

# Water Baptism

There are three main controversies when it comes to baptism in the Christian church:

- (1) What's the purpose of baptism?
- (2) What formula should be used?
- (3) What method should be used

**What's the purpose of baptism?** There is a lot of discussion on the purpose of Baptism. I think this needs to be discussed now because some will leave the water still holding to ideas that cannot be totally supported by the Bible. As we look at each one, we'll see what the Scripture says also.

- **BAPTISMAL REGENERATION VIEW** – This is the viewpoint of the *Roman Catholic Church*, the Eastern Orthodox Church, some Pentecostal sects (notably the anti-Trinitarian *United Pentecostal Church* and other “*Jesus Only*” or *apostolic groups*), and groups such as the Mormons. Baptismal Regeneration is also the doctrinal stance of many teachers and preachers within the Restoration Movement, sometimes called Campbellism (from its founder, Alexander Campbell), whose members are mainly found in churches called *Churches of Christ* or Independent Christian Churches. **This view says that water baptism is an essential part of salvation because it is in water baptism that we are born again.** They use this Scripture to support their position: Mark 16:16 *He that believeth and IS BAPTIZED shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned.* (Note: this is why the Roman Catholic Church baptizes infant children.)
- **NECESSARY OBEDIENCE VIEW** – **This view says that baptism is a part of a PROCESS necessary for salvation.** (*The only difference from the prior is that it says that there is a PROCESS and baptism is one of those steps.*) The several steps of this process are: repentance, faith, confession, baptism, and perpetual obedience in life. Some “Campbellites,” some Baptists, and some independent evangelicals hold to this viewpoint.

**WHY WE DON'T SUPPORT THESE VIEWS** If these views are true, a confession of salvation and water baptism are necessary to be saved and no further progress will be made in one's Christian life until these two steps are fulfilled. Acts 10:44-48 *While Peter yet spake these words, the Holy Ghost fell on all them which heard the word. 45 And they of the circumcision which believed were astonished, as many as came with Peter, because that on the Gentiles also was poured out the gift of the Holy Ghost. 46 For they heard them speak with tongues, and magnify God. Then answered Peter, 47 Can any man forbid water, that these should not be baptized, which have received the Holy Ghost as well as we? 48 And he commanded them to be baptized in the name of the Lord. Then prayed they him to tarry certain days.* The point of this passage is that Cornelius was baptized with the Holy Ghost BEFORE he received water baptism. We already know that God gives the Holy Ghost to them that obey Him therefore; this was a sign that Cornelius had already received what he needed. **For the Baptismal Regeneration or Necessary Obedience views to be correct, he would not have been able to receive the Baptism of the Holy Ghost until he was baptized in water.** In addition, as Jesus suffered on the cross, one of those crucified with Him expressed faith in Him. Jesus promised this man a place with Him in paradise. The thief was not baptized. Did Jesus lie or deceive him? No and He never has. Some have tried to speculate that “paradise” was not heaven. However, the Lord said that the thief would be with Him.

- **THE QUAKER VIEW** – **This view denies that water baptism is appropriate in this age because the Baptism of the Spirit has replaced water baptism.** **WHY WE DON'T SUPPORT THIS VIEW** This view denies the practice of the New Testament apostles. Note that the New Testament is built on the apostles' doctrine (Acts 2:42 *And they*

*continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers.)* The practice of the apostles was to baptize and they started this on the Day of Pentecost. 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.*

- **THE COVENANT VIEW** – This view is held by conservative Lutherans, Presbyterians, Congregationalists, and Methodists. *It states that baptism is the New Testament equivalent to circumcision, and should be performed on new converts and ON THE INFANT CHILDREN OF BELIEVERS as a sign of the covenant.* **WHY WE DON'T SUPPORT THIS VIEW** Circumcision is what ushered a person into the Jewish faith. It was the key to their faith (look at all the times in the Old Testament they spoke of the “uncircumcised”). However, baptism is not the key to our salvation – faith in Jesus Christ is. Romans 10:9 *That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt BELIEVE in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved.* We also don't believe in the baptism of infant children because baptism is a result of your faith in Jesus which an infant cannot express.
- **THE COMMON EVANGELICAL VIEW** – *This view, held by the majority of Bible-believing Christians, Baptists, and many Pentecostals, is that baptism and the Lord's Supper are ceremonies, or ordinances, given by Christ as signs and memorials to indicate inward realities.* **THIS IS THE VIEW WE (C.O.G.I.C.) SUPPORT** As the Lord's Supper is a remembrance and proclamation of the death of Christ on the Cross, Water Baptism is a confession and declaration of the inward reality of salvation in the life of a new convert. But be careful with this. We are baptized as part of our obedience to Jesus, but missing baptism in water for a valid reason will not detract from your salvation (remember the thief on the cross). However, if someone is willful and refuses to be baptized in water in spite of understanding the Scriptural instruction to do so, then that person is giving evidence of a heart still bound by sin--in all probability, such a person is not a believer. Look at the willingness of the Ethiopian eunuch. Acts 8:36 *And as they went on their way, they came unto a certain water: and the eunuch said, See, here is water; what doth hinder me to be baptized?* This should be the attitude of the believer toward baptism.

**What formula should be used?** We use the following process as outlined by the Lord in 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.* **Suggested Formula: Brother or Sister, I baptize you in obedience of the command of our Lord Jesus Christ in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Amen.** This formula testifies to our belief in the Trinity, which the Lord Jesus repeatedly pointed to during His ministry on earth.

**What method should be used?** This is another area that has been controversial in the past. Some “sprinkle” their candidates and some immerse them fully in water. The Church of God in Christ believes in full immersion based on Romans 6:4 *Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.* The term “buried” speaks of being fully covered. If it's not fully covered, it's not buried. Also, in Bible days, it seems that they were fully immersed in water.

**How should you prepare for a baptism service?** Men and women should wear regular undergarments. Women should wear an additional DARK colored garment on top of this. Every one should be bring a white sheet to wrap themselves in. They should be sure to bring a towel, change of clothes, and some type of shower shoes – they will be totally wet! Before they go into the water, they will be asked the question of Acts 8:37 – Do you believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God and has He saved you?