

BAPTISM IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

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INTRODUCTION

A. BAPTISM: A NEW BEGINNING

The biblical teaching on baptism is not monolithic. New Testament authors describe Christian baptism with various images. It is death and resurrection (Romans 6:3-4). It is donning the Messiah (Galatians 3:26-27). Baptism is circumcision of the sinful nature (Colossians 2:11-12). It is rebirth and renewal, bringing forgiveness of sins and the gift of the Holy Spirit (Titus 3:4-6; Acts 2:38). It is an appeal to God for a clear conscience (1 Peter 3:21). These images are vivid and powerful. They are exciting. They depict God’s effort to rescue a perishing world. They also portray baptism as something that effects a new beginning. God intervenes by sending his *monogenes* (“only-begotten”) son as a remedy for the desperate human situation. God establishes a new order of things, a new creation through him (2 Corinthians 5:17). God conquers death and brings life. He discards the old and brings in the new. He clothes his people with the righteousness of Jesus and empowers them with the strength of his Spirit. He effects a new beginning through Jesus his son, and he uses baptism as an important means to accomplish this. This work of God via baptism in effecting new beginnings will be the theme of this study.

B. THE IMPORTANCE OF BAPTISM

Jesus affirmed to rabbi Nicodemus the change needed for entrance into God’s kingdom. “Unless a man is born again (or, from above, *anōthen*), he cannot see the kingdom of God” (John 3:3). This change takes place in Christian baptism. Jesus defined this change as a birth “of water and the Spirit” (v. 5). Baptism is a new birth; it is spiritual transformation; it is the occasion for the working of God’s Spirit. Baptism is one birth with two aspects—water and Spirit.¹ Together

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water and Spirit are agents of the heavenly birth (cf. John 7:38f.; 4:14). And this change does not take place because of a person’s own righteousness. It is accomplished solely by God’s mercy.

He saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy. He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit, whom he poured out on us generously through Jesus Christ our Savior, so that, having been justified by his grace, we might become heirs having the hope of eternal life (Titus 3:5-7; cf. Ezekiel 36:25-27).

In this passage, “baptism is qualified as a cleansing bath, but then as a cleansing that is to be understood in the context of the saving, eschatological activity of God (for example, ‘the appearing’ of his mercy).”² As G. R. Beasley-Murray observes,

God saved us ‘not by reason of works . . . but in accordance with his mercy’ (v. 5). A two fold contrast is here drawn between deeds that earn and faith that receives, and the power of God that mercifully achieves what man cannot do for himself. This, we observe, is related to baptism; the emphasis on the powerful operation by the Spirit in the ‘washing’ underscores this very fact that God does for us what we are powerless to perform—he makes us anew and gives us new life. . . . No statement of the New Testament more unambiguously represents the power of baptism to lie in the operation of the Holy Spirit.³

What is worked in this “washing of rebirth” is worked by God’s mercy. The main actor is God, and man passively receives God’s gift of renewal, the Holy Spirit. But man receives in faith and he receives through God’s appointed means of baptism. Herman Ridderbos sums it up nicely,

The washing with water of baptism represents the new birth as the transition from the old mode of existence dominated and qualified by sin to that which derives its character from the Spirit as the eschatological gift of salvation. . . . Baptism is the means in God’s hand, the place where he speaks and acts. . . . It is God who gives baptism its power, on the faith of the one baptized.⁴

Further, this work of God and his Spirit in baptism does not eliminate the need for the physical element of water. The text itself suggests that God does not work his saving mercy without formal means. God uses physical means to effect spiritual consequences. Note the

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important phrase “through the washing of rebirth” (*dia loutrou palingenesias*; compare Ephesians 5:26; Hebrews 10:22; the majority text of Revelation 1:5; Acts 22:16; and 1 Corinthians 6:11). This “washing” of Titus 3:5, says Newport White, “may mean the water used for washing, or the process itself of washing,” while “rebirth” describes “the nature of the ‘washing’ which God employs as his instrument in effecting the salvation of man.” It is “not any ‘washing’ whatever, but that of the new birth.”⁵⁵ The washing in water is the outer dynamic of Christian baptism, but in this washing the inner dynamic of the Spirit’s renewal predominates (cf. 1 Corinthians 12:13; John 3:5-8). The Spirit works his change on the sinner “through the water, and with the water, and not without the water.”⁵⁶ The two aspects are intertwined closely. By these two dynamics, water and Spirit, one outer (corresponding to man’s body) and one inner (corresponding to man’s spirit), God transforms sinful man.

Some believers, though, disagree with this connection between baptism and salvation. They ask, “How can something physical like water baptism produce spiritual results like salvation?” This objection seems to come from a philosophical basis that denies the full reality of the physical. Jack Cottrell suggests,

Of course the Bible itself never presents a physical element or act as in itself being the source or origin of a spiritual effect. See John 3:6; 6:63. Only God, who is spirit, can bestow such blessings. But the inability of flesh to produce spiritual effects is not due to some kind of inherent antithesis between matter and spirit. The inability is due simply to the inherent impotence of anything less than God himself to effect the kind of spiritual changes which are in view. Though God alone is the source of all spiritual blessings, material elements or acts are regarded as proper and appropriate means of bestowing these blessings.

For the first 1500 years of Christian history, very few questioned the propriety of the use of a physical element as a necessary part of ceremonies which were essentially spiritual in their result. Zwingli, however, denied both the causal and the chronological connection between the material and the spiritual. John 6:63 was his proof-text, but Platonic dualism was the philosophical basis of his objection. Thus, beginning with

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Zwingli in the 1520's, a large element of Christendom has continued to deny any necessary causal or chronological connection between physical acts [and spiritual results]. The sacramental elements are limited to symbolical and psychological significance. This is the basic principle of sacramental theology in all Reformed groups, and in all groups that have adopted the Reformed approach to the sacraments (e.g., most Baptist and most Wesleyan groups).⁷

Because of this Platonic dichotomy between physical and spiritual, modern believers neglect the due import of Christian baptism. Some see baptism as unnecessary. For example, otherwise excellent works on evangelism completely fail to mention Christian baptism and promote a “praying-through” method of salvation.⁸ Others recognize the need for baptism but place it in a subordinate role with regard to salvation. Elmer Towns writes, “Although water baptism is always closely related to the time of forgiveness in the New Testament, it is not a requirement or a work necessary for salvation.”⁹ This view of baptism is common. But believers neglect Christian baptism to their own spiritual jeopardy. The lack of physical or tangible means of God’s grace for salvation leaves many questioning their status with God. It leaves them with “deep dissatisfaction” in not knowing “the specific day on which they crossed over the line to be on the Lord’s side.”¹⁰ What is needed to remedy this lack of assurance is a healthy appreciation of the apostle Peter's assertion—“baptism now saves you” (1 Peter 3:21). With the proclamation and obedience of the concrete act of Christian baptism, believers can experience the assurance that God desires to grant them. With baptism as their starting point, believers can go forward with confidence. They can know that the foundation of their spiritual journey is of the Lord’s doing. They will have no need to trust their own subjective reasons.

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I. BEFORE THE DESCENT OF THE SPIRIT

Arguments for various Jewish or pagan antecedents of Christian baptism have not proven conclusive. While discussion of Mosaic lustrations, circumcision, pagan initiation rites, Jewish proselyte baptism, and Essene baptisms might prove useful,¹¹ such would not change the essential design of Christian baptism in the New Testament. Christian baptism is different qualitatively from all of the above, because Christian baptism is baptism “in the name of Jesus Christ.”¹² Whatever particulars it might possess in common with other contemporary practices, whether Jewish or pagan, Christian baptism has the distinction of being the only “initiation rite” in the name of a historical figure. In baptism, the “initiate” experiences intimate identification with decisive historical events—the death and resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth (see Romans, chapter 6). So radical is this identification in baptism that the “initiate” is stamped, as it were, with the name of Jesus. He now wears the name “Christian,” and he shares his new life with brothers and sisters in an intimate, family-like community of fellow-believers who also are called “Christians.” Nothing exactly like this is found in either Jewish or pagan practices.¹³ Christian baptism is unique.¹⁴ Therefore, the New Testament must be allowed to speak for itself about the design of Christian baptism.

A. THE BAPTISM ADMINISTERED BY JOHN [Matthew 3:6, 7, 11; 21:25; Mark 1:4, 5, 8; 11:30; Luke 3:3, 7, 12, 16; 7:29, 30; 20:4; John 1:25, 26, 28, 31, 33; 3:22, 23, 26; 10:40; Acts 1:5, 22; 10:37; 11:16(?); 13:24; 18:25; 19:3]

One valid antecedent of Christian baptism found in the New Testament, however, is John’s baptism. That John’s baptism represented a decisive break with sectarian (Pharasaic and Sadducean) order and tradition seems obvious from the combined testimony of Matthew, Mark, and Luke. John came on the scene suddenly, and his work was detached both geographically and

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sacramentally from the Jerusalem temple cult. He came “baptizing in the desert region and preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins” (Mark 1:4). Like the prophets before him, John preached a cutting away of the old and a bringing in of the new (see Matthew 3:9-10).

The gospel of Mark significantly identifies this coming of John as “the beginning of the gospel about Jesus Christ,” and both Matthew and Luke begin their narratives about Jesus with the work of John (after telling the birth stories). Luke also notes the beginning of John’s ministry with the customary chronological data. The gospels depict the work of John as a very important starting point, and the book of Acts does the same. When selecting a replacement for Judas, Peter limits possible replacements to those “who have been with us the whole time the Lord Jesus went in and out among us, beginning from John’s baptism” (Acts 1:21-22; cf. 10:37; 13:24). This emphasis on John’s work as an important starting point is highly significant, for it is precisely the baptism of John that provided the embryonic nucleus for the Messianic community.¹⁵ “John came baptizing,” and he introduced something new. William Lane remarks,

In response to his preaching John called for an action which was wholly novel—baptism in the Jordan River. It has been conjectured that John's baptism was derived from the Jewish practice of baptizing proselytes, or from the rites of initiation practiced at Qumran. No clear line of dependence can be shown in support of these theories. Baptism appears rather as a unique activity of the prophet, a prophetic sign so striking that John became known simply as ‘the Baptizer’.¹⁶

John’s baptism was quite different from ceremonial cleansings and proselyte baptisms. John’s baptism was administered by John himself or perhaps by his disciples; it was not performed by the recipient himself.¹⁷ John’s baptism was performed only once; it was not repeated. John’s baptism initiated covenant relationship with God; it was not administered

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merely to retain the purity of that covenant relationship. John’s baptism was “for the forgiveness of sins” (Mark 1:4; Luke 3:3).¹⁸ His baptism was “repentance baptism” or “turning baptism” (cf. Acts 13:24; 19:4). It was a call for Israel to flee “the coming wrath” by turning to their Lord, specifically their Messiah Lord. “What is meant [by *metanoeo* or “repent”], remarks D. A. Carson, “is a fundamental turnaround involving mind and action and including overtones of grief, which results in ‘fruit in keeping with repentance.’”¹⁹

Rather than “an outward symbol of an inward change,” John’s baptism effectually completed the recipient’s repentance or turning unto God. Those who were baptized by John “acknowledged that God’s way was right.” But those who refused John’s baptism “rejected God’s purpose for themselves” (Luke 7:29-30). The text in Luke clearly distinguishes between “all the people and the tax collectors” and “the Pharisees and the lawyers” on the basis of John’s baptism. Note the antecedent use of the aorist participle (that is, “having been baptized . . . not having been baptized”). The former group acknowledged God; they were God’s people; they had experienced a change through the baptism of John. The latter group rejected God; they were not God’s people; they had not experienced this change through John’s baptism.²⁰ John’s baptism certainly marked a decisive break with the past and a new beginning in the lives of those who received it.

B. THE BAPTISM ADMINISTERED TO JESUS [Matthew 3:13ff.; Mark 1:9; Luke 3:21; John 1:29ff.]

The baptism of Jesus also marked a new beginning. The synoptic gospels record Jesus’ baptism with brevity and simplicity. No explanation seems necessary; yet the terseness of the records makes the interpretation all the more difficult. Note the importance of the event. “Jesus

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came from Galilee to the Jordan” (Matthew 3:13; Mark specifies “Nazareth of Galilee,” 1:9). If John was baptizing in the wilderness region of Judea near the Dead Sea, then Jesus came a distance of over fifty miles.²¹ Jesus came this lengthy distance for the express purpose “to be baptized by him.”²² Note John’s reluctance. With prophetic insight he confesses, “I need to be baptized by you, and you come to me?” (Matthew 3:14). The reluctance is based on Jesus’ sinlessness. John administered “a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins.” But Jesus needed no forgiveness of sins, because he had no sin. This coming of Jesus for baptism perplexed and puzzled John.²³ Note also Jesus’ response. Jesus was not surprised at John’s reaction, nor does he rebuke John for feeling the way he does. Calmly, with conviction, Jesus reassures John, “Let it be so now.”²⁴ He confidently shares with John the reason, “It is proper for us to do this to fulfill all righteousness” (Matthew 3:15). Jesus comes to John with an intimate understanding of the Father’s will, a knowledge that leads him to the waters of the Jordan river to be baptized by John “to fulfill all righteousness” (*plerosai pasan dikaiosunen*).

What does it mean “to fulfill all righteousness?” Different interpretations have been offered: “to fulfill God’s purpose,” “to identify himself with sinners,” or “to leave nothing undone that had been revealed in the righteous will of God.”²⁵ Perhaps the best explanation lies in Matthew’s use of the word “righteousness” (*dikaiosune*). John came to Israel “in the way of righteousness” (Matthew 21:32). His message and his baptism were “from heaven” and not “from men” (Matthew 21:25). He came preaching and baptizing to prepare a remnant for the coming kingdom of God, a remnant seeking first the kingdom of God and his righteousness (Matthew 6:33). He came also to prepare the way for the righteous king himself. As Malachi and Isaiah foretold,

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I will send my messenger ahead of you,
who will prepare your way—
a voice of one calling in the desert,
‘Prepare the way for the Lord,
make straight paths for him’ (Mark 1:2-3).

John came, and Jesus came to John to usher in the righteousness of God in all its fulness (for example, in his own person as Messiah; cf. Colossians 2:9).²⁶ It is not unimportant that the only place where Jesus and John ever meet is the Jordan river. In this lies the greatest significance of the baptism of Jesus. John prepared for the coming Messiah king. John revealed to Israel the Messiah king. Then John relinquished to the Messiah king.

Compare the crude illustration of a relay race. The first man runs, he passes the baton, and then he stops running. The baptism of Jesus, so to speak, is the passing of the baton. John himself confesses, “I myself did not know him, but the reason I came baptizing with water was that he might be revealed to Israel” (John 1:31).²⁷ Before the baptism, John did not recognize Jesus (as Messiah, as Son of God). After the baptism, John could confess, “I have seen and I testify that this is the Son of God” (verse 34). God planned that Jesus should be revealed to John in the act of baptism when the Holy Spirit descended from heaven in dove-like form (verse 33).

In addition to being God’s sign of confirmation and approval to John, the descending Spirit resting upon²⁸ Jesus at baptism marked the beginning of the “already but not yet” new dispensation. Barrett aptly remarks, “Jesus has the Spirit in order that he may confer it; and it is the gift of the Spirit that pre-eminently distinguishes the new dispensation from the old; it belongs neither to Judaism nor even to John.”²⁹ Jesus had the Spirit, but he had not yet given the Spirit to his followers (John 7:39; 14:16f.; 20:22). That would come later. So John could say of Jesus, “He *will baptize* you with the Holy Spirit.”³⁰ In anticipation of that time, John could now

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tell his disciples, “Look, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!” (verses 29, 36).

