

THE NEW BIRTH EXPERIENCE

On the Day of Pentecost, the Apostle Peter preached the first gospel sermon. As Peter preached that marvelous message, the Holy Ghost pricked the hearts of sinners with conviction, and they cried out, "*Men and brethren, what shall we do?*" (Acts 2:37). In response to their question, Peter, with the endorsement of the other apostles, proclaimed the New Testament plan of salvation:

"Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost. " (Acts 2:38).

This is the original New Testament plan of salvation preached and taught by the apostles. God has never changed His plan of salvation. It is still the same today.

The Keys of the Kingdom

Jesus had given to the Apostle Peter the "*keys of the kingdom*" (Matthew 16:19). Peter was to have the privilege of opening the door of the kingdom to both Jews and Gentiles in the new age. Peter first used the "keys of the kingdom" on the Day of Pentecost, when he preached the gospel to the Jews (Acts 2). At the close of his Pentecostal message, Peter set forth the New Testament plan of salvation. Peter thus opened the door to the kingdom by presenting the terms of salvation by which people can enter into the kingdom of God. Peter used these "keys of the kingdom" again when he preached the gospel to the Gentiles at the house of Cornelius (Acts 10) and presented to them the same bible plan of salvation.

Three Simple Steps

Our salvation must be "*built Upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone*" (Ephesians 2:20). We are saved only by grace through faith in Jesus Christ (Ephesians 2:8). Saving faith in Christ includes obedience to the gospel of Christ as preached by His apostles (Matthew 28:19-20; Luke 24:46-49). If a person wants to be saved from his sins and become a member of the New Testament church, he must obey the original bible plan of salvation as given in Acts 2:38, which consists of three simple steps: **1) repentance, 2) water baptism in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins and 3) receiving the gift of the Holy Ghost.**

Repentance

Sincere, heartfelt repentance is the first step in the plan of salvation. Jesus said, "*Except ye **repent**, ye shall all likewise perish* " (Luke 13:3). Paul declares that *God "commandeth all men everywhere to repent"* (Acts 17:30). The message of repentance is to be preached to all nations. Jesus said that "*repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem* " (Luke 24:47). There can be no experience of true bible salvation without genuine repentance. Repentance must come first.

Turning from Sin to God

Repentance is a *turning away from all sin*. The bible declares, "*He that covereth his sins shall not prosper.- but whoso confesseth and forsaketh them shall have mercy*" (Proverbs 28:13). Godly sorrow for sin is the only motivating force for real *repentance*. "**For godly sorrow worketh repentance to salvation"**(2 Cor.7:10).

Repentance also means *turning to God in faith*, praying for forgiveness and cleansing from all sin. The repentant person confesses to God that he is a sinner and asks for forgiveness. In turn, God promises to forgive and abundantly pardon when a person fully repents. The Old Testament contains this wonderful promise: "*Seek ye the Lord while he may be found, call ye upon him while he is near.- let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts:* and let *him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon"*(Isaiah55:6-7). The New Testament makes a similar promise to the church today. "*If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive its our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness"* (I John 1:9).

Death to Self and Sin

The gospel is the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Apostle Paul said, "*I declare unto you the gospel.. by which also ye are saved.. that Christ died for our sins .. and that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures"* (I Cor. 15:1-4). We must obey *Christ's gospel* in order to be saved (Romans 6:17-18; 11 Thes. 1:8; 1 Peter 4:17). We must

experience a death, a burial and a resurrection. In the act of repentance, we die out to sin, the world and self (Romans 6:2), and we ask Jesus Christ to become the Lord of our life.

In God's order, repentance must precede water baptism and the receiving of the Holy Ghost. Before there can be either a burial or a resurrection, there must first be a death.

Baptism in Jesus' Name

Water baptism in the name of Jesus Christ is the second step in the New Testament plan of salvation. Water baptism is not optional; it is essential to New Testament salvation. It is a command that everyone who repents must obey in order to be saved. Jesus said,, "***He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved***" (Mark 16:16). Again, he stated, "***Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God***" (John 3:5).

