed, the masculine gender is used in Acts 8 to describe those "*scattered*." The scattering was not like chickens running in every direction but like seed being purposely scattered by a Sower.

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churches through their ordained representatives or officers (see Rev. 2:1,8, etc. "*the angel*" or "messenger").

The fact that the apostles are the immediate recipients of the Great Commission is revealed in Acts 2:41 with the words "*the apostles doctrine*." Christ spent three and half years personally training the apostles in "*the faith*" and set them in the church as its first ordained representatives (see 1 Cor. 12:28 with Mk 3:12;Lk. 6:13).

As we have seen, baptism requires public identification with an administrator that embraces the essentials of New Testament Christianity as a system of faith. Ordination is designed to qualify and identify those men who hold to these essentials and are thus qualified to administer the ordinances and indoctrinate the baptized into that system of faith.

What is the purpose for ordination? Who is qualified to be ordained?

According to the scriptures not everyone is qualified to be ordained ("*Lay hands suddenly on no man...*" 1 Tim. 5:22).

One of the Biblical qualifications for ordination is that a man should be "*sound in the faith*" (Tit. 1:9). Paul says at the end of his life "*I have kept the faith*" (2 Tim. 4:7b) referring to the basic essentials of Christianity as a system of faith.

We believe ordination is to make sure that those who act as representatives for the New Testament congregation administer the Great Commission within the boundaries of "*whatsoever I have commanded you.*"

How does a man demonstrate he is called of God and should be ordained? Who examines and confirms that call and publicly ordains him?

Of course, it is God that spiritually equips and calls him to the public ministry. However, it is the church (Acts 6:3-5; 14:22; Mt. 18:17) that examines and confirms that call through qualifications set forth in the scriptures (1 Tim. 3:1-12; Tit. 1). If that man is qualified, he will not only meet the qualifications

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set forth in the scriptures but the Holy Spirit will bear witness through him unto the church (Acts 13;1-4). If he is a “*novice*” (newly saved) without sufficient experience, he is not to be ordained (1 Tim. 3:6). If he is found to be qualified, then by a majority consent the church votes to ordain such a man to the ministry (Acts 6:3,5). The church ordains men through the laying on of hands by its other ordained members (Acts 3:6; 14:22; 1 Tim. 5:22) and/or by those ordained men that may be invited by the church to participate.

Therefore, ordination is the act whereby qualified members are set apart to represent the church in administering the Great Commission. Ordination is a public declaration that this man embraces the essentials of the New Testament faith and practice that was “*once delivered to the saints*” (Jd. 3). Ordination sets a man apart as the proper representative of the church to administer the gospel ordinances. Such men lead the church and protect it from those who would deceive and lead others to “*depart from the faith*” (1 Tim. 4:1; 2 Tim. 2:2).

### **They are not Unqualified Administrators**

If a man is not sound in the faith and practice, he is not qualified to be ordained, and therefore, has no authority to administer the ordinances.

This should be reasonable and easy to accept! Why ordain men that will teach falsehood? Christ only commissioned those who had already been taught how to observe all things He commanded (Mt. 28:20).

Since the prerequisite for ordination is soundness in the faith, then, those who depart from that system of faith (1 Tim. 4:1; Acts 20:29-30) are disqualified to administer the ordinances and/or represent the true churches of Christ. Instead, such a

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person is to be condemned and separated from by the churches of Christ (1 Thes. 3:6; Rom. 16:17).

It should be easy to see that any professed administrator of baptism that rejects the very essentials of baptism (right mode, candidate, design, and authority) cannot be a properly qualified administer of baptism.

Therefore, all ordinances administered by representatives from churches or denominations which are deviant to the faith and practice found in the New Testament are null and void in God's eyes, as God never approves or authorizes any ministry that deviates from the faith, but instead warns the saints to avoid such.

God is not the author of confusion (1 Cor. 14:30). For instance, it should be quite evident when considering the baptism administered by Mormons, Jehovah's Witnesses and other such cults that God would never call or lead his churches to recognize or receive their administration of the ordinances.

However, this is equally true of all churches and denominations that deny and pervert the essentials that make baptism to be *scriptural* baptism (right candidate, right mode, and right purpose), or deny, and pervert those truths baptism is designed to publicly identify with (The doctrine of Theology, Soteriology, Hamartology, etc.).

If you were not baptized by a scripturally qualified administrator, meaning, an ordained representative of a church that embraces all the essentials of Scriptural baptism, then, you merely got wet, and still need proper baptism.

### **They are Authorized Administrators**

Not only is the administration of baptism limited to qualified ordained men of God, but the ordained ministry is subject to the

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higher authority of a New Testament congregation. They are subject to the institution that selects, qualifies and confirms their calling. They are subject to the institution they are "set in." They are subject to the institution they represent.