But John must now decrease so that Jesus might increase (John 3:30).³¹ At the baptism of Jesus a new beginning had taken place. The Spirit of the Lord had come upon Jesus (cf. Luke 4:1, 18); God’s righteous Messiah king had come.³²

C. THE BAPTISM ADMINISTERED BY THE DISCIPLES OF JESUS [John 3:22, 23; 3:26; 4:1, 2]

Another possible antecedent of Christian baptism in the New Testament is the baptism administered by the disciples of Jesus. The New Testament unfortunately preserves very little information about this baptism. The narrative in the gospel of John simply states, “Jesus and his disciples went out into the Judean countryside, where he spent some time with them, and baptized” (3:22; cf. 4:1-2). Given the strong comparison with John’s baptism, this baptism evidently paralleled John’s baptism in design.³³ Only the administrators were different. This is the point of difference that engendered an argument (“who” rather than “what”) and the point of difference noticed by the Pharisees.³⁴ The whole incident serves to demonstrate the growing popularity of Jesus and the decline of John’s ministry. John came to testify to the superiority of Jesus. The fact that Jesus increasingly baptized more shows that John did his work well.

D. THE BAPTISM SAYINGS OF JESUS [Mark 10:38, 39; Luke 12:50]

Two baptism sayings of Jesus deserve brief treatment at this point.³⁵ Both sayings refer to Jesus’ suffering and death. Both speak of a future baptism to be experienced by Jesus. In Luke 12:50, Jesus says, “I have a baptism to be baptized with; and how I am constrained until it is accomplished!” (*Revised Standard Version*). In Mark 10:38, he asks his disciples, “Are you able to drink the cup that I drink, or to be baptized with the baptism with which I am baptized?”

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(*Revised Standard Version*). The “cup” as a metaphor for suffering occurs often in biblical literature (Psalm 11:6; 75:8; Jeremiah 25:15, 17, 28), but what does Jesus mean when he calls his death a baptism? Alfred Plummer remarks, “Regarding troubles as a flood in which one is plunged is common in [biblical] literature.”³⁶ For example, Psalm 69:1-2 vividly reads, “Save me, O God, for the waters have come up to my neck. I sink in the miry depths, where there is no foothold. I have come into the deep waters; the floods engulf me.”³⁷ But the “trouble” of Jesus ran very deep. He came to pour out his life unto death, to be numbered with the transgressors, to bear the sin of many (Isaiah 53:12). He had no sin, but God made him “sin for us” (*hamartian hyper hemon*, 2 Corinthians 5:21). Jesus could not give a more potent description of this great burden than “baptism.” It was a baptism of death. With John’s baptism, Jesus had offered himself to the Father to fulfill all righteousness; now he would complete that task. He had come by water, now he would come by blood (1 John 5:6). The baptism of water, that inaugurated his ministry, anticipated the baptism of death, that crowned his ministry.³⁸ This baptism of death was moreover a baptism unto resurrection and glorification. It marked a new stage in the ministry of Jesus and in his relationship with both the Father and his followers—a very important new beginning. For this reason, Jesus would not avoid this baptism of death. He would do the Father’s will.

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II. AFTER THE DESCENT OF THE SPIRIT: BAPTISM IN THE GROWING CHURCH

[Acts 2:38, 41; 8:12, 13, 16, 36, 38; 9:18; 10:37, 47, 48; 11:16; 13:24; 16:15, 33; 18:8, 25; 19:3, 4, 5; 22:16]

An important change takes place in the meaning of baptism after the descent of the Holy Spirit. This does not mean to suggest a lack of continuity between John’s baptism, the baptism of Jesus, and Christian baptism, but it is to say that another new beginning has occurred. Oscar Cullman observes, “This new baptismal gift of the Holy Spirit is imparted neither by Jewish proselyte baptism nor Johannine baptism. It is bound up with the person and the work of Christ. . . . The outpouring of the Holy Spirit ‘on all flesh’ (Acts 2:17) presupposes the resurrection of Christ and follows on Pentecost.”³⁹ Of this Pentecostal descent of God’s Spirit, Peter affirms, “This is what was spoken by the prophet Joel” (Acts 2:16). Later he refers back to this time as “at the beginning” (*en arche*, Acts 11:15). God’s “last days” had been ushered in. Jesus had kept his promise. The Holy Spirit had come.⁴⁰ The kingdom of God had come with power from on high. But the “extraordinary” means used by God on this occasion for the sending and the reception of the Spirit are not permanent. “Ordinary” immersion in water becomes God’s means of bestowing forgiveness of sins and the gift of the Holy Spirit. As Cullman suggests,

*Christian baptism is only possible after the church is constituted as the locus of the Holy Spirit. . . . What happened in a collective manner at Pentecost is in future to take place for each individual in the sacrament of the transmission of the Spirit. . . . Pentecost represents the decisive turning point. . . . The church is constituted here as the locus of the Holy Spirit, as the body of Christ crucified and risen. Thus the baptismal death of Christ completed once for all on the cross passes over into church baptism.*⁴¹

A. AT PENTECOST

Peter’s message on Pentecost provoked a response from the hearers. Peter answered their question “What shall we do?” with “Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of

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Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit”

(*Revised Standard Version*, Acts 2:38). Peter did not tell his inquirers “to await the Holy Spirit in a second Pentecost event with wind, fire, and tongues.”⁴² Peter offers his audience Christian

baptism. Note the strong imperatives, “You repent, and let each one of you be immersed.”⁴³

And the appeal of the apostle is urgent. “With many other words he warned them; and he

pleaded with them, ‘Save yourselves from this corrupt generation’” (Acts 2:40). “Waiting”

would be totally inappropriate. Frederick Bruner remarks, “The apostolic wait in Jerusalem

applied only to that unusual period in the apostles’ career between the ascension of Jesus and his

gift of the Spirit to the church at Pentecost.”⁴⁴ Waiting was no longer necessary, because the

Spirit already had been given.⁴⁵ What was necessary was the receiving of God’s gift through the

humble rite of baptism. The connection between verse 40 and verse 41 must not be overlooked.

The emphasis in Peter’s exhortation is not “save *yourselves*” as most of the English translations

seem to imply. The emphasis is rather “*save yourselves.*” The Greek text simply reads *sothete*,

“be saved.”⁴⁶ Gareth Reese remarks, “Peter is urging them to submit to God’s way of salvation

which he has just explained.”⁴⁷ Those who accepted Peter’s message to “be saved” *were*

baptized (ebaptisthesan), that is, they were saved. No longer were these pilgrims part of a

“corrupt generation.” They accepted God’s means of salvation, and God added them to the

number of his people.⁴⁸

Luke explains that the Lord himself added these believers to the number of his people.

He had granted to them “forgiveness of sins” and “the gift of the Holy Spirit.” Such had been

accomplished through “baptism in the name of Jesus Christ.” Bruner rightly notes,

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The baptism in the name of Jesus Christ, according to Luke’s account, includes both the forgiveness of sins *and* the reception of the gift of the Holy Spirit—together. This single two-fold benefit corresponds exactly to the Old Testament promise of the coordinate forgiveness of sins and gift of the Spirit (Jeremiah 31:31-34; Ezekiel 36:24-27). The baptism is, in the careful formulation, “for the forgiveness of your sins, *and* you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.”⁴⁹

“Forgiveness of sins” indicates the release that comes with the canceling of man’s debt to God.

Man’s failure to keep God’s righteous law incurred a debt, namely, “the certificate of debt

consisting of decrees against us which was hostile to us” (*New American Standard Bible*,

Colossians 2:14). Man was unable to keep the former law; the flesh was too weak by itself

without the Spirit. God sent his son Jesus to “condemn sin in the flesh,” to render satisfaction to

the just demands of God’s law, and to “cancel out the certificate of debt” by granting to mankind

forgiveness of sins (see Colossians 2:13ff.; Romans 8:1ff.). Furthermore, God sent his Spirit to

enable men and women to put to death the deeds of the body and to live (Romans 8:13). The

“gift of the Holy Spirit” indicates the new power that follows the renewing of man’s life to God.

Taking away the old (“the law of sin and death”), God establishes the new (“the law of the Spirit

of life in Christ Jesus”). In the words of Paul in 2 Corinthians 5:17, “The old has gone; the new

has come,” and the time of this release and renewal is Christian baptism.

B. SAUL, LYDIA, OTHERS

Another indication of the saving power of Christian baptism comes from the immediacy of the administration of this rite of release and renewal by the first proclaimers of good news.

Christian preachers like Peter gave immediate importance to the rite of baptism. Ananias of

Damascus told Saul of Tarsus, “Get up, be baptized and wash your sins away, calling on his

name” (Acts 22:16; cf. 9:18).⁵⁰ This devout believer had just told the persecutor God’s plan for

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his life (Acts 22:14-15). Then he exhorted him to be baptized by asking, “What are you waiting for?”⁵¹ The cause for immediacy in baptism is obvious. Saul must first experience forgiveness himself before he can witness to others. He must first wash away his own sins and call on the name of the Lord through baptism. Then he can witness to others about salvation through Jesus the Messiah. The turning point of Saul’s career from persecutor to Christian preacher comes precisely at the time of his baptism (see Acts 9:17ff.).

Some argue that Paul’s conversion occurred at the time of the heavenly vision. But the time of the inception of faith must not be confused with the concrete expression of that faith in baptism. Just as planting a seed does not guarantee a new plant, so the germ of faith within any human heart does not guarantee new spiritual life. Both must await the death of the outer shell, and for the believer this death occurs when the old man is crucified and the new man is resurrected with Jesus in baptism. The distinction, however, between faith and baptism must not be drawn too sharply. On the one hand, baptism without faith (for example, an *ex opere operato* initiatory ceremony) is unthinkable. On the other hand, faith without baptism (except for those waiting the opportunity of baptism, such as Paul) equally is unthinkable. In the New Testament church, according to Alan Richardson,

. . . faith and baptism belong together, like soul and body in biblical thought: the one cannot exist without the other. To regard sincere faith as adequate to salvation apart from baptismal incorporation into Christ’s body is sheer ‘Christian Science’ by the standards of NT theology; by ignoring the reality of the body it makes salvation a subjective affair, a disembodied soul-salvation of individuals who have ‘enjoyed’ a certain ‘experience’. The profession of faith without the bodily action of submission in baptism is not the obedience of the whole man; a mental act which has no outward embodiment is a mere phantom of the full-blooded, full-bodied wholeness of biblical thinking. Believing while dispensing with the act of obedience, with the act of baptism, is a kind of docetism, and is thus not belief in the NT sense at all. The action—or, rather,

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the passion—of being baptized, is itself part of the act of believing, since to believe means to obey.⁵²

Paul’s faith in Jesus as Lord possibly had its beginning at the time of his heavenly vision. But the completion of his faith in obedience to Lord Jesus did not occur until he was baptized by Ananias.⁵³ When the importance of baptism is rightly understood as the completing or making whole of one’s faith, then the exhortation of Ananias to Paul (“get up now and do it”) easily is understood.

Similarly, Lydia of Thyatira, a Roman jailer of Philippi, and Crispus of Corinth received baptism soon after hearing and believing the message of Jesus. Crispus heard Paul, believed, and was baptized (Acts 18:8). Possibly he listened to Paul’s message for some time before making his commitment (see v. 11), but the language of verse 8 suggests that once Crispus and others believed, their baptism followed immediately. Lydia also accepted Paul’s message and received baptism (Acts 16:13-15). Like Crispus, she confirmed her faith in Jesus in the act of baptism. She saw her response to Paul’s message as “being faithful to the Lord” (*pisten to kurio einai*; v. 15). Of course, some time could have elapsed between the teaching and Lydia’s baptism (“we stayed there several days,” v. 12; cf. v. 18), but the narrative appears to recount events of one day, that is “on the sabbath” (v. 13). Regardless of the exact time sequence, her confirmation of faith in baptism occurred *soon* after her hearing the message. There was no delay of months or years. In like fashion the Roman jailer was baptized “immediately” or “at once” (*parachrema*) after Paul and Silas spoke the word of the Lord to him (“the same hour of the night,” Acts 16:33). I. Howard Marshall even conjectures that the jailer and his family were baptized “in the prison itself.”⁵⁴

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The immediacy with regard to baptism indicates the seriousness of the matter to early Christian preachers. Delay in proclamation of the word and obedience in baptism was out of the question. The jailer, like Lydia and Crispus, needed salvation (Acts 16:30-31), so salvation was offered and accepted via baptism. Afterwards, the jailer’s family rejoiced. They “had believed in God” (*pepisteukos to theo*, Acts 16:34). Notice the perfect tense of the verb. The perfect tense generally expresses a “punctiliar event in the past, related in its effects to the present.”⁵⁵ The past event referred to by the verb *pepisteukos* (“had believed”) seems to be the family’s baptism. Baptism confirmed their faith in Jesus as Lord, just like an ancient seal would complete and ratify an ancient document.⁵⁶ The jailer and his family had trusted God’s promise to save them and accepted God’s mercy in baptism. In consequence of this, God granted to them joy and new life. For them it was a new beginning.

C. AT EPHESUS

For twelve disciples of John at Ephesus, baptism became the source of joy and new life *in the Lord Jesus* and *in the Holy Spirit* (Acts 19:1-7). These disciples apparently had been taught by Apollos. Like Apollos they “knew only the baptism of John” (Acts 18:25). They had received limited instruction in “the way of God,” and therefore they suffered from limited benefits. Bruner notes, “Apollos taught the things of Jesus accurately, but he did not yet know how to apply or end his teaching by offering baptism into the name of Jesus Christ. . . . Apollos’ converts were inadequately initiated.”⁵⁷ By accepting John’s baptism, these disciples had accepted a life of faith towards God. But they needed something more, and Paul sensed this deficiency. He asked them, “Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?” (v. 2). Some interpreters of this text would translate, “Did you receive the Holy Spirit *after* [*since* in KJV] you believed?”

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with the implication that reception of the Spirit is a gift subsequent to belief in Jesus.” Marshall argues correctly that this is “a wrong understanding of the phrase here in context; it . . . goes against the constant NT association of the Spirit with conversion.”⁵⁸ The aorist participle “having believed” (*pisteusantes*) denotes an action corresponding in time to the action of the main verb “you received” (*elabete*).⁵⁹ The small group should have received the Spirit at the time of their conversion (i.e., when belief was confirmed at baptism).⁶⁰ In other words, one cannot become a true believer in Jesus without receiving the Holy Spirit, and the means of receiving the Spirit is baptism “into the name of the Lord Jesus.”⁶¹

The text goes against the two-stage initiation theory of water baptism followed by Spirit baptism. As Michael Green says,

Baptism then, and not baptism plus a subsequent confirmation or ‘baptism with the Spirit’ is what marks a man as a Christian. It is the unrepeatable sacrament of Christian beginnings. . . . Baptism is *the* mark of Christian belonging, the badge which all God’s people have in common whatever their differences. The NT knows nothing of believers in Jesus who do not get baptised. Neither does it know anything of Christians who get themselves rebaptised. For baptism is the sacramental expression of Christian initiation.⁶²

This is why Paul immediately questioned them about their baptism, that is, “what baptism did you receive” (*eis ti oun ebaptisthete*, v. 3; cf. Hebrews 6:2, “instruction about baptisms,” *baptismon didaches*). F. F. Bruce comments, “As they knew John’s baptism, they might have been expected to know John’s teaching, that his baptism of repentance prepared the way for the coming of One who should baptize *en pneumati hagio* [“in the Holy Spirit”], but this, apparently, they did not know.”⁶³ And Beasley-Murray affirms, “Men unsure of the gospel and not possessing the Spirit need Christian baptism, whatever has gone before; Paul ensured that they received it.”⁶⁴ After further instruction as to the preparatory function of John’s baptism, these

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disciples “were baptized into the name of the Lord Jesus” (v. 5).⁶⁵ Formerly disciples of John, they now become disciples of the Lord Jesus. Formerly ignorant of the Holy Spirit, they now become empowered with God’s holy gift and speak in tongues and prophesy (v. 6).⁶⁶ Christian baptism secures a new beginning for these people. In this *new* baptism (not rebaptism), they acknowledge Jesus as Lord and Savior, and they receive the Holy Spirit. It is these two foundational experiences of Jesus as Lord and the Holy Spirit as helper that make baptism essential for any believer.