Burial with Christ

Following death there must be a burial. A repentant person must bury the old man of sin (Romans 6:6) - his past sinful lifestyle - in the watery grave of baptism. "***Therefore, we are buried with him by baptism***" (Romans 6:4). Since baptism is a burial with Christ, there should be no question as to the proper mode of water baptism. The original Greek word for baptism is *baptizo*, which means "to dip, plunge or immerse." Immersion was the only mode of baptism practiced in the New Testament church (see Matthew 3:16 and Acts 8:36-39).

Correct Formula for Water Baptism

For water baptism to be scriptural, it must be administered **in the name of Jesus Christ**. In the Book of Acts, people were always baptized in the name of Jesus Christ. Peter commanded the Jews on the day of Pentecost to be "***baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ***" (Acts 2:38). The Samaritans, under the ministry of Philip, were "***baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus***" (Acts 8:16). Peter commanded the Gentiles at Caesarea to be "***baptized in the name of the Lord***" (Acts 10:48). The New International Version says, "So he ordered that they be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ." The disciples of John the Baptist were re-baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus (Acts 19:1-5). The

Amplified bible says, "On hearing **This** they were baptized (again, this time) in the name of the Lord Jesus" (Acts 19:5). In the Early Church, then, water baptism was always administered in the name of Jesus Christ. No other baptismal formula was ever used.

Jesus commanded, "*Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost*" (Matthew 28:19). The apostles obeyed this command by baptizing their converts in the name of Jesus Christ. Many people repeat the words of the command given in Matthew 28:19. But to *repeat* a command and to *obey* a command are two different things. Father, Son and Holy Ghost are three titles, not the singular redemptive name of God described by this verse. To obey the command of Matthew 28:19, we must first find out what the name (singular) of the Father, Son and Holy Ghost is and then baptize people in that name. The apostles knew that Jesus was the name described by Matthew 28:19.

Jesus is the Name that Reveals the Godhead

Jesus is the name that reveals the Godhead in this New Testament age. The Apostle Paul said, "*For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named*" (Ephesians 3: 14-15). The use of the singular name in Matthew 28:19 presents no problem whatsoever when we understand that Jesus is the New Testament name of the Godhead.

1. **Jesus is the name of the Father.** Jesus said, "*I am come in my Father's name*" (John 5:43). Jesus received His name by inheritance (Hebrews 1:4).
2. **Jesus is the name of the Son.** "*And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name JESUS.- for he shall save his people from their sins*" (Matthew 1:21).
3. **Jesus is the name of the Holy Ghost.** "*But the Comforter which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name..*" (John 14:26).

Jesus is the Saving Name

God revealed Himself by many different names or titles in the Old Testament. Jehovah was the special name by which God revealed Himself to the nation of

Israel. In the New Testament age, God has revealed Himself to mankind by and through the name of Jesus. It is the greatest name by which God has ever revealed Himself to man (Ephesians 1:20-21; Philippians 2:9-11). Jesus is God's salvation name. It means "Jehovah-Savior" or "Jehovah who saves". ***"Neither is there salvation in any other.- for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved"*** (Acts 4:12). Since water baptism is part of our salvation, it is to be administered in the one saving name.

Historical Evidence for Jesus Name Baptism

No baptismal formula other than one using the name of Jesus existed in the New Testament church. This is an established historical fact, as the following references demonstrate. The *International Standard Bible Encyclopedia* states, "The words of Matthew 28:19 are not given in any description of Christian baptism until the time of Justin Martyr; and there they are not repeated exactly ... In every account of the performance of the rite in apostolic times a much shorter formula is in use." (Volume 1, page 392). It then proceeds to identify this formula as "in the name of Jesus Christ" or "in the name of the Lord Jesus".

Encyclopedia Britannica (eleventh edition) observes that "Everywhere in the oldest sources it is stated that baptism took place in the name of Jesus Christ" (Volume 3, page 82). *Hasting's Dictionary of the Bible* acknowledges that from the historical record one can conclude, the original form of words was "into the name of Jesus Christ" or "the Lord Jesus". "Baptism into the trinity was a later development" (Volume 1, page 241).