In the final analysis, it is the New Testament congregation that is authorized to carry out the Great Commission through its ordained ministry. *There is no such thing as an ordained ministry outside the membership of New Testament congregations.* The congregation ordains men to represent them.

A careful study of the Scriptures demonstrates that final authority in the public administration of kingdom affairs on earth lies with the congregations of Jesus Christ and not with its ordained ministry.

For example, in Matthew 16:19 where the Lord gives the "keys of the kingdom" to Peter, it is only in a representative capacity, as Peter answered in behalf of the rest of the congregation (Mt. 16:13-15). Absolute proof that the "keys" were given to Peter, as a representative of the congregation is the fact that just two chapters later where these keys are administered in discipline of a congregational member, Jesus identifies the final authority on earth not Peter, or any other ordained man, but "tell it to the church" (Mt. 18:17-18).

In Acts 1:15-26 and in Acts 6:3,5 the apostles appeal to the congregation to select members for ordination. In Acts 11:1-17 it is the congregation that Peter must answer to for his actions. In Acts 11:22 it is the congregation that selects and sends Barnabas to Antioch. In Acts 13:1-4 it is the congregation that the Holy Spirit speaks through to select and send Paul and Barnabas out on the mission field and it is to this sending congregation that they report back and give an account of their actions after every missionary journey (Acts 14:26-27). It is the congregation that selects and sends Paul and Barnabas to represent it at the church in Jerusalem in Acts 15:1-3. Dr. A.T.

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Roberson says of the Greek word translated “determined” in Acts 15:2:

*The verb εταξαν (τασσω, to arrange) suggests a formal appointment by the church in regular assembly.* - A.T. Robertson, **Word Pictures**, Acts 15:2

Notice that Luke says that “*being brought on their way by the church*” - Acts 15:3.

In Acts 14:22-23 where men were ordained in the congregations, Luke uses a special Greek term translated “**appoint**” that refers to majority vote. Dr. A.T. Robertson says of this term:

*χειροτονεω (from χειροτονος, extending the hand, χειρ, hand, and τεινω, to stretch) is an old verb that originally meant to vote by show of the hands, finally to appoint with the approval of an assembly that chooses as in 2Co 8:19* - A.T. Robertson, **Word Pictures**, Acts 14:233

Furthermore, since the Great Commission is an age long mission (“*with you until the end of the world*”), it should be obvious that it could not have been given to Peter or any of the Apostles as individuals, since they all died long before the consummation of this commission. Neither could it have been given to them as “*apostles*” because the office ceased (1 Cor. 15:8) due to the very nature of the qualifications required to fill that office (Acts 1:21-22). It could not have been given unto them as Christians because not all Christians have submitted to scriptural baptism and/or have been instructed in the “*all things*.” It could only be given unto them as qualified ordained representatives of the congregation, because only the congregation as an institution is promised age long existence

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(Mt. 16:18; Eph. 3;21) as “*the pillar and ground of the truth*” (1 Tim. 3;15).

The apostles were the first ordained representatives “*set in the church*” by Christ (1 Cor. 12:28). Therefore, it is the congregation that is authorized to administer the Great Commission through its ordained representatives.

If you received baptism from a free lance preacher, that is, one who does not submit, or act under the authority of a New Testament congregation, then, you just got wet by an unauthorized and unqualified administrator. For example, those baptized by Apollos in Acts 19:1-6 were rebaptized by Paul (who acted under the authority of the congregation at Antioch - Acts 13;1-4; 15:2). On the other hand, after Apollos was instructed more perfectly, he no longer acted as a free lance preacher but from that point forward worked through New Testament congregations (Acts 18:27-28; 19:1).

The proper administrator for baptism is a qualified ordained representative of a New Testament congregation.

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## Conclusion

The difference between wet and baptized is determined by four specifics of scriptural baptism. These four specifics provide the Biblical pattern for baptism and those who depart from this pattern are merely getting people wet.

These four specifics are:

1. **The Right Candidate** - A professed believer in the true gospel of Jesus Christ.
2. **The Right Mode** - Immersion
3. **The Right Design** - Public Identification with Christ's Gospel, Christ's congregation and Christ's Doctrine
4. **The Right Administrator** - Church ordained male

The proper administration of baptism identifies with the essential doctrines of Scripture. The proper administrator of baptism represents a church that embraces all these essentials.

The proper administrator for baptism is an authorized (ordained) representative of a New Testament congregation. It is a congregation that originates ultimately with the congregation at Jerusalem through the reproductive cycle of the Great Commission. It is not a Johnny-come-lately denomination. It is not a self-constituted denomination any more than it is a self-ordained administrator.

Find a congregation that administers baptism according to these four specifics and you have found scriptural baptism. Any other kind of administrator or baptism simply gets you wet.