D. AT SAMARIA

The baptism of Samaritans and Gentiles likewise meant new life in Jesus for these groups, but these baptisms also marked an explosive and exciting new period for the corporate life of God’s church. God wanted to make an undisputable point when he decided to extend the boundaries of his church from Jews to Samaritans to Gentiles, and he made this point through special workings of his Spirit. “Who has understood the Spirit of the Lord, or instructed him as his counselor?” (Isaiah 40:13). The events at Samaria (Acts 8:4-25) and Caesarea (Acts 10:1-48) are not typical! Maybe this is why Luke records these events, because they are different and very important to the story of the history of the early church.

The story in the eighth chapter of Acts “records the reception of the gospel by the Samaritans, a people whom the Jews hated and regarded as heretical.”⁶⁷ Green rightly notes, “However you choose to interpret chapter 8, it leaves you with problems.”⁶⁸ The persecution led by Saul scattered the Christians “throughout Judea and Samaria” (v. 1). Missionary activity increased because of greater adversity Philip, one of the seven servants of the church (Acts 6:1-7), traveled to the region of Samaria and preached Christ there.⁶⁹ The message brought about a

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good response, with signs, exorcisms, healings, and great joy (vv. 6-8). Even the sorcery of Simon, that had held the people spellbound for some time, could not stop the progress of the gospel. The power of the “good news of the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ” was greater than the “great power” of Simon (see v. 10). Simon had amazed the people and boasted of his greatness, but the Samaritans had never seen anything like the signs performed by Philip. This demonstration of power gave credibility to Philip’s message about Jesus, and consequently many of the Samaritans, both men and women, believed and were baptized (v. 12).⁷⁰ “Simon himself believed and was baptized” (v. 13), surprisingly, and there is no reason to doubt the sincerity of Simon’s faith.⁷¹

So far so good in the interpretation of Acts, chapter 8. The problem comes, however, when Luke informs us that Peter and John came from Jerusalem to Samaria to pray for these believers that “they might receive the Holy Spirit, because the Holy Spirit had not yet come upon any of them; they had simply been baptized into the name of the Lord Jesus” (vv. 15-16). The perplexing question is, “If the Holy Spirit is given at baptism, why the delay in the case of the Samaritans?” One solution questions the sincerity of the faith of the Samaritans. Under this view some deficiency in their faith delayed the coming of the Holy Spirit.⁷² But Bruner more correctly notes,

It should be noticed first that the remedy for the absence of the Holy Spirit was not sought or found in any disposition or action of the Samaritans. . . . The Samaritans are asked no questions and they are placed under no commands. The problem lies not with the Samaritans. . . . The discovery in Acts 8:14-17 of insufficient commitment on the part of any parties or a finding of the imperfect fulfilling of any conditions must be imported into the text.⁷³

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The faith of the Samaritans was not insufficient. They did believe Philip’s message, and they were baptized into the name of the Lord Jesus. Their faith found fulfillment in commitment and obedience. Of faith they had no lack, but they did lack *the Holy Spirit*.

Another solution sees “the laying on of the apostles’ hands” as the key to this delay of the Spirit.⁷⁴ The Samaritans received the “ordinary” gift of the Spirit at their baptism, but they waited to receive the “extraordinary” or “miraculous” gifts of the Spirit at the laying on of the apostles’ hands. Following this line of interpretation, Richard Rogers writes,

The Holy Spirit is expressly named four times when the ‘gifts’ are meant. These people had heard the gospel; they had believed the gospel; they had obeyed the gospel. They had, therefore, received the Holy Spirit. Yet Peter and John came down from Jerusalem that the Samaritans might receive the Holy Spirit. The key to the whole section is verse 18: ‘Now when Simon *saw* that through the laying on of the apostles’ hands the Holy Spirit was given . . .’ This is a metonymy. The Spirit is stated when the gifts are meant.⁷⁵

But this sort of interpretation unfortunately is misguided. It assumes the Samaritans had received the Holy Spirit as a gift when the text plainly states otherwise. Furthermore, as R. J. Knowling asserts, “It is difficult to believe that St. Luke can mean to limit the expression *lambanein* [“to receive”] here to anything less than a bestowal of that divine indwelling of the spirit which makes the Christian the temple of God.”⁷⁶ That is the problem, and the observation that Simon “saw” that the gift of the Spirit accompanied the apostles’ ministrations does not lessen the problem. Marshall notes,

The story presupposes that it can be known whether or not a person has received the Spirit. This would be the case if charismatic gifts were involved; cf. how 10:46 gives the proof for 10:45. But there is no proof that charismatic gifts were manifest every time, and other less spectacular indications, such as a sense of joy, may have been regarded as adequate evidence of the presence of the Spirit (13:52; 16:34; 1 Thessalonians 1:6).⁷⁷

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So the Samaritans did not receive the Holy Spirit at their baptism, and the question remains, “Why was the Spirit withheld?” The best explanation is that “God withheld the Spirit until the coming of Peter and John in order that the Samaritans might be seen to be fully incorporated into the community of Jerusalem Christians who had received the Spirit at Pentecost.”⁷⁸ The unusual working of the Spirit was God’s way of telling the Jewish believers, “You accept the Samaritan believers, just as I have accepted you” (cf. 10:47; 11:17). Through this special outpouring of his Spirit, God was mending the ancient split between Jew and Samaritan (see John 4:9; cf. 8:48). Green comments,

If the Holy Spirit had been given immediately upon profession of faith and baptism by the Samaritans, this ancient schism would have continued, and there would have been two churches, out of fellowship with each other. . . . God did not give his Holy Spirit to the Samaritans at once: not until representatives from Jerusalem came down and expressed their solidarity with the converts by praying for them and laying their hands on them. Then they received the Holy Spirit . . . it was not so much an authorisation from Jerusalem or an extension of the Jerusalem church, as a divine veto on schism in the infant church, a schism which could have slipped almost unnoticed into the Christian fellowship, as converts from the two sides of the ‘Samaritan curtain’ found Christ without finding each other. That would have been a denial of the one baptism and all it stood for. It was for this reason that God made delay on this occasion. Acts 8 is recorded precisely to show the abnormality of a baptism which does not lead to reception of the Holy Spirit.⁷⁹

The Samaritans’ reception of the Spirit *after* baptism is a special case, and it would be foolish to make a special case the general pattern for the working of the Spirit. But the incident does represent another new beginning associated with baptism. “Samaria was the church’s first decisive step out of and beyond Judaism.”⁸⁰ As such it is the beginning of God’s reaching out through the apostles “to the ends of the earth” (Acts 1:8).

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E. THE GENTILES

A similar movement of the Spirit involved the Gentiles, but unlike the Samaritans, Cornelius, his relatives, and his close friends received the Holy Spirit *before* baptism (Acts 10:44-48). By this wondrous proof of the “falling” (*epepesen*, v. 44) of God’s Spirit on the Gentiles, “Peter and his Jewish brethren with him saw that, uncircumcised though they were, Cornelius and his household were no longer common or unclean.”⁸¹ Chase appropriately labels this “the Pentecost of the Gentile world,” and Bruner notes, “Through a striking divine intervention by which the Gentiles were inaugurated into the church just as the Jews had been (‘just as we have,’ 10:47; cf. 11:15), a certainty was provided that Gentiles stood on no less equal footing in the church than did the Jews.”⁸² The Holy Spirit took the initiative on this occasion, and he did so to break down the old “dividing wall of hostility” (Ephesians 2:14).⁸³

But this special working of God’s Spirit did not cause water baptism to be useless or unnecessary. In fact, it made water baptism all the more important. Peter replied, “Can anyone keep these people from being baptized with water? They have received the Holy Spirit just as we have” (v. 47). Convinced of God’s acceptance of the Gentiles, the apostle “ordered that they be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ” (v. 48). Why did Peter demand the Gentiles be baptized with water? It can only be because he connected water baptism “in the name of Jesus Christ” (*en to onomati Iesou Christou*) with the promised baptism “with the Holy Spirit” (*en pneumati hagio*; see 11:16). The Spirit and the water of baptism belonged together. Bruner states,

Baptism was not considered a superfluous rite, dispensable now because the ‘real thing’ had already occurred. The gift of the Holy Spirit without baptism was as unthinkable to the church as baptism without the gift of the Holy Spirit (8:14-17; 19:2-7). . . . The Holy Spirit and baptism, they knew, belonged together

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in such a way as to form the ‘one baptism’ of the church (Ephesians 4:5; cf. 1 Corinthians 12:13).⁸⁴

Peter later explained his actions to his critics in Jerusalem, “If God gave them the same gift . . . who was I to think that I could oppose God!” (11:17).⁸⁵ In other words, to not baptize the Gentiles with water would have been to oppose God. God had taken the initiative, and he had given his approval of the Gentiles by bestowing on them the gift of his Spirit. Now it remained for these Jewish Christians to complete the Gentiles’ turn to God by baptizing them. They did this, because they understood the importance of baptism.

The Gentiles like the Samaritans received the Holy Spirit in an unusual way. But though the immediacy of the working of the Spirit was removed from baptism in these instances, an indication of God’s sovereignty in “cross-racial evangelism,” the strong connection between Spirit and water in conversion was preserved. And once again, God used baptism to lead his people to new beginnings. It was a fresh start for Cornelius and his friends, and in a real sense it was a fresh start for the faith of Peter and his Jewish brothers. The Gentiles experienced the newness of the power of God’s Spirit. The Jews experienced the newness of God’s working in the church of Christ, namely that God in his sovereign grace would “bring Gentiles directly into relationship with Jesus Christ apart from any prior relationship with Judaism.”⁸⁶ God so worked through baptism to fix a point of decisive change not only in the lives of individual believers but also in the attitudes and development of the Christian community as a whole.

F. AN ETHIOPIAN

The case of a leading official from Ethiopia provides yet another instance of the new life associated with baptism in the growing church (Acts 8:26-40).⁸⁷ Under the guidance of the Holy

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Spirit (vv. 29, 39), the Hellenist Philip received an invitation to join this man in his chariot and teach him. Beginning with Isaiah’s prophecy about “the suffering servant,” Philip “told him the good news about Jesus” (*euangelisato auto ton Iesoun*; v. 35). Evidently this message about Jesus included a message about baptism (cf. 2:22ff., 38; 8:12). When they came to a body of water, the official asked Philip, “Look, here is water. Why shouldn’t I be baptized?” (v. 36). He understood from Philip’s good news that the proper response to the message about Jesus was baptism, so “both Philip and the eunuch went down into the water and Philip baptized him” (v. 38). Notice the language used to describe the eunuch’s baptism. They both “went down into the water,” and they “came up out of the water.” As Knowling says, “The context indicates that the baptism was by immersion, and there can be no doubt that this was the custom in the early church.”⁸⁸

As a beautiful portrayal of death and resurrection, baptism by immersion suitably corresponds to the message or *kerygma* about Jesus. Furthermore, the “coming up out of the water” (i.e., the believer’s resurrection to new life; see v. 39; cf. Matthew 3:16; Mark 1:10) prepares the candidate for the reception of the Spirit, God’s gift of new life. The believer’s ascending from the water also complements the picture of the Spirit as gift descending from heaven. In the Ethiopian’s case, a longer form of the text reads, “When they came up out of the water, the Holy Spirit fell upon the eunuch, but the angel of the Lord caught up Philip.”⁸⁹

Whether this reading is original or not is debatable,⁹⁰ but the fact of the official’s reception of the Holy Spirit is not in question, because he “went on his way rejoicing.” Things now were different. The indwelling Holy Spirit imparted joy to his heart (cf. 13:52; Galatians 5:22). He

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had experienced a new beginning for his life. This is because he had discovered Jesus, and he had received the Spirit of Jesus in baptism.

G. THE COMMAND OF JESUS

By connecting water baptism with the saving work of Jesus and the reception of the Holy Spirit, the early church did not act arbitrarily. The summons to baptize came from the lips of Jesus himself. The early church acted by or under his authority. After his resurrection and prior to his ascension, the Lord taught his disciples many lessons concerning the kingdom of God (see Acts 1:3). He taught his followers about baptism with the Holy Spirit (Acts 1:5; cf. John 20:21-23), about repentance and forgiveness of sins (Luke 24:45-49), and about faith, discipleship, baptism, and further teaching (Matthew 28:19-20; cf. Mark 16:15-16). The Lord made clear the need for proclamation of good news about his suffering, death, resurrection, and exaltation.⁹¹ This proclamation would be the foundation for God’s kingdom. And the Lord also made clear the need for proclaiming a way whereby men and women might accept the saving benefits of his life and enter God’s kingdom. He gave them a way that was specific, decisive, and meaningful. He gave them a way which identified any follower of Jesus with these foundations of Christian faith—the suffering, death, resurrection, and exaltation of Jesus.⁹² He gave them baptism. Jesus told his disciples,

All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, to the close of the age (*Revised Standard Version*, Matthew 28:18-20; cf. Mark 16:15-16).

Herein lies the authority for Christian baptism. It came first from Jesus himself. Baptism was the gift of Jesus to his church. By giving baptism, Jesus gave his followers a way to confer

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the forgiveness of sins,⁹³ entrance into God’s kingdom, the gift of the Holy Spirit, and union with his person. The two participles in what has been called Jesus’ Great Commission, “baptizing” (*baptizantes*) and “teaching” (*didaskontes*), describe how disciples are made. D. A. Carson, though, denies any strong connection between baptism and discipleship. Rather than *means* of disciple-making, he sees baptism and teaching as actions “characterizing” discipleship.⁹⁴ But Alan McNeile’s comment on “baptizing them” (*baptizantes autous*) is more to the point. He says, “The present participle expresses a continuous activity [emphasizing the ongoing activity of the church in both baptizing and teaching, DF]; each forms part of a continuous *matheteuein* [‘disciple-making’].”⁹⁵ Perhaps it is better to see the commission as involving a threefold task. Alfred Plummer suggests, “The apostles are to make disciples of all men, to baptize them, and to instruct them.”⁹⁶ With this understanding, the apostolic pattern of teaching or evangelizing, baptizing, then post-baptismal teaching is preserved. But the necessary connection between the differing activities must not be obscured by the difficulty of the text’s grammar.