Thus, the formula for water baptism was changed many years after the writing of the New Testament. The Book of Acts, which is the history book of the Early Church, contains no record of anyone ever being baptized in the titles Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. In the days of the apostles, water baptism was always administered in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Sins Remitted in Water Baptism

As stated in Acts 2:38,- water baptism is "for the remission of sins". We are to be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the purpose of obtaining the remission of sins. The word "for" is translated from the Greek word *eis* and means "in order to obtain". It does not mean "because of" as some people try to teach. In instituting the Lord's Supper, Jesus said, ***"For this is my blood of the***

new *testament, which is shed for many for the remission* of sins" (Matthew 26:28). Jesus shed His blood on Calvary in order to obtain remission of sins for us, and this is why we

are to be baptized. In the original Greek, the same phraseology is used in both verses. It would be ridiculous to think that Jesus shed His blood because our sins were already remitted. Thus, we are baptized not because our sins are already remitted, but we are baptized in order to obtain the remission of our sins. The full work of remission comes when the repentant person obeys God's command to be baptized in Jesus' name, thereby believing on the blood of Jesus to wash away his **sin**.

The Difference Between Repentance and Baptism

At this point, we must distinguish between what happens at repentance and what happens at water baptism. Two words in the King James *Version, forgiveness and remission,,* are sometimes used to indicate this distinction. Although, both words translate the same word, *aphesis*, in the original Greek, they can have slightly different meanings. Repentance and water baptism represent two different aspects of God's dealing with sin. God has always forgiven sin upon the condition of sincere, heartfelt repentance, which removes the barrier that prevents a personal relationship with Him (Psalm 32:5; Proverbs 28:13; Isaiah 55:7; I John 1:9). In the New Testament church, however, God has ordained that the record of sin be canceled permanently, or remitted,, through water baptism in Jesus' name (Acts 2:38; Acts 22:16).

Forgiveness *is personal*. It denotes a change in the relationship between God and the repentant sinner. The repentant person's sin no longer stands in the way of fellowship with God. As a result, God can form a personal relationship with him. Remission of sins at water baptism is a *legal* matter. It denotes the legal cancellation or removal of past sins from the record books in heaven for eternity. When God remits sins, they are erased, blotted out and remembered no more. It **is** just as though the sin had never been committed.

In the bible, sinners are described as debtors, and sin is pictured as a debt that needs to be both personally forgiven and legally remitted, or removed from the record books of the Divine Creditor (Matthew 6:12; Luke 7:41-48; Matthew 18:21-35). God can forgive and remit the sinner's indebtedness because the price has been paid by Jesus Christ. It is possible to experience the present, personal aspect of forgiveness (at repentance) without having the complete work of legal

remission through water baptism in Jesus' name. The sin question, however, is not fully taken care of until the sinner both repents and is baptized.

Remission of Sins is a New Covenant Blessing

Remission of sins is a distinct blessing of the new covenant. Sins were forgiven under the old covenant. When a sinning Israelite brought his sacrifice to the priest and made the proper atonement for My sin, he had the promise that *"it shall be forgiven him"* (Leviticus 4:35). The Hebrew word for atonement is *Kaphar*, which means "to cover". Sins were covered by the blood of the Old Testament sacrifices, and God passed over them in anticipation of the Cross, where sin would be dealt with permanently (Romans 3:25; Hebrews 9:15). Thus, under the Old Testament, sins were forgiven, covered and passed over, but they were not actually remitted or *taken away until calvary*. **"For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins"** (Hebrews 10:4).

David spoke of the blessedness of forgiveness under the old covenant (Psalm 32: 1-2). Likewise, Jesus Christ himself forgave people's sins while here on earth before He instituted the new covenant (Mark 2:5; Luke 7:48). But remission of sins was not available until the blood of Christ was actually shed on Calvary (Matthew 26:28; Hebrews 9:22). The penalty for sin had to be paid in full before remission of sins could become a reality.

In this sense... remission of sins is a unique blessing that comes by the new covenant. The prophet Jeremiah foretold that God would make a new covenant with His people (Jeremiah 31:31-34). Under this new covenant, God promised to *"forgive their iniquity .. and remember their sin no more"* (Jeremiah 31:34). The letter to the Hebrews says that we have received this new covenant and its provision for remission of sins (Hebrews 8:6-13; 10: 16-18). Jesus shed His blood on Calvary to make remission of sins available to mankind (Matthew 26:28), and God has ordained that the remission of sins purchased at Calvary could be received today when a repentant person believes on Him and obeys His command to be baptized in Jesus' name (Acts 2:38; Acts 22:16).