Just as baptism without further teaching would be inappropriate, so evangelism without baptism would be incomplete and lacking. Proclamation of good news without profession of that good news in baptism would be omitting the very necessary work of God to incorporate the sinner into the company or fellowship of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. The baptized convert, says Grant Osborne,

. . . becomes the possession of and therefore enters into fellowship with the Trinity in the discipling process. Jesus’ words here are thus more than just a liturgical formula; baptism is an experience which transcends any act of obedience or symbolic rite. It is the initiation of the disciple (cf. 1 Peter 3:19, 20) into the rights and obligations of his calling.⁹⁷

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Similarly, Plummer writes,

In the words before us our Lord was not ordering any particular form of administering baptism. . . . Our Lord may be explaining what becoming a disciple really involves: it means no less than entering into communion with, into vital relationship with, the revealed persons of the Godhead. The divine name is often a reverent symbol for the divine nature, for God himself; and therefore baptizing into the name of the Trinity may mean immersing in the infinite ocean of the divine perfection. In Christian baptism the divine essence is the element *into* which the baptized are plunged, or *in* which they are bathed.⁹⁸

Early Christians entered into their profession of faith and into fellowship with the trinity by gladly accepting and proclaiming salvation through baptism.⁹⁹

Unlike many modern believers, early Christians did not balk at baptism. They gave baptism its due prominence, and this was not done without important reasons. Baptism has historical associations with the death and resurrection of Jesus. Baptism has existential associations with the risen Lord, the Godhead, and the gathered community of saints. And baptism has eschatological associations with God’s Spirit and the promised return of Christ. Because of these crucial associations, baptism was given prominence by the early disciples.

Baptism, Ridderbos explains,

. . . is the means by which communion with the death and burial of Christ comes into being (*dia tou baptisματος*, “through baptism,” Romans 6:4), the place where this union is effected (*en to baptismati*, “in baptism,” Colossians 2:12), the means by which Christ cleanses his church (*katharisas to loutro*, “having been washed with water,” Ephesians 5:26), and [the means whereby] God has saved it (*esoson hemas dia loutrou*, “he saved us through washing,” Titus 3:5). . . . All these formulations speak clearly of the significance of baptism in mediating redemption; they speak of what happens in and by baptism and not merely of what happened before baptism and of which baptism would only be the confirmation. On the other hand, it is plain that baptism as means of salvation, does not have an exclusive significance. Thus what is here attributed to baptism can elsewhere be ascribed to faith, and thus what is here represented as appropriated to believers by baptism can elsewhere be ascribed to them already in Christ’s death . . . [So] baptism accomplishes in its own way what already obtained in

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another way, and thus occupies its own place in the whole of the divine communication of redemption.¹⁰⁰

It is because of connections “in the whole of the divine communication of redemption,” connections with repentance, entry into God’s kingdom, forgiveness of sins, reception of the Holy Spirit, and union with Christ, that it will not do to suppose that baptism is an optional extra or superfluous ordinance. Baptism is God’s ordinance of new life, and as such it surely depends on God, Christ, and the Holy Spirit for its effectual working. They alone can make us new people, and they alone can bring about the transformation of mind, body, spirit, and will needed by sinful man. But baptism must not be decontextualized and then regarded as unnecessary to this process of transformation. Baptism should be viewed in its immensely rich and varied context—its biblical context. When baptism is seen in this light, then baptism will be heralded and obeyed as one of God’s greatest gifts to his church. If baptism is not this important, why did Jesus command his people to make disciples by baptizing them and teaching them until “the very end of the age”?

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III. AFTER THE DESCENT OF THE SPIRIT: BAPTISM IN THE ESTABLISHED CHURCH
[Romans 6:3, 4; 1 Corinthians 1:13, 14, 15, 16, 17; 10:2; 12:13; 15:29; Galatians 3:27; Ephesians 4:5; Colossians 2:12; 1 Peter 3:21]

In the epistles of the New Testament, the emphasis on baptism changes. Exhortation *to be baptized* now becomes exhortation *to the baptized*. Paul and other writers do not address a hostile, unbelieving audience. They speak to an already Christian audience of whom they can say, “You were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God” (1 Corinthians 6:11). The emphasis on baptism changes from invitation via proclamation (for example, Peter’s “Repent, and be baptized . . .”) to exhortation via remembrance (for example, Paul’s “Don’t you know . . .”), a remembrance that recalls God’s saving act and the Spirit’s imparting of new life. In the epistles, baptism as hortatory instruction becomes a vital part of the early church’s paraenetic tradition, a tradition indispensable for Christian maturation and growth. Wayne Meeks writes, “Paraenetic reminders are appeals to recall what happened when the addressees first became Christians, both the ritual of baptism and the instruction that accompanied it, and to behave in ways appropriate to that memory.”¹⁰¹ This paraenetic use of baptism as “reminder” or as appealing to the “memory” should be emphasized. Baptism can function as *anamnesis* (“reminder”)¹⁰² only by appeal to an already existing consciousness of baptism. This is the amazing fact about references to baptism in the epistles of the New Testament. The need for and necessity of baptism never is argued. Baptism always is presumed to be part of the believer’s past experience. K. W. Noakes states,

Throughout his letters, Paul assumes that to become a Christian one is baptized; the ‘once-for-all-ness’ of baptism is a basic presupposition of Paul’s thought, as of all subsequent thought about baptism. Baptism is the frontier between two worlds, between two entirely different modes of life, or, rather, between death and life. Faith and baptism are inextricably linked; in their baptism believers confess Christ as Savior.¹⁰³

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The epistles address those who have already been baptized, and this common experience of baptism becomes a powerful argument for holy and righteous living.

A. BAPTISM AS DEATH AND RESURRECTION WITH CHRIST

In his letter to Christians at Rome (chapter 6), Paul introduces the matter of baptism because of a certain antinomian misconception of grace. Paul, however, does not answer the “bogus logic”¹⁰⁴ echoed in verse 1 with an appeal to the law (compare verse 14, “you are not under law, but under grace”). He instead emphasizes the importance of new life in Christ, a new life brought into existence by God’s grace through baptism. In baptism the believer experiences death, burial, and resurrection with Christ. “We were baptized into his death” (*eis ton thanaton autou ebaptisthemēn*, v. 3), and “we were buried with him through baptism into death” (*sunetaphemēn auto dia tou baptisματος eis ton thanaton*, v. 4).¹⁰⁵ In the rite of baptism “we died with Christ” (*apethanomen sun Christo*, v. 8), and “our old self was crucified with him” (*ho palaios hemon anthropos sunestaurōthe*, v. 6; compare Galatians 2:20). Beasley-Murray says, “The death we died is the death *he* died on Golgotha. . . . The action of baptism primarily means, not that the baptistry becomes our grave, but that we are laid in the grave of Christ.”¹⁰⁶ The emphasis in baptism is that we died “with him,” and through baptism we were buried “with him.” Beasley-Murray continues, “The reason for Paul’s stating that the baptized is *buried* as dead . . . is the nature of baptism as immersion. The symbolism of immersion as representing burial is striking. . . . It is the kerygma *in action* . . . But the ‘with him’ of baptism is due to the gospel. . . . Christ and his dying, Christ and his rising give the rite all its meaning.”¹⁰⁷

But this identification with Christ in his death, however, and the ratification and sealing of this death by burial, demands a corresponding resurrection to new life. Paul affirms, “So that

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as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the father, we too might walk in newness of life” (*Revised Standard Version*, v. 4). Just as the believer at baptism died with Christ, at baptism the believer also is raised to new life—an even deeper connection between Christ’s death and resurrection at the believer’s baptism. According to Beasley-Murray,

When the parenthetical material of [v. 4] is omitted we are left with the unambiguous statement: ‘We were buried with him through baptism . . . *that we might walk in newness of life*’. Bornkamm maintains that the *hina* introduces the divine determination and demand under which we now stand. . . . The *hina* (‘in order that’) introduces the purpose of the convert as he submits to baptism . . . He renounces the ‘oldness’ of his earlier life and commits himself to the ‘newness of life’ opened up for him through the resurrection life of Christ.¹⁰⁸

Resurrection to new life is the *purpose* for the believer’s baptismal death. But the transformation that God accomplished for Jesus historically, in Christ’s own body, he accomplishes for the believer existentially and eschatologically, in the body of Christ’s church. Meeks notes, “Descent into the water obviously did not mime Jesus’ death, but it could be construed as ‘being buried with Christ’ (Romans 6:4; Colossians 2:12), and rising from the water could very well signify ‘being raised with Christ’ (Colossians 2:12; 3:1; Ephesians 2:6).¹⁰⁹ In other words, the dying and rising in baptism is not to be construed in a crassly literal sense as in many ancient pagan initiation rites.¹¹⁰ The bodily death and resurrection of Jesus is the pattern or prototype (i.e., the church’s foundation), and those who are baptized “into Christ Jesus” do indeed experience death and resurrection but with reference to sin, the world, the body of Christ’s church, and the coming resurrection.¹¹¹ The dying and subsequent rising become a reality through faith in its existential/eschatological context. W. D. Davies aptly puts it,

The union of the individual with Christ is such that the experiences of Christ are reenacted in the experience of the individual Christian. The life, death, resurrection and glorification of Jesus cease to be mere external facts of history but living realities in the

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Christian’s own life. The latter appropriates to himself the past events of the historical and risen life of Jesus so that they become his own.¹¹²

It must be stressed further that baptism is a *real* experience of this union with Christ; it is not just a “mere sign.” Anders Nygren comments, “That which baptism symbolizes also actually *happens*, and [it happens] precisely through baptism.”¹¹³ Christ himself is both present and personally active in and through the “visible word of baptism.”¹¹⁴ And the tangible element of water and the tangible movements of dipping and rising in immersion enhance baptism’s forceful realism. So much so that it is precisely this experience of death with Christ in baptism that brings death to sin. The Christian needs to sin no longer, because he has a new master or a new owner (see vv. 15ff.). According to Paul, it is precisely this fellowship of resurrection with Christ in baptism that brings triumphant hope of the death of death itself (see vv. 8-10). Baptism unites the believer with Christ in his death and in his resurrection.

Paul, however, uses the aorist tense when referring to the believer’s baptismal death, but he uses the future tense when referring to the Christian’s resurrection in baptism (*esometha*, “we will be,” v. 5; *sudzesomen*, “we will live,” v. 8).¹¹⁵ These references to resurrection in the future seem to be Paul’s way of exhorting the Roman Christians to more diligence concerning their sanctification.¹¹⁶ His main emphasis, Andrew Lincoln writes,

. . . is on dying with Christ, as, against any accusation of a deficient ‘cheap’ view of grace, he insists that the believer’s present life cannot be one of living in sin because he or she has died to sin. But dying with Christ is only one side of the coin. It is a precondition which finds its intended completion in the sharing of the new resurrection life of Christ.¹¹⁷

Paul seems to be arguing, “If the rising with Christ prefigured in baptism is to become a future reality, then the dying with Christ also portrayed in baptism must find fulfillment in holy living.”

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In this age of the “already, but not yet” (i.e., already raised with Christ in baptism, but not yet raised with Christ bodily and literally), the life of spiritual resurrection must be lived in hope of future bodily resurrection.

Until that time comes, “there is a present aspect of sharing in Christ’s resurrection,” a present reality that must be worked out by living a sanctified life. To the contrary, the libertine view of grace (vv. 1, 15) does not take God’s gift of new life seriously. To adhere to such a notion of grace would be to quench the new life of the Spirit, and that would be a rejection of what was experienced with Christ at baptism. The Roman Christians should “count” or “reckon” themselves “alive to God in Christ Jesus” (v. 11). “Through his resurrection Christ now lives to God [v. 10], and since they are *en Christo Iesou* [‘in Christ Jesus’] and identified with Christ in both his death and his life, believers are also to consider themselves alive to God.”¹¹⁸ But equally they are “dead to sin” (v. 11). The new life of holiness and righteousness must be followed (see vv. 15ff.). To do otherwise would be to forfeit participation in God’s greatest gift of new life, the life of the bodily resurrection. Such would also be a tragic reversion to living under law, under sin, and under the penalty of death.

B. BAPTISM AS UNION WITH CHRIST AND UNION WITH FELLOW CHRISTIANS

In his letter to churches of Galatia, Paul writes to believers who are struggling with the relationship of law and faith.¹¹⁹ The attempt to impose circumcision, dietary restrictions, and the observance of “appointed times” on believers had caused many of the Galatians to question their status as Christians and the reason for their acceptance into the church (see 1:7; 3:1-5; 4:8-11; 5:2-12). As Lincoln notes, “It appears that the Judaizers promoted circumcision on the grounds that only those who submitted to [these rites] could enter fully into the elect community of the

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people of God and become the seed of Abraham.”¹²⁰ This separatistic leaven put a severe strain on associations in the churches (see 5:15), so that the problem threatened to tear apart the newly formed Christian communities. Such a crisis called for a decisive response. Paul tells the Galatians “that they have already attained to the goals the agitators are holding before them, and that they have done so simply by faith in Christ.” And he declares, “You are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus” (Galatians 3:26). Faith in Christ rather than works of law had been the basis of their justification before God. The law could add nothing; in fact, such would be contrary to the law’s purpose and duration (3:15ff.).¹²¹ But in verse 27, Paul delineates the means whereby God had worked to adopt these Galatian believers into his family (cf. 4:4-7).

Paul’s reminder focuses on the bodily confirmation of their faith through baptism. To allow the Galatians to forget *their exact starting point* in Christ would be too risky (cf. 3:2-5). He states, “For all of you who were baptized into Christ have been clothed with Christ” (*hosoi gar eis christon ebaptisthete, christon enedusasthe*). In other words, the faith that brought about their adoption into God’s family was the faith that led to baptism, the faith by which they “put on” Christ. Franz Rendtorff maintains that “one sentence qualifies the other, [so that] the experience of baptism is the experience of faith.”¹²² And Beasley-Murray comments,

If Paul were pressed to define the relationship of the two statements in vv. 26-27, I cannot see how he could preserve the force of both sentences apart from affirming that baptism is the moment of faith in which the adoption is realized—in the dual sense of effected by God and grasped by man—which is the same as saying that in baptism faith receives the Christ in whom the adoption is effected.¹²³

The connection that Paul makes between faith and baptism shows that baptism is not a work of law. It is the acceptance of God’s grace in Jesus based on faith. In baptism faith receives what the grace of God gives, and God’s grace above everything else freely gives Christ. Baptism

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brings about *union* with Christ. It is God’s way of incorporating the sinner into the realm of Christ’s saving life, the realm of justification, regeneration, and sanctification. The Galatians did not need the law to save them; God had saved them already by uniting them with Jesus at their baptism.

To describe this union with Christ, Paul uses the metaphor *enduein* (“to put on,” “to be clothed with”). Possibly it signifies being clothed with the righteousness of Christ (for example, his robe of righteousness; cf. Isaiah 61:10; Job 29:14; Psalm 132:9; Zechariah 3:3ff.), or perhaps it describes putting on the new man who is recreated in the image of Christ (cf. Romans 13:14; Ephesians 4:20ff.; Colossians 3:9ff.).¹²⁴ The term could also refer to the symbolic practice of dressing the baptismal candidate or the newly baptized convert with a white robe. Richardson comments,

Older commentators thought that this practice could hardly have begun in St. Paul’s day. But there is no reason why the practice should be less likely to have arisen in A.D. 50 than in A.D. 150; Justin Martyr (*Dialogue with Trypho* 116) attests its prevalence in the second century. After all, some such practice must have been necessary from the very beginning, since baptism was by total immersion in running water (cf. *Didache* 7:1-3; Hebrews 10:22), and the earliest Christians doubtless shared in full the aversion of the Jews [to] the state of *gumnotes* [“nakedness”]. What is more likely than that the putting on of the white robe should from the beginning have represented to the mind of the church the putting on of Christ, just as the actual immersion in the river represented the burial of the Christian with Christ in his death, and as the rising from the water symbolized his resurrection from the dead (cf. Romans 6:3f.)? . . . [Similarly], the seer’s conception of the robes of the saints washed in the blood of the Lamb (Revelation 7:14; 22:14) is his way of expressing the great truth which the whole NT affirms, namely, baptismal justification.¹²⁵

Whatever the exact meaning, the “putting on” of Christ in baptism does indicate a close and strong association between the baptized and Christ. Such union with Christ is complete, real,

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and irreversible; it is a *once for all*²⁶ act of union with the risen Lord. And it is an act with extensive, spiritual consequences.

One obvious consequence of this union with Christ is *union with others who have also experienced union with Christ*. Baptism is much more than union with Christ on an individual basis. Because of their common baptism based on like faith in the same Lord (cf. Ephesians 4:5, “one Lord, one faith, one baptism”), Paul tells the Galatians, “There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham’s seed, and heirs according to the promise” (3:28-29; cf. Colossians 3:11; 1 Corinthians 12:13). The apostle here addresses these believers collectively, “For *ye* are all *one* in Christ Jesus, and if *ye* be Christ’s, then are *ye* Abraham’s seed” (*King James Version*). Baptism in Christ effects union with others. Baptism into Christ creates community. Baptism gives birth to family, to brothers and sisters in Christ, who share a common life, who are the people of God. To use the words of Paul, “So in Christ we who are many form *one body*, and each member belongs to all the others” (Romans 12:5; on “one body” cf. 1 Corinthians 6:15-17; 10:17; 12:12-13, 20, 27; Ephesians 2:16; 4:4, 25; 5:30; Colossians 3:15). So great is this union with one another in Christ that every barrier, as J. B. Lightfoot highlights,

. . . is swept away. No special claims, no special disabilities exist in him, none can exist. The conventional distinctions of religious caste or of social rank, even the natural distinction of sex, are banished hence. One heart beats in all; one mind guides all; one life is lived by all. *Ye* are all *one man*, for *ye* are members of Christ.¹²⁷

And union with Christ destroys faction, schism, and disunity, since it is God’s movement against the structures and forces of the prevailing godless culture. According to Kevin Springer,

The early Christians did not see themselves as isolated individuals. Their interdependence and love amazed pagans, helping to convert some of them to Christ. . . .

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In strong communities Christians also found protection from the corroding influences of the non-Christian culture. . . . But we would be mistaken to think Christians formed committed communities only for the sake of evangelism or resistance to pagan culture. The basic reason for their unity was an understanding of the gospel—that in Christ God [was] raising up a new race of men and women, the people of God, joined together as a body.¹²⁸

Similarly, when he writes to the Corinthian church, Paul connects baptism to this work of God in joining together individual believers as one body.¹²⁹ To a “church of God” wracked by squabbles, immorality, and divisions, he affirms the unity effected by God’s Spirit at baptism. “For indeed in *one* Spirit we *all* into *one* body were baptized—whether Jews or Greeks, whether bondmen or freemen—and we *all* of *one* Spirit were made to drink” (12:13).¹³⁰ Paul’s stress on “oneness” is very clear. But what is equally clear is the means by which this oneness is effected. Note that both verbs in this verse are aorist passives, “ye were baptized” (*ebaptisthemen*), “ye were given to drink” (*epotisthemen*). The emphasis falls on the action of God’s Spirit. The Corinthians’ baptism into one body was effected “in” or “by” one Spirit (*en heni pneumati*).¹³¹ It was not brought about by their own merits nor by their own abilities. Rather it was the work of the Spirit through water (*en hudati*)¹³² that made them one. At baptism “*one* Spirit flooded their souls with the love and joy of a common faith in Christ.”¹³³ At baptism they were drenched or saturated with God’s Spirit which had at Pentecost been poured out for all to drink.¹³⁴

Paul’s reminder further exhorts the Corinthians to live as people of the Spirit. “The argument of the passage as a whole is that the Christians at Corinth who have the most spectacular *charismata* [‘gifts’] should not boast of them.”¹³⁵ There are many gifts but one Spirit. There are many members but one body. The essential unity of God’s people needs to be recognized and preserved. So Paul focuses on the Corinthians’ common baptism by the same

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Spirit, something that “all” (*pantes* is repeated twice in v. 13) received equally. Paul Althaus suggests,

Since it is precisely the apostle’s concern to show the inner consolidation of Christians in one unified organism by means of a public-fact-of-experience, he could not use an inner, purely ‘spiritual’ event as his evidence; he could call upon only an historical event which had occurred in the same way to all members, by which their entrance into the spiritual ‘body’ came also outwardly into view.¹³⁶

Paul appropriately calls forth something outward, public, and objective. He calls forth baptism, that “profound initiation event through which every Christian passes and by which every Christian is given the same spiritual gift” (that is, the Holy Spirit).¹³⁷

But the Corinthians also received at baptism ordination to ministry in Christ’s spiritual body, the church, and every member received the personal *charisma* (“gift”) of the Spirit to help each believer fulfill his or her God-given *diakonia* (“service”).¹³⁸ Beasley-Murray suggests,

The controlling idea of [the passage] is not a personal, in the sense of private, receiving of the Spirit, but the social concept of incorporation of the baptized through the Spirit into the body of Christ. . . . The unity of the body does not consist in uniformity of character and function, but these differentiated functions are possible because the body is a unity, informed by one life and inspired by one Spirit. . . . [So] baptism obliterates the disunities of man and harmonizes them in the unity of Christ’s body in the one Spirit.¹³⁹

Such unity exists not because baptism is “into the name of Paul” (see 1:13-17), nor because of any individual that administered the baptism.¹⁴⁰ The unity of the body in baptism is made a reality “through the name of our Lord Jesus Christ” (*dia tou onomatos tou kuriou hemon Iesou Christou*, 1:10; cf. 1:2; 5:4; 6:11; 10:2). “Christian baptism is ‘in the name of the Lord Jesus’, to the crucified and exalted redeemer, who has sent to his church the Spirit promised from the Father; and the Spirit he sends is his agent, communicating the benefits of his redemption.”¹⁴¹

The Lord Jesus is for the church *the unifying personality*. All members of the church draw their

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common life from him through the Spirit, a oneness of life received at baptism. And precisely because of such a valued sense of baptism, Paul “regarded with such abhorrence its debasement by Corinthian partisanship.”¹⁴²

C. BAPTISM AS SPIRITUAL CIRCUMCISION

In response to false teaching at Colossae about the heavenly world and about rigorous observances, esoteric knowledge, and visionary experiences as ways of attaining salvation,¹⁴³ Paul vigorously affirms the supremacy of Jesus as risen and exalted Lord and the believer’s complete and secure incorporation in him.¹⁴⁴ Against the heretics’ syncretistic use of Jewish circumcision as part of initiation procedures,¹⁴⁵ Paul strikingly makes a counterclaim that compares Christian baptism with circumcision, but Paul delicately phrases his analogy by describing baptism as a circumcision made without human hands. “In him you were also circumcised, in the putting off of the sinful nature, not with a circumcision done by the hands of men, but with the circumcision done by Christ” (Colossians 2:11). The qualification of “not done by the hands of men” (*acheiropoieta*; cf. Mark 14:58; 2 Corinthians 5:1) shows that the believer’s circumcision is not literal but of the heart (cf. Deuteronomy 10:16; 30:6; Jeremiah 4:4; 9:26; Ezekiel 44:7, 9; Romans 2:28, 29; Philippians 3:3). Christ himself performs this cutting away of “the sinful nature” (*tou somatos tes sarkos*, “the body of flesh”),¹⁴⁶ and he performs this spiritual surgery at baptism (*en to baptismo*, v. 12). Baptism is the time when Christ circumcises the old nature and God resurrects the new creature.

In the Greek text of the passage, Paul nicely signals this connection by balancing the clause “having been buried with him in baptism” with his double use of the phrase “in whom also.”

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*In whom also ye were circumcised,
with a spiritual circumcision,
by cutting off the carnal person,
by the circumcision [worked by] Christ;*

Having been buried together with him in baptism;

*In whom also ye were raised,
through faith,
in the working of God,
who raised him from the dead.*

This grammatical structure indicates that the action of the aorist participle *suntaphentes* (“having been buried”) should be taken as *coincident in time* with the actions of the two main verbs, *perietmethete*, “you were circumcised,” and *sunegerthete*, “you were raised.”¹⁴⁷ God and Christ worked a “cutting off,” and believers at Colossae received this “cutting off” at baptism. The phrase “the working of God” (*tes energieas tou theou*) denotes the activity of God, and the phrase “through faith” (*dia tes pisteos*) indicates the role of the believer in receiving. Baptism is thus “the grave of the old man, and the birth of the new.”¹⁴⁸ But it is only so through faith in the supreme operation of God’s power—the resurrection of Christ. The ordinance of baptism derives its efficacy “not from the water but from the saving act of Christ and the regenerating work of the Holy Spirit.”¹⁴⁹ And Paul highlights baptism as something that belonged to the Colossians’ *past* experience (i.e., the verbs used are all aorists in the Greek text). In this way Paul urges the Colossians to recall or remember their baptism. He wants them to know that God made obsolete any syncretistic attempt to achieve salvation through fleshly circumcision. God and Christ had given to them a far better circumcision at their baptism—a circumcision of the heart performed without human hands—the spiritual operation of the risen Christ.

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D. BAPTISM AS SALVATION FROM SUFFERING THROUGH THE RESURRECTION

In writing to Christians of various provinces in Asia Minor (1 Peter 1:1), Peter addresses the problem of suffering and especially suffering for doing what is right and good (see 3:13-17; cf. 1:6; 4:12-19; 5:9).¹⁵⁰ Peter himself is probably in Rome at the time of writing (see 5:13, “Babylon” as a cryptogram for Rome), and either he had seen with his own eyes or had heard eyewitness reports of what had happened there. Ernest Best writes, “When Rome was burned (A.D. 64), Nero persecuted the Christians in order to divert suspicion from himself; it was a ludicrous charge, but the Christians in Rome suffered greatly.”¹⁵¹ The Roman annalist Tacitus describes some of the events in the following way:

First, Nero had self-acknowledged Christians arrested. Then, on their information, large numbers of others were condemned—not so much for incendiarism as for their anti-social tendencies.¹⁵² Their deaths were made farcical. Dressed in wild animals’ skins, they were torn to pieces by dogs, or crucified, or made into torches to be ignited after dark as substitutes for daylight. Nero provided his gardens for the spectacle, and exhibited displays in the circus, at which he mingled with the crowd—or stood in a chariot, dressed as a charioteer. Despite their guilt as Christians, and the ruthless punishment it deserved, the victims were pitied. For it was felt that they were being sacrificed to one man’s brutality rather than to the national interest.¹⁵³

It is true that the experience of Christians in Rome should not be transferred uncritically to the situation of believers in Asia Minor at a later time. But after the Neronian conflagration, Peter probably knew what to expect!¹⁵⁴

The apostle writes to encourage believers to stand firm in their faith (see 5:12), because the persecution they faced would only be temporary. “Who is there to harm you?” he questions (*Revised Standard Version*, 3:13). Who can corrupt you? Who will cause you to lose your inheritance? Who can destroy your life in Christ? The obvious answer is, “No one can!” (cf. Romans 8:31ff.). If you suffer because you have become a Christian, God’s blessing rests upon

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you (cf. Matthew 5:3ff.; Luke 6:22). “Do not fear what they fear; do not be frightened” (3:14).¹⁵⁵

“In your hearts reverence Christ as Lord” (*Revised Standard Version*, 3:15). Regard Christ (not Caesar) as holy, and do not fear those persecuting you. Fear the Lord (cf. Matthew 10:28)! If unbelievers bring you before the Roman tribunal, or if they accuse you privately, be ready to make a reasoned defense rather than condemning or accusing in return (cf. 2:23; 3:9). “Keep your conscience clear,” and put the accusations of the pagans to rest by your good behavior (3:16), because “it is better to suffer for doing right, if that should be God’s will, than for doing wrong” (*Revised Standard Version*, 3:17; cf. 2:20).

At this point in his hortatory argument,¹⁵⁶ Peter introduces the example and victory of Christ (3:18-22).¹⁵⁷ He shows to these beleaguered saints the triumph of Jesus over all opposing powers. “This triumph began in his redeeming death, was established through his resurrection, and is now effective through his ascension and sitting at God’s right hand.”¹⁵⁸ Christ died (v. 18); Christ was raised (vv. 19-21); Christ ascended and now he reigns (v. 22)! Such a proclamation spoke powerfully to the situation of these persecuted Christians.¹⁵⁹ Peter reminds the believers in Asia Minor that the evil powers and the hostile forces they might encounter had been defeated already by the victory of their Lord and Master.

The death of Christ. “Christ died *for sins*,” affirms Peter (v. 18). His was a redemptive death. His sacrifice was “*once for all*.” It was a decisive and complete victory. No more sacrifice for sins was necessary. He also died a substitutionary death for *guilty ones*. His death was “the righteous one *on behalf of the unrighteous ones*” (*dikaios huper adikon*; cf. 1:19; 2:22). Notice carefully the double meaning of Peter’s focus on the *death* of Jesus. His readers face possible torture, estrangement from family, homelessness, and even death. They struggle with

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terrible experiences of suffering, especially suffering brought about by serving a crucified Lord. So when Peter emphasizes the death of Jesus, the burning question seems to be, “Why? Why did he do this?” But this question cannot be far removed from their own negative experience. It is really two questions in one: “Why did *he* do this; why must *I* go through this?” Peter has a ready answer that highlights the prior question—Christ died “so that you might be led to God” (*hina humas prosagage to theo*). And the answer is not unrelated to the latter question. Peter is saying as well, “It is for this faith in Christ who died for you that you too are called to suffer. It’s not an optional extra; it’s the only way of salvation, the only way to God; but it’s worth the cost!”¹⁶⁰

The resurrection of Christ. The believer’s suffering possesses value, since in Christ the negative aspects of suffering are revolutionized radically. What appear to be wounds of defeat inflicted by the world become marks of glory borne by the disciple (see Galatians 6:14, 17). Such can be true because “the apparent defeat of death was for Jesus the beginning of [his] victory.”¹⁶¹ For Jesus, death led to his resurrection, his triumph. “God raised him up again, putting an end to the agony of death, since it was impossible for him to be held in its power” (*New American Standard Bible*, Acts 2:24). Even though “he was put to death in the flesh, (God) made him alive in the spirit” (cf. Romans 1:3f.; 1 Timothy 3:16). In the words of a favorite hymn, “death could not keep its prey, he tore the bars away.”¹⁶²

Moreover, in his *resurrected state* (“in which also,” *en ho kai*),¹⁶³ Jesus went and preached to the spirits in prison (v. 19; cf. Jude 6; 2 Peter 2:4).¹⁶⁴ While a myriad of interpretations of verse 19 have been suggested,¹⁶⁵ it seems best to view this preaching of Jesus as a post-resurrection *proclamation or announcement*¹⁶⁶ of his victory over sin, over death, over all evil, and over all hostile spiritual powers (cf. Colossians 2:15). To defeated powers in

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“prison” awaiting judgment, Christ declared his conquest. R. T. France paraphrases, “In the triumph of his resurrection he went to the fallen angels awaiting judgment in their place of confinement, and proclaimed to them the victory won by his redeeming death.”¹⁶⁷ Perhaps Jesus told them, “I am the Living One; I was dead, and behold I am alive for ever and ever! I hold the keys of death and Hades” (Revelation 1:18). This message of Christ’s proclamation of victory would assure Peter’s suffering Christian audience that evil spiritual powers influencing their pagan opponents had been defeated. In effect, he says, “Even the most wicked powers had to recognize the authority of the risen Jesus. So whatever the forces against you, they are not his equal. Do not fear!”¹⁶⁸