The Blood and the Name Work Together

Although it is God's plan that sin be remitted through water baptism in Jesus' name, it should be pointed out that the water itself does not remit sin. Jesus alone remits sin,,, and water baptism is effective only as an expression of faith in and obedience to Him. It is faith in the blood and name of Jesus that make baptism effective.

The blood of Jesus operates in conjunction with the name of Jesus. Jesus said that "*repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name*" (Luke 24:47). Peter said, "*To him give all the prophets witness, that through his name whosoever believeth in him shall receive remission of sins*" (Acts 10:43). When the name of Jesus Christ is called over a repentant person as he is buried in the waters of baptism, the blood of Christ remits his sins. Annanias told Saul (Paul), "*Arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on (literally, invoking) the name of the Lord*" (Acts 22:16). Thus, the blood of Jesus always operates in conjunction with the name of Jesus in remitting sin. Remission of sins is always associated with the name of Jesus. That is why it is so important to be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ,, as commanded in Acts 2:38.

The Gift of the Holy Ghost

The third step in the plan of salvation consists of receiving the gift of the Holy Ghost. To enter the kingdom of God, Jesus said one must be "*born of water and of the Spirit*" (John 3:5). The *birth* of the Spirit, the *baptism* of the Spirit, and the *gift* of the Spirit are all synonymous terms in the New Testament.

This wonderful experience was received by the Jews on Pentecost (Acts 2:1-4), the Samaritans (Acts 8:15-17), the Gentiles (Acts 10:44-48), and the disciples of John the Baptist (Acts 19:1-6). This demonstrates that it is for all people, regardless of **race**,- creed, color or station in life.

Essential to Salvation

The new birth consists of both water and Spirit, and it was never presented as optional. "Ye *must* be born again" are the words of Jesus in John 3:7. Until a person is born of the Spirit, he is not truly a son of God under the new covenant. The Holy Ghost is the Spirit of adoption or sonship (Romans 8:15-16). The Holy Ghost gives the power to become sons of God and members of the family of God. (See John 1: 12 with Acts 1:8) Being filled with the Holy Ghost is the seal, or proof, of a person's relationship with God (Ephesians I- 13). "*Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his*" (Romans 8:9).

The Holy Ghost baptizes us into the body of Christ. "*By one Spirit are we all baptized unto one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond*

or free,- and have been all made to drink into one Spirit" (I Corinthians

12:13). There is only one true body, or church, (Ephesians 4:4). Joining a human church organization does not place a person in the body of Christ. A person must be baptized with the Holy Ghost to be a member of the true church of Jesus Christ.

The Holy Ghost imparts resurrection power. ***"But if the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, he that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by his Spirit that dwelleth in you "*** (Romans 8:11). The Holy Ghost is the resurrection power that will resurrect and transform the bodies of the saints when Christ returns for the church. To be a "wise virgin" and qualify for the marriage supper of the Lamb, we must have "oil" in our vessels (Matt. 25:1-13). This parable of the ten virgins teaches the necessity of being prepared for the coming of the Lord. Oil appears in Old Testament ceremonies as a type of the Holy Ghost, and we must have the Spirit to be ready for Christ's coming.

It is imperative that we be filled with the Holy Spirit. The scriptures speak of ***"Christ in you, the hope of glory"*** (Colossians 1:27). When we receive the Holy Spirit, Christ comes to live in us. ***"At that day ye shall know that I am in my Father, and ye in me, and I in you "*** (John 14:20). This promise was fulfilled on the Day of Pentecost. (See also John 14:18, 23; Romans 8:9; Galatians 2:20, Ephesians 3:16-17.) Unless we have received the Holy Spirit and have Christ dwelling within our hearts, we will not be in the first resurrection and the coming kingdom when Christ returns. (See Revelation 20:4-6.)

The Holy Ghost Baptism is a New Covenant Experience

The baptism of the Holy Ghost is another unique blessing of the new covenant. God... through the prophet Jeremiah, foretold that He would make a new covenant with His people that would transform the inner being of man. ***"But this shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel; after those days, saith the Lord, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people"***(***Jeremiah31:33***). This is accomplished by the outpouring of the Holy Ghost. Under the old covenant, God's law was written on tables of stone. Under the new covenant, God's laws are written on the fleshly tables of the heart by the power of the Holy Ghost (11 Corinthians 3:3). In the church age, the Holy Ghost imprints God's laws on the people's hearts.