The antitype baptism. Peter refers to the “spirits” of Noah’s time to embolden the Christians in Asia Minor. Similarly, he brings up the flood and God’s salvation of Noah for further reassurance. It is true “God waited patiently in the days of Noah while the ark was being built” (v. 20). God is patient with humans, but judgment will come (cf. 2 Peter 3:8ff.). Proof that God’s judgment did come in the days of Noah is that *few* were saved (only *okto psuchai*, “eight souls”) from the flood. These persecuted believers, France notes,

. . . must have been painfully conscious of their small numbers and relative feebleness compared to the pagan majority among whom they lived. But Noah and his crew were an even smaller minority: only eight out of the whole wicked population of the world. Yet they were saved, and the world destroyed.¹⁶⁹

These eight souls *were saved through water (diesothesan di’ hudatos)*.¹⁷⁰ The flood of waters separated those who were rescued from those who were destroyed, so the waters became judgment for the unbelievers and salvation for the believers. Best notes, “What is to unbelievers their judgment is to believers their hope and trust.”¹⁷¹ The Christians in Asia Minor, like Noah,

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had experienced salvation *by means of* water (instrumental sense).¹⁷² Peter’s transition from water of the flood to Christian baptism is entirely natural. So he adds, “Which [water] now saves even you, the antitype baptism” (*ho kai humas antitupon nun sodzei baptisma*, v. 21).¹⁷³

The *antitype* that Peter forcefully identifies is baptism. France accurately describes the Bible’s use of type/antitype when he says, “God works according to a regular pattern, so that what he has done in the past, as recorded in the Old Testament, can be expected to find its counterpart in his work in the decisive period of the New Testament.”¹⁷⁴ Just as Noah and his family were saved through water (i.e., the type), Peter’s readers are saved by the watery experience of Christian baptism (i.e., the antitype). The confidence of Peter to fellow believers in Asia Minor is that “baptism now saves you.” So “any view of baptism which finds it a rather embarrassing ceremonial extra, irrelevant to Christian salvation,” France asserts, “is not doing justice to [this] New Testament teaching.”¹⁷⁵

But Peter is careful to qualify his statement, lest anyone accuse him of a “magical” view of baptism. And he answers the question, “*How* does baptism save?” Baptism saves “not [by] the removal of dirt from the body, but [by] the pledge of a good conscience toward God.” The outer act of washing in baptism does not bring salvation in and of itself. Baptism is not a matter of washing away ritual uncleanness (i.e., like the Jewish ritual washings). The outer washing saves because it represents the proper inner response (i.e., the submission of the soul to God for cleansing). Baptism is a transaction with God concerning the *conscience* (*suneideseos agathes eperotema eis theon*, “an appeal to God for a clear conscience,” *Revised Standard Version*). Baptism is a pledge, a contract, an undertaking.¹⁷⁶ In baptism, the believer commits his or her life to God and to Jesus as Lord. Baptism thereby functions as a pledge to God to maintain a

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good conscience by honoring Jesus in one’s life (cf. Acts 8:37; Romans 10:9; 1 Timothy 6:12).

But this believer’s pledge (or prayer) has saving relevance only because of the resurrection of Jesus.

Baptism saves “by the resurrection of Jesus Christ” (*di’ anastaseos Iesou Christou*). This is Peter’s answer to the *why* of salvation via Christian baptism. This is also the reason why Peter can say “baptism also *now* saves you.” The verb is in the present tense (*sodzei*). Because of the victory over the powers of death by the risen Christ, not only were the Christians of Asia Minor saved at the occasion of their baptism, even now they are being saved from persecution through hope in his resurrection, a hope that exists because of their union with Christ effected by baptism. Baptism is for them God’s ark of safety from the floods of persecution through the power of Christ’s resurrection. And it is a refuge of salvation past, present, and future. This is marvelous encouragement for these believers. As France observes,

Peter reminds [them] of what their baptism means. It marks them out as God’s chosen few who, like Noah, will be saved though all around mock them and perish. Their baptismal pledge commits them to unswerving loyalty to God whatever the consequences. And their baptism is a symbol of their being united with the risen Christ, who in his resurrection has triumphed over all the powers of evil [v. 21]. It is a reminder, in fact, of all that they stand for, and of the strength in which they stand, the victory of the risen Christ.¹⁷⁷

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ADDENDUM A: THE TWELVE OR THE ONE HUNDRED TWENTY?

First, limiting the outpouring of the Spirit in Acts 2 to the twelve apostles only seems to labor under the conviction that “baptism in the Holy Spirit” is a special measure or bestowal of the Spirit intended only for the apostles and empowering them to work miracles, speak in tongues, and teach and write with inspiration. But the “baptizing with the Holy Spirit” promised by Jesus is viewed better as the general outpouring of God’s Spirit that the church received at Pentecost. The Spirit then became available for everyone God calls through the gospel (i.e., accepts the gift of the Holy Spirit at baptism). This baptism is not limited to a select few. It is strongly associated throughout the New Testament with the rite of water baptism, and it is available to all who will receive. The bestowal of the Spirit is administered by Jesus on the occasion of the recipient’s water baptism. It did not take place before Pentecost. It does not necessarily convey the power to perform miracles, since the apostles had performed miracles before this promise came. It does not carry with it the promise of inspiration. It does not necessarily involve the speaking in tongues, although this did occur in certain situations. The idea of the miraculous as bound up with the gift of the Spirit, the “baptism of the Spirit,” is not justifiable by New Testament evidence. The baptism is not a mere clothing with the Spirit (for example, power from on high). Power is involved, but a distinction exists between the gift of the Spirit himself and the power given by the Spirit (see 1 Corinthians 12:11). It is improper to confuse the power given by the Spirit with the gift of the Spirit himself. See Richard Rogers, *The Holy Spirit of God*, 18ff. Cf. Addendum B.

Second, the use of “all” (Acts 2:1, 4) seems to include the entire group of disciples, the 120.

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Third, Luke is careful to preserve the special role of the twelve (see 1:2, 13; 2:14), but he does so without excluding others (see 2:14-15). The special role of the twelve is not dependent on the Spirit’s baptism.

Fourth, if the 120 did not receive the Spirit at this time, then when? Acts 2:41 seems to indicate only those who “received the word” of Peter were baptized (and received the Holy Spirit). The 120 already had received the word; they were part of those “numbered among us” (Acts 1:17). The 120 (cf. the seventy Jesus sent out) comprise a group that included “men who have accompanied us during all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us, beginning from the baptism of John until the day when he was taken up from us—one of these men must become with us a witness to his resurrection” (*Revised Standard Version*, vv. 21-22; cf. 1 Corinthians 15:6, “five hundred brethren”). That the disciples had a choice between Justus and Matthias, evidently selected from a larger number of candidates, would indicate a broader group than the twelve. So the Spirit’s falling on all these who shared in Jesus’ ministry from the beginning of John’s baptism to his resurrection is not at all surprising.

Fifth, identification of those speaking in tongues as Galileans (2:4, 7) does not necessarily restrict the number to the twelve. Jesus spent the largest portion of his ministry in Galilee, and this is where he had the greatest following. This is especially true concerning his immediate, intimate disciples (which seems true also of the 120). See Matthew 28:7, 10, 16, 17 and the emphasis on the eleven but not an omission of a larger number. Compare also Mark 16:7; Luke 24:6; and Luke 24:33 (“the eleven and those who were with them” and the promise to this larger group in vv. 44ff.). In John 20:19, 20, 24, 26, 30, the number of the “disciples” is not to be restricted to the eleven.

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ADDENDUM B: BAPTISM AND THE GIFT OF THE HOLY SPIRIT (by Jack Cottrell)

1. The fact that baptism is the point of time when regeneration occurs can be explained only in connection with the teaching that the gift of the Holy Spirit is received at baptism.
 - a. The Holy Spirit is the life-giver: John 6:63; 7:37-39; Romans 8:2, 6, 11, 13; 1 Corinthians 15:45; 2 Corinthians 3:6; Galatians 6:8.
 - b. “The gift of life is prominently ascribed to the Spirit. . . . Whatever vitality man possesses is itself the gift of the Spirit of God” (G. Hendry, *The Holy Spirit in Christian Theology*).
2. It is characteristic of many religious groups to separate baptism and the gift of the Holy Spirit.
 - a. But New Testament passages connect baptism with the gift of the Holy Spirit. See Acts 2:38-39; John 3:5; Titus 3:5; 1 Corinthians 6:11.
 - b. See also the following passages: Acts 3:9; 5:31-32; 9:12, 17-18; 19:2-3; 1 Corinthians 12:13; Colossians 2:12 compared with Romans 8:11; Ephesians 1:13 compared with Acts 18:8.
 - c. See also the connection between joy/rejoicing and the Holy Spirit in Acts 8:39; 13:52; 16:34; Romans 14:17; 15:13; Galatians 5:22.
3. The entrance of the Holy Spirit is a seal upon our hearts. See 2 Corinthians 1:22; Ephesians 1:13.
4. Is there any special terminology used for the different aspects of the Spirit’s working? This does not seem to be the case. See chart below.

NEW TESTAMENT TERMINOLOGY REGARDING THE GIFT OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

1. *Baptism in* the Holy Spirit: Mark 1:8; Matthew 3:11; Luke 3:16; John 1:33; Acts 1:4-5; 11:16; 1 Corinthians 6:11; 12:13.
2. *Pouring out* of the Holy Spirit: Acts 2:17, 18; 2:33; 10:45; Titus 3:5-6.
3. *Gift / Giving* of the Holy Spirit: John 4:10, 14; 7:39; 2 Corinthians 1:22; Acts 2:38; 5:32; 8:18; 10:45; 11:17; 15:8.
4. *Receiving* the Holy Spirit: John 7:39; Romans 8:15; Galatians 3:2, 14; Acts 2:38; 8:15, 17, 19; 10:47; 19:2.
5. Other
 - a. *Came upon*, Acts 1:8; 19:6
 - b. *Fell upon*, Acts 8:16; 10:44; 11:15
 - c. *Drink / Give to Drink / Partake*, John 4:14; 7:37; Hebrews 6:4 (see Ephesians 3:6), 1 Corinthians 12:13
 - d. *Sent forth*, Galatians 4:6
 - e. *Sealed with*, Ephesians 1:13; 4:30; 2 Corinthians 1:22
 - f. *Have from God*, 1 Corinthians 6:19 (see Acts 3:19)

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ADDENDUM C: BAPTISM & FAITH (by Jack Cottrell)¹⁷⁸

<u>God's Gift</u>	<u>Promised to Faith</u>	<u>Connected with Baptism</u>
Forgiveness of sins	1 John 1:9; Acts 15:9	Acts 2:38; 22:16
Union with Christ	Ephesians 3:18 Galatians 2:20 Colossians 2:12	Galatians 3:26 Colossians 2:12 Romans 6:1-11
Possession of Spirit	Galatians 3:2, 14	Acts 2:38; Titus 3:5
Church Membership	Acts 5:14; 4:32 Galatians 6:10	1 Corinthians 12:13 Galatians 3:27ff.
Inherit Kingdom	John 3:14; Mark 10:15	John 3:5
Justified / Sanctified	Romans, chapters 3–5	1 Corinthians 6:11
Sonship	Galatians 3:26	Galatians 3:26-27
Holy Living	Philippians 3:8-11	Colossians 3:1ff.

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ADDENDUM D: LAYING ON OF HANDS IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

<u>Reference</u>	<u>By Whom</u>	<u>On Whom</u>	<u>Purpose</u>
Mt. 19:13 (NIV) (cf. Mk. 10:16)	Jesus	Little children	“To pray for them”
Mk. 5:23 (cf. 1:41)	Jesus	Jairus’ daughter	Healing
Mk. 6:5	Jesus	A few sick people	Healing
Mk. 7:32	Jesus	A deaf man	Healing
Mk. 8:23	Jesus	A blind man	Healing
Mk. 16:18 (?)	Disciples	Sick people	Healing
Lk. 4:40	Jesus	Sick; diseased	Healing
Lk. 13:13	Jesus	Crippled woman	Healing
Acts 6:6	Apostles	Seven men, full of faith & the Holy Spirit	Appointment to ministry; connected with prayer
Acts 8:17	Peter & John	Samaritans	After baptism, to impart the Holy Spirit
Acts 9:17	Ananias	Saul	Before baptism, to bless or heal (?)
Acts 13:3	Church leaders; whole church (?)	Barnabas & Saul	To set apart for work, v. 2; with prayer & fasting
Acts 19:6	Paul	Disciples at Ephesus	To confer the Holy Spirit; at baptism? after?
Acts 28:8	Paul	Publius’ father	Healing, with prayer
1 Timothy 4:14	Presbytery	Timothy	“Gift” (<i>charismatos</i>) given “through” (<i>dia</i>) prophecy “with” (<i>meta</i>) laying on of hands; reference to extraordinary gift (?)
1 Timothy 5:22	Timothy	Others; someone	To bless, approve (?)
2 Timothy 1:6	Paul	Timothy	“Gift” (<i>charisma</i>) of God” (cf. Hebrews 6:2); reference to Holy Spirit who came upon Timothy at his baptism (?)

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ADDENDUM E: THE WORLD/THE BODY OF CHRIST & DEATH/LIFE

THE WORLD

“god of this world”
Satan, demons, etc.

old human

vices

oppositions (kinship,
roles, status)

instruction

unclothing /
dying

descending

washing /
burial /
baptism

DEATH

- v. 2, died to sin
- v. 3, baptized into death
- v. 4, buried into death
- v. 5, united with him in death
- v. 6, old self crucified;
body of sin destroyed
- v. 7, has died
- v. 8, died with Christ
- v. 9,

- v. 10, death he died;
died to sin;
once for all
- v. 11, dead to sin
- v. 13, wickedness
etc.

THE BODY OF CHRIST

one God, one Lord
further instruction

new human
(image of Christ)

virtues

unity (brothers and sisters,
children of God)

gift of Spirit
“Abba!” “Kyrios Iesus!”

enthronement?
anointing?

reclipping /
revivification

ascending

—from Meeks, *First Urban Christians*, 156

LIFE

how can we live in it

just as . . . we too . . . new life
will be in his resurrection
no longer slaves to sin

freed from sin
will live with him
Christ raised from the dead;
cannot die again;
death no longer has dominion
life he lives;
lives to God

alive to God
righteousness

—from Paul’s Letter to the Romans, chapter 6

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9. Elmer L. Towns, *The Complete Book of Church Growth* (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale, 1981), 264.
10. Will Metzger, *Tell the Truth* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1981), 63.
11. See Beasley-Murray, *Baptism*, 1-31.
12. Acts 2:38; 8:16; 10:48; 19:5; compare Acts 18:12; 22:16; contrast 1 Corinthians 1:13, 15.
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14. See Wayne A. Meeks, *The First Urban Christians: The Social World of the Apostle Paul* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1983), 150-157. For the historical development of baptism as initiation, see Cheslyn Johns, Geoffrey Wainwright, Edward Yarnold, eds., *The Study of Liturgy* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1978), 79-146.
15. “John’s baptism is a preparation for the messianic baptism; it is the initiatory rite which brings together the messianic people.” K. W. Noakes, “Initiation: From New Testament Times to St. Cyprian,” in Johns, Wainwright, Yarnold, eds., *The Study of Liturgy*, 81.

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16. William L. Lane, *The Gospel according to Mark* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1974), 49. Compare W. S. LaSor’s unconvincing denial of the newness of John’s work, “Discovering What Jewish Miqva’ot Can Tell Us About Christian Baptism,” *Biblical Archaeology Review* XIII, no. 1 (January-February 1987), 58-59.

17. Clearly Apollos, or someone closely associated with him, administered the baptism of John to twelve men at Ephesus (Acts 18:25; 19:3), so perhaps an earlier precedent for this practice existed as was the case with the disciples of Jesus (see John 3:22; 4:1-2).

18. Compare Matthew 26:28; Luke 24:47; and Acts 2:38. See also Herwart Vorlander, “Forgiveness,” *The New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology*, gen. ed. Colin Brown (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1975), Vol. 1, 697-703.

19. D. A. Carson, “Matthew,” *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary*, gen. ed. Frank E. Gaebelein (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1984), Vol. 8, 99.

20. See Luke 20:1ff. and the parallels in Matthew 21:23ff.; Mark 11:27ff.

21. Jack Finegan, *The Archeology of the New Testament* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1969), 8-10.

22. The infinite of purpose is used by Matthew, *tou baptisthenai hup’ autou*. On its use, see Ernest De Witt Burton, *Syntax of the Moods and Tenses in New Testament Greek* (1900; rpt., Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel, 1976), 146; F. Blass and A. Debrunner, *A Greek Grammar of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, trans. Robert W. Funk (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1961), 197.

23. Compare a fragment from the Gospel of the Hebrews preserved by Jerome (*Against Pelagius* iii.2): “Behold the mother of the Lord and his brethren said to him, John the Baptist baptizes for the remission of sins; Let us go and be baptized by him. But he said to them, What sin have I committed that I should go and be baptized by him?” Cited in Alfred Plummer, *An Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel according to St. Matthew* (rpt., Minneapolis, MN: James Family Christian Publishers, n.d.), 31.

24. This is a mild imperative, *aphes arti*, by which Jesus extends an invitation to John to allow him to be baptized. See Blass and Debrunner, *Greek Grammar*, 183-184.

25. Jack P. Lewis, *The Gospel according to Matthew: Part I* (Austin, TX: Sweet, 1976), 65.

26. Compare Oscar Cullmann’s interpretation, “At the moment of his baptism he receives the commission to undertake the role of the suffering servant of God, who takes on himself the sins of his people. Other Jews come to Jordan to be baptized by John for their *own* sins. Jesus, on the contrary . . . is baptised for [the sins] of the whole people. . . . This means that Jesus is baptised in view of his death, which effects forgiveness of sins for all men. For this reason Jesus must unite himself in solidarity with his whole people, and go down himself to Jordan, that ‘all

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righteousness might be fulfilled.’ . . . The baptism of Jesus is related to *dikaiosune*, not only his own but also that of the whole people.” *Baptism in the New Testament*, trans. J. K. S. Reid (Philadelphia, PA: Westminster, 1950), 18.

27. “Like John himself, his baptism has no independent significance; both exist in order to bear witness to Christ (v. 7), who alone truly takes away sin and confers the Spirit as well.” Barrett, *Gospel according to St. John*, 177. Notice the forceful *all’ hina . . . dia touto*.

28. *Emeinen ep’ auton*, e.g., “the Spirit abides permanently upon Jesus; the baptism was not a passing moment of inspiration.” *Ibid.*, 178.

29. *Ibid.*

30. Consistent use of the future tense, *autos baptisei humas en pneumati hagio* (Mark 1:8; see Matthew 3:11; Luke 3:16; and Acts 1:5), is very important to the “already but not yet” schema.

31. Compare the testimony of the synoptic gospels to the imprisonment of John by Herod Antipas shortly after the baptism of Jesus in Matthew 4:12; Mark 1:14; and Luke 3:19-20.

32. “The baptism of the Lord inaugurated his ministry; the descent of the Spirit which closely followed his baptism meant that the new covenant had been entered upon, a new epoch begun.” K. W. Noakes, “Initiation: From New Testament Times to St. Cyprian,” in Johns, Wainwright, Yarnold, eds., *The Study of Liturgy*, 81.

33. “John *also* was baptizing,” *en de kai ho Ioannes baptidzon*, John 3:23. Given the context, verse 26 could be paraphrased, “he is baptizing *too*,” *ide houtos baptidzei*.

34. John 4:1 makes clear the difference that captured the Pharisees attention. It was not the baptizing itself; rather it was *hoti Iesous pleionas mathetas poiei kai baptidzei e Ioannes* (“that Jesus made and baptized more disciples than John,” *King James Version*).

35. Two other sayings, Matthew 28:19 and Mark 16:16, will be treated later.

36. Alfred Plummer, *The Gospel according to St. Mark* (1914; rpt., Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1982), 247.

37. See also Psalm 124:3-4. Noteworthy is the reading *he anomia me baptidzei* (“lawlessness overwhelms me”) in the Septuagint at Isaiah 21:4 and Isaiah’s agitation at the vision (vv. 3-4) even though Babylon’s destruction is something he has longed for. Compare the similar attitude of Jesus to his *cup*, especially in the garden of Gethsemane.

38. See F. F. Bruce, *The Hard Sayings of Jesus* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1983), 128.

39. Cullmann, *Baptism*, 10.

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40. The connection between this outpouring of the Spirit and the Spirit-baptism promised by Jesus is unmistakable. See Frederick Dale Bruner, *A Theology of the Holy Spirit* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1970), 155-165. It seems plausible that this would be the point at which the 120 disciples received the Spirit in a special, extraordinary way like the Samaritans and the Gentiles. For this reason, the 120 did not need Christian baptism; they already had the Spirit from their Pentecostal experience, and they already had forgiveness of sins from John’s baptism. See Acts 1:15 and Addendum A at the end.

41. Cullmann, *Baptism*, 10, 22.

42. Bruner, *Theology of the Holy Spirit*, 168.

43. The Greek phrase—*metanoesate kai baptistheto*—has two aorist imperatives.

44. Bruner, *Theology of the Holy Spirit*, 168.

45. Luke’s favorite word in Acts 2:17, 18, and 33 is *ekcheo* (“pour out”) taken from the Septuagint (Joel 3:1, 2).

46. “With *sothete* cf. *sothesetai* [‘you will be saved’], quoted from Joel in verse 21. In both places the word applies to a ‘remnant’ (cf. Joel ii.32) which would be delivered from the judgment destined to overtake the mass of the people.” F. F. Bruce, *The Acts of the Apostles* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1951), 99. Also, the verb is passive, and this emphasizes God’s initiative rather than man’s initiative.

47. Gareth L. Reese, *New Testament History: A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Book of Acts* (Joplin, MO: College Press, 1976), 80.

48. In verse 41 those who were baptized were added (*prosetethesan*). In verse 47 the Lord added (*prosetitheis*) those who were being saved. The connection between baptism, salvation, and the Lord’s work of adding to the body of believers is plain.

49. Bruner, *Theology of the Holy Spirit*, 167.

50. “The imperatives [*baptisai kai apolousai*] are in the middle voice: ‘get yourself baptized and get your sins washed away.’” F. F. Bruce, *Acts*, 403.

51. “Paul is to get up, act straightaway, and submit to baptism.” I. Howard Marshall, *The Acts of the Apostles*, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries, gen. ed. R. V. G. Tasker (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1980), 357.

52. Alan Richardson, *An Introduction to the Theology of the New Testament* (London, England: SCM, 1958), 347-348. See Beasley-Murray’s critique, “The view of Richardson, that faith without baptism is ‘Christian Science’ or ‘docetism’, is an unhappy exaggeration,” *Baptism*, 303. But compare Addendum C on baptism and faith at the end the chapter.

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53. Ridderbos observes, "Baptism and faith are both means to the appropriation of the content of the gospel. However, while faith according to its nature is an act of man, baptism according to its nature is an activity of God and on the part of God. That which the believer appropriates to himself on the proclamation of the gospel God promises and bestows on him in baptism. One can therefore speak of a sequential order only in part. For although baptism presupposes faith, the place of faith is not only prior to baptism, but in and after baptism as well. Baptism, however, according to its essence is once for all, because it marks the transition from the mode of existence of the old man to that of the new. . . . For this reason faith is not without baptism, just as baptism is not without faith." *Paul*, 412.

54. Marshall, *Acts*, 274.

55. C. F. D. Moule, *An Idiom Book of New Testament Greek*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press, 1959), 13.

56. See S. S. Smalley, "Seal," *The New Bible Dictionary*, ed. J. D. Douglas (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1962), 1155-1156, and the bibliography on baptism and the Spirit as a seal. Compare Ridderbos, *Paul*, 399-400. See too 2 Corinthians 1:22; Ephesians 1:13; 4:30; Revelation 7:2ff.; 9:4; and 1 John 2:20, 27.

57. Bruner, *Theology of the Holy Spirit*, 206.

58. Marshall, *Acts*, 306.

59. See Burton, *Moods and Tenses*, 64.

60. Notice the parallel role of John's baptism and Christian baptism in the confirmation of belief. The key difference, though, lies in the *object* of that belief.

61. "These men can hardly have been Christians since they had not received the gift of the Spirit; it is safe to say that the NT does not recognize the possibility of being a Christian apart from possession of the Spirit (John 3:5; Acts 11:17; Romans 8:9; 1 Corinthians 12:3; Galatians 3:2; 1 Thessalonians 1:5f.; Titus 3:5; Hebrews 6:4; 1 Peter 1:2; 1 John 3:24; 4:13)." Marshall, *Acts*, 305. See too Michael Green, *I Believe in the Holy Spirit* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1975), 134-136.

62. Green, *I Believe in the Holy Spirit*, 128, 132.

63. Bruce, *Acts*, 354.

64. Beasley-Murray, *Baptism*, 112.

65. On usages and meaning of *onoma* in relation to Jesus, see Hans Bietenhard, "Onoma, etc.," *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, eds. G. Kittel and G. Friedrich (Grand Rapids, MI:

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Eerdmans, 1967), Vol. V, 271ff. See too Grant Osborne, *The Resurrection Narratives: A Redactional Study* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1984), 93-94.

66. Paul’s “laying on of hands” could be just the administration of baptism itself or a symbolic gesture subsequent to baptism indicating the impartation of the Holy Spirit. “This does not mean, however, that the moment of the laying on of hands was thought of as the moment of the imparting of the Holy Spirit. Still less does it mean that the apostolic church considered that baptism in water was not baptism in Holy Spirit at all, and that it was the ceremony of the laying on of hands which was thought of as baptism in Holy Spirit. In the NT the whole baptismal action is a unity which cannot be analysed into its component parts, and it is in the whole action that the Spirit is bestowed.” Richardson, *Introduction to the Theology of the New Testament*, 355. On the blessings associated with “laying on of hands” in the New Testament, see Addendum D at the end of the chapter. Compare also Noakes’ comments, “Initiation,” *The Study of Liturgy*, 87.

67. Marshall, *Acts*, 152. On the Samaritans, see George W. E. Nickelsburg and Michael E. Stone, *Faith and Piety in Early Judaism* (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress, 1983), 13-19; T. H. Gaster, “Samaritans,” *The Interpreter’s Dictionary of the Bible*, ed. G. A. Buttrick (Nashville, TN: Abingdon, 1962), Vol. 4, 190-197; and James D. Purvis, “The Samaritans and Judaism,” *Early Judaism and Its Modern Interpreters*, eds. R. A. Kraft and G. W. E. Nickelsburg (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress, 1986), 81-98.

68. Green, *I Believe in the Holy Spirit*, 136.

69. “The RSV has *a city of Samaria*. The oldest manuscripts have ‘*the city of Samaria*’ which *Good News Bible* paraphrases as ‘the principle city of Samaria’. The possible towns are Sebaste (Herod the Great’s new name for OT Samaria), Shechem, or possibly Gitta, the birthplace of Simon.” Marshall, *Acts*, 154.

70. On the evidential nature of miracles, see Bernard Ramm, *Protestant Christian Evidences* (Chicago, IL: Moody, 1953), 125-145. For a critical discussion of the philosophical problems involved, see Colin Brown, *Miracles and the Critical Mind* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1984). For Luke’s inclusion of the *gunaikes* (“women”) among the believers, see Acts 1:14; 2:17; 5:14; 8:3; 9:2; 16:1, 13; 17:4, 12, 34; 18:2; 21:5; 22:4. In light of rabbinic statements like, “The daughters of the Samaritans are menstruant [e.g., ceremonially unclean] from their cradle” (*Niddah* 4.1, cited by Barrett, *Gospel according to St. John*, 232), Luke’s mention of the women in Samaria is all the more significant.

71. See Reese’s treatment, *New Testament History: Acts*, 322.

72. So J. D. G. Dunn, *Baptism in the Holy Spirit* (London, England: SCM, 1970), 65. But note Marshall’s critique, *Acts*, 156.

73. Bruner, *Theology of the Holy Spirit*, 174.

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74. See vv. 17, 18, 19; cf. 6:6; 9:12, 17; 13:3; 19:6; contrast 4:3; 5:18; 21:27.

75. Richard Rogers, *The Holy Spirit of God* (Lubbock, TX: World Mission Publishing, 1968), 29.

76. R. J. Knowling, “The Acts of the Apostles,” *The Expositor’s Greek Testament*, Vol. II, 216.

77. Marshall, *Acts*, 158.

78. *Ibid.*, 157. Compare G. W. H. Lampe, *The Seal of the Spirit* (London, England: Longmans, 1951), 70-72. But see Green’s critique of Lampe’s view, *I Believe in the Holy Spirit*, 137. Green, though, seems to wrongly argue an either/or case between Lampe’s view and his own.

79. Green, *I Believe in the Holy Spirit*, 138-139. Compare Richard N. Longenecker’s comments, “The Acts of the Apostles,” *Expositor’s Bible Commentary*, gen. ed. F. E. Gaebelein (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1981), Vol. 9, 359-360.

80. Bruner, *Theology of the Holy Spirit*, 175.

81. Knowling, “Acts,” *Expositor’s Greek Testament*, Vol. II, 262.

82. See Bruce, *Acts*, 227; Bruner, *Theology of the Holy Spirit*, 191.

83. On Jewish/Gentile tensions in the early church, see John E. Stambaugh and David L. Balch, *The New Testament in Its Social Environment* (Philadelphia, PA: Westminster, 1986), 46ff.; Rudolph Bultmann, *Primitive Christianity*, trans. R. H. Fuller (Cleveland, OH: World, 1956), 175-179; and T. R. Glover, *The Conflict of Religions in the Early Roman Empire* (1909; rpt., Washington, DC: Canon, 1974), 167-195.

84. Bruner, *Theology of the Holy Spirit*, 193-194.

85. See Cullmann, *Baptism*, 71ff., for his argument that *koluein* (“prevent” or “forbid”; Matthew 3:14; Acts 8:36; 10:47; 11:17) indicates an early baptismal formula in the New Testament. For a critique, see D. A. Carson, “Matthew,” *Expositor’s Bible Commentary*, Vol. 8, 420-421.

86. R. Longenecker, “Acts,” *Expositor’s Bible Commentary*, Vol. 9, 395.

87. Concerning the question of the eunuch’s relationship to Judaism, see Longenecker, “Acts,” *Expositor’s Bible Commentary*, Vol. 9, 363.

88. Knowling, “Acts,” *Expositor’s Greek Testament*, Vol. II, 226. For an older treatment of the mode of baptism, see Alexander Campbell, *Christian Baptism* (rpt., Nashville, TN: McQuiddy, 1913), 85-159; contrast John Murray, *Christian Baptism* (rpt., Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian & Reformed, 1980), 6-30; and G. R. Beasley-Murray, “Baptism, Wash,” *The New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology*, gen. ed. Colin Brown (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan,

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1975), Vol. 1, 143ff. On the image of sprinkling, see Ezekiel 36:25; Zechariah 13:1; and Isaiah 4:4.

89. Marshall’s translation, *Acts*, 165.

90. See the discussion in Bruce M. Metzger, *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament*, 3rd ed. (Stuttgart, Germany: United Bible Society, 1971), 360-361.

91. See Luke 24:44ff., and Grant Osborne’s treatment, *Resurrection Narratives*, 129-136. But Osborne does not seem to place enough emphasis on the role of “suffering” in Luke’s apostolic commission. Compare Matthew 16:21; 17:12; Mark 8:31; 9:12; Luke 9:22; 17:25; 22:15; 24:26, 46; and Acts 1:3; 3:18; 17:3.

92. Note Cullmann’s assessment, “Most theologians today agree that the distinctive element in the baptismal act of the primitive church at first consisted in the relation of that act to the individual who now dies and rises again with Christ (Romans 6:3). On the other hand, the explanations diverge widely as soon as the attempt is made to define more closely the nature of that relation and thus to establish what it is in the baptism of an individual that effects his participation in Christ’s death and resurrection,” *Baptism*, 23. Compare Ridderbos’ discussion of what happens in baptism and his critique of different views, *Paul*, 406ff.

93. For example, see John 20:23; compare Matthew 16:19; 18:18.

94. Carson, “Matthew,” *Expositor’s Bible Commentary*, Vol. 8, 597.

95. Alan Hugh McNeile, *The Gospel according to St. Matthew* (1915; rpt., Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1980), 435-436.

96. Plummer, *Gospel according to St. Matthew*, 435.

97. Osborne, *Resurrection Narratives*, 93.

98. Plummer, *Gospel according to St. Matthew*, 433. Compare Noakes’ comment, “If we look the writings of the NT we shall find much about the significance of baptism but little liturgical detail,” “Initiation,” *The Study of Liturgy*, 80.

99. Note the strong affirmation of Mark 16:16, *ho pisteusas kai baptistheis sothesetai* (“he who believes and is baptized will be saved,” *Revised Standard Version*), an early second century scribal gloss, so Metzger, *Textual Commentary*, 125. See Osborne’s fine treatment, *Resurrection Narratives*, 58-65.

100. Ridderbos, *Paul*, 409-410.

101. Meeks, *First Urban Christians*, 154. Compare Abraham J. Malherbe, *Social Aspects of Early Christianity*, 2nd ed. (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress, 1983), 23-24. See also Nils Alstrup Dahl,

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“Anamnesis: Memory and Commemoration in Early Christianity,” *Jesus in the Memory of the Early Church* (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg, 1976), 11-29.

102. While the various terms for “memory” and “remembrance” are not used in conjunction with baptism in the New Testament (see K. H. Bartels, “Remember, Remembrance,” *The New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology*, Vol. 3, 230-247), the concept is present (for example, Paul’s use of *agnoeite*, “don’t you know,” in Romans 6:3).

103. Noakes, “Initiation,” *The Study of Liturgy*, 82.

104. C. E. B. Cranfield, *The Epistle to the Romans*, The International Critical Commentary, gen. eds., J. A. Emerton and C. E. B. Cranfield (rpt., Edinburgh, Scotland: T. & T. Clark, 1982), Vol. I, 297.

105. It seems pointless to wrangle over the exact meaning of “baptized into his death” whether the phrase indicates an ethical, sacramental, eschatological, or judicial significance. Beasley-Murray surveys three of a “veritable Babel of voices” on this question and concludes, “Each of these three views has essential truth and none is complete in isolation from the rest.” *Baptism*, 130-132.

106. *Ibid.*, 133.

107. *Ibid.* Compare the objection of Ridderbos, *Paul*, 402.

108. Beasley-Murray, *Baptism*, 143-144.

109. Meeks, *First Urban Christians*, 155.

110. For a good example, see C. K. Barrett, ed., *The New Testament Background: Selected Documents* (New York, NY: Harper & Row, 1961), 96-100. Compare Glover’s survey of the mystery cults, *Conflict of Religions*, 20ff.

111. Meeks nicely depicts the two nearly symmetrical movements associated with baptism. He says, “The first, characterized by descending action, climaxes with the ‘burial’ in the water; it signifies the separation of the baptized from the outside world. The second, a rising action, marks the integration of the baptized into another world, the sect on one plane, the heavenly reality on another.” *First Urban Christians*, 156-157. In Romans 6 the contrast is not nearly so involved, but a definite life/death antithesis is to be noted. See Addendum E at end of paper.

112. W. D. Davies, *Paul and Rabbinic Judaism*, 4th ed. (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress, 1980), 88.

113. Anders Nygren, *Commentary on Romans*, 3rd ed. (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress, 1975), 233. Contrast Cecil Hook’s overreaction to a sacramental/magical view of baptism: “Baptism symbolizes and confirms the change that the convert has undergone rather than accomplishing the change. . . . Regeneration is a process finalized by baptism instead of being produced by it.”

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"Our Seven Sacraments," *Restoration Review* 28, no. 10 (December 1986), 397-378. Hook unfortunately tends to argue an either/or position by putting too much weight on the parallel between human birth and the new birth and by neglecting the decisive, once for all work of the Spirit at baptism.

114. Cranfield, *Epistle to Romans* (ICC), Vol. I, 303.

115. Compare Colossians 2:12 where Paul uses the aorist tense of both death and resurrection in baptism (*suntaphentes*, "having been buried"; *sunegertete*, "you were raised").

116. E. P. Sanders, *Paul and Palestinian Judaism* (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress, 1977), 449-450, argues that Paul's soteriology involves *only* a future resurrection but has to dismiss Colossians 2:11-13 as not from Paul and a later theological development.

117. Andrew T. Lincoln, *Paradise Now and Not Yet*, Society For New Testament Studies, Monograph Series, gen. ed., R. M. Wilson (Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press, 1981), 122-123.

118. *Ibid.*, 123.

119. See Helmut Koester, *History and Literature of Early Christianity*, Volume Two, Introduction to the New Testament (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress, 1982), 116-120. Compare Lincoln's treatment, *Paradise Now and Not Yet*, 9-11.

120. Lincoln, *Paradise Now and Not Yet*, 11.

121. *Ibid.*

122. *Die Taufe im Urchristentum im Lichte der Neueren Forschungen* (Leipzig, Germany: n.p., 1905), 36, cited by Beasley-Murray, *Baptism*, 151.

123. *Ibid.*

124. See Richardson's fine treatment of these texts, *Introduction to the Theology of the New Testament*, 344-347.

125. *Ibid.*, 346-347. Compare Meeks, *First Urban Christians*, 155-157. Frederick Rendall observes that by this image of clothing, baptism is "likened to spiritual coming of age." Just as the Roman youth exchanges the *toga praetexta* for the *toga virilis* and passes into the rank of citizen, so the Christian at baptism receives the robe of spiritual maturity, a symbol of emancipation from earlier bondage to an outward law. "Hitherto bound to obey definite commandments and fulfill definite duties, the convert is now set free to learn God's will from the inward voice of the Spirit, and discharge the heavier obligations incumbent on a citizen of the heavenly commonwealth under the guidance of an enlightened conscience." "The Epistle To The Galatians," *The Expositor's Greek Testament*, Vol. III, 174.

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126. “It is of the essence of the eucharist that it is *repeated*, whereas baptism *cannot be repeated* for the individual. . . . In baptism, the individual is, for the first time and once for all, set at the point in history where salvation operates—where even now, the death and resurrection of Christ, the forgiveness of sins and the Holy Ghost, are to be efficacious for him. . . . [Furthermore], what happens in the act of baptism is clearly defined, in the decisive Pauline texts 1 Corinthians 12:13 and Galatians 3:27-28, as a setting within the body of Christ. God sets a man within the body of Christ; and *at this moment* therefore the reception of this act on the part of the person baptised consists in nothing else than that he is the passive object of God’s dealing, that he *is really set within* the body of Christ by God.” Cullman, *Baptism*, 29, 30, 31. See also Richardson, *Introduction to the Theology of the New Testament*, 348-349.

127. J. B. Lightfoot, *The Epistle of St. Paul to the Galatians* (rpt., Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1957), 150.

128. Kevin Springer, “Brothers and Sisters in Christ,” *Pastoral Renewal* 8 (February 1984), 84.

129. On the church as the body of Christ, see Ridderbos, *Paul*, 362ff.; Sanders, *Paul and Palestinian Judaism*, 453ff.; and Jerome Murphy-O’Connor, *St. Paul’s Corinth: Texts and Archaeology*, Vol. 6, Good News Studies, ed. R. J. Karris (Wilmington, DE: Michael Glazier, 1983), 165, 167.

130. G. G. Findlay’s translation and emphasis, “St. Paul’s First Epistle To The Corinthians,” *The Expositor’s Greek Testament*, Vol. II, 890.

131. The translation of “by” is to be preferred “on the analogy of 1 Corinthians 6:11, and the immediately preceding references to the Spirit’s agency in the church.” Beasley-Murray, *Baptism*, 167.

132. “The baptism ‘in or by one Spirit’, 1 Corinthians 12:13, is Christian baptism in water.” *Ibid.*, 169.

133. Findlay, “Corinthians,” *Expositor’s Greek Testament*, Vol. II, 890.

134. On *potidzein* (“to give to drink”), compare Isaiah 29:10; 43:20; Joel 3:18; and Psalm 36:8.

135. Sanders, *Paul and Palestinian Judaism*, 457.

136. Paul Althaus, *Die Heilsbedeutung der Taufe* (Gutersloh, Germany: Bertelsmann, 1897), 48, cited by Bruner, *Theology of the Holy Spirit*, 292.

137. *Ibid.*; compare 1 John 2:20; 2:27 where the Spirit is referred to as an “anointing” (Greek *chrisma*).

138. See Richardson, *Introduction to the Theology of the New Testament*, 350-351.

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139. Beasley-Murray, *Baptism*, 170-171.

140. This seems to be the thrust of Paul's disclaimer—“Christ did not send me to baptize, but to preach the gospel” (1 Corinthians 1:17). To see in this statement a minimizing of the significance of baptism is to abuse and misunderstand Paul's sacramental teaching; see Beasley-Murray, *Baptism*, 178ff.

141. *Ibid.*

142. W. F. Flemington, *The New Testament Doctrine of Baptism* (London, England: n.p., 1948), 54, cited by Beasley-Murray, *Baptism*, 181.

143. See Lincoln, *Paradise Now and Not Yet*, 110-118.

144. *Ibid.*, 118-122; compare F. F. Bruce, *Paul: Apostle of the Heart Set Free* (Grand Rapids: MI: Eerdmans, 1977), 417-423.

145. See Stanislas Lyonnet, “Paul's Adversaries In Colossae,” and compare Gunther Bornkamm, “The Heresy Of Colossians,” both in *Conflict at Colossae*, eds. F. O. Francis and W. A. Meeks (rev. ed.; Missoula, MT: Scholars Press, 1975), 123-145, 147-161.

146. On Paul's use of *sarx* (“flesh”), see Davies, *Paul and Rabbinic Judaism*, 18ff.

147. On usages and description of the aorist participle of identical action, see Burton, *Moods and Tenses*, 64ff.

148. J. B. Lightfoot, *Saint Paul's Epistles to the Colossians and to Philemon* (1879; rpt. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1959), 184.

149. F. F. Bruce, *Commentary on the Epistle to the Colossians*, *The New International Commentary on the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1957), 236.

150. See E. G. Selwyn, *The First Epistle of Peter* (London, England: Macmillan, 1946), 78ff.

151. Ernest Best, *1 Peter*, *The New Century Bible Commentary*, gen ed., Matthew Black (rpt., Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1977), 41.

152. The Latin phrase *odio humani generis* could also mean “detested [or] hated of the human race.”

153. Tacitus (15:44), *The Annals of Imperial Rome*, trans. Michael Grant (rev. ed.; New York, NY: Penguin, 1971), 365-366. On the Neronian persecution of Christians, see Bo Reicke, *The New Testament Era*, trans. D. E. Green (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress, 1968), 245-251.

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154. For the development of Roman persecution of Christians, see Philip Schaff, *History of the Christian Church*, Vol. II, Ante-Nicene Christianity, A.D. 100-325 (1910; rpt., Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1979), 31-84. For source documents, see Naphtali Lewis and Meyer Reinhold, *Roman Civilization, Sourcebook II: The Empire* (New York, NY: Harper & Row, 1966), 552-610. For a good treatment of Pliny and the Christians, see Robert L. Wilken, *The Christians as the Romans Saw Them* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1984), 1-30.

155. This is a quote from Isaiah 8 where the prophet is told not to fear the king of Assyria as the Israelites do. “Do not fear what they fear, and do not dread it. The Lord Almighty is the one you are to regard as holy, he is the one you are to fear, he is the one you are to dread” (vv. 12-13).

156. On whether or not 1 Peter is a baptismal treatise, see Beasley-Murray, *Baptism*, 251-258; compare Best, *1 Peter*, 21-27.

157. For an excellent overview, see R. T. France, “Exegesis In Practice: Two Examples,” *New Testament Interpretation*, ed. I. H. Marshall (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1977), 264-278.

158. Ibid.

159. Even if some Christians were not experiencing persecution at the time of Peter’s writing, such would come eventually. See Donald Guthrie, *New Testament Introduction* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1970), 781-784.

160. France, “Exegesis,” *New Testament Interpretation*, 277.

161. Ibid.

162. Robert Lowry, “Low In The Grave He Lay” (1874).

163. See France’s treatment, “Exegesis,” *New Testament Interpretation*, 268-269.

164. “The evidence is more than sufficient to indicate that *ta en phulake pneumata* (‘the spirits in prison’) must be fallen angels who, according to apocalyptic tradition, sinned at the time of Noah and are in custody awaiting their final punishment.” Ibid., 270.

165. See John S. Feinberg, “1 Peter 3:18-20, Ancient Mythology, and the Intermediate State,” *The Westminster Theological Journal* XLVII (Fall 1986), 303-336.

166. The Greek word *kerussein* can mean “to act as herald” or “to utter a proclamation” (so the *New American Standard Bible*).

167. France, “Exegesis,” *New Testament Interpretation*, 277.

168. Ibid.

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169. Ibid.

170. Note the passive voice of the verb. God as always does the saving.

171. Best, *1 Peter*, 147.

172. Ibid.; but see J. H. A. Hart who thinks, "Both local and instrumental meanings of *di'* are contemplated." "The First Epistle General Of Peter," *The Expositor's Greek Testament*, Vol. V, 69. Compare France's ambiguity on the point, "Exegesis," *New Testament Interpretation*, 273.

173. For a brief exegetical discussion and translation, see France, "Exegesis," *New Testament Interpretation*, 273. Surely Beasley-Murray, *Baptism*, 259, is incorrect to minimize the role of water as means of salvation.

174. France, "Exegesis," *New Testament Interpretation*, 273-274.

175. Ibid.

176. Ibid.

177. Ibid.

178. Chart from G. A. Beasley-Murray, *Baptism Today and Tomorrow*, 27-33. "In light of these statements I am compelled to conclude that the understanding of baptism as 'a beautiful and expressive symbol,' *and nothing more*, is irreconcilable with the NT. . . . It is evident that God's gift to baptism and to faith is one: it is salvation in Christ." Ibid., 32, 37. "Baptism and faith are but the outside and the inside of the same thing." Ibid., 33, citing James Denney, *The Death of Christ*, 185.

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