The old covenant was primarily outward and external. The new covenant deals first with the heart) which is the center of human life. The heart is where sin must be conquered first (Proverbs 4:23; Jeremiah 17:9; Matthew 15:19). Through the birth of the Spirit, people are given new hearts (Ezekiel 36:26-27) and become new creatures in Christ (11 Corinthians 5:17). Under the old covenant, God gave Israel external **laws,-** but they did not receive supernatural power to keep those laws. Under the new covenant, God fills us with the Holy Spirit and gives us the power to overcome sin and live a holy life (Romans 8:1-4). The remission of sins and the infilling of the Holy Ghost are two outstanding blessings of new covenant salvation.

A Spiritual Resurrection

As we have seen, the gospel is the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus Christ (I Corinthians 15:14). In order to obey the gospel fully, we must die to sin through repentance, be buried with Christ in water baptism and then rise to walk in „newness of life" (Romans 6:4) by being filled with the same Spirit that raised Jesus from the dead (Romans 8:1 1). This is the New Birth experience of New Testament salvation.

Speaking in Tongues is the Bible Evidence

The bible evidence of receiving the Holy Ghost is speaking in other tongues (languages) as the Spirit of God gives the utterance. On the Day of Pentecost, the Holy Ghost was poured out upon the 120 waiting disciples in the upper room (Acts 1: 12-15). "**And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance"** (Acts 2:4). The initial outpouring of the Spirit on the Day of Pentecost was accompanied by speaking in tongues, and constitutes the pattern for all subsequent outpourings of the Spirit (Acts I 1: 1-5).

The Apostle Peter explained the Pentecostal phenomenon to curious onlookers: "**This is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel; and it shall come to pass in the last days, saith God, I will pour out of my Spirit upon all flesh "** (Acts 2:1617). This outpouring of the Holy Ghost which began on the Day of Pentecost continues even to this present day. The church age is distinctly the dispensation of the Holy Spirit. As long as the church age continues, God will be filling hungry hearts with His Spirit.

The Gentiles Receive the Holy Ghost

Acts 10 records the account of the first Gentiles to receive the Holy Ghost. They, too, received the Holy Ghost with the evidence of speaking in tongues. **"While Peter Yet spake these words,, the Holy Ghost fell on all them which heard the word And they of the circumcision which believed (Jewish Christians) were astonished, as many as came with Peter, because that on the Gentiles also was poured out the gift of the Holy Ghost. For they heard them speak with tongues, and magnify God Then answered Peter, Can any man forbid water, that these should not be baptized, which have received the Holy. Ghost as well as we? And he commanded them to be baptized in the name of the Lord"** (Acts 10:44-48). How did Peter and the other Jewish brethren know without doubt that these Gentiles had received the Holy Ghost? The answer's found in verse 46,- **"For they heard them speak with tongues, and magnify God "**

From this account we see clearly that the Early Church recognized speaking in tongues as the initial evidence of receiving the Holy Ghost. The same outward sign still accompanies the baptism of the Holy Ghost today.

Disciples of John Receive the Holy Ghost

Acts 19 records the account of twelve disciples of John the Baptist in the city of Ephesus who received the Holy Ghost. They also spoke in tongues when they received the Holy Ghost. **"And when Paul had laid his hands upon them, the Holy Ghost came on them,- and they spake with tongues, and prophesied"** (Acts 19:6). The bible teaches that **"in the mouth of two or three witnesses shall every word be established"** (11 Corinthians 13: 1). The Book of Acts presents three different accounts which clearly show that speaking in tongues is the sign that accompanies the baptism of the Holy Ghost.

What About the Samaritans?

Acts 8 relates how the Samaritans received the Holy Ghost (Acts 8:15-17). Although it does not specifically state that they spoke in tongues, it does indicate that some supernatural manifestation accompanied their receiving the Holy Ghost. Simon the Magician saw some outward manifestation when these people received the Holy Ghost and, therefore, wanted to purchase that power (Acts 8:18-19).

Undoubtedly, Simon saw the supernatural manifestation of speaking in other tongues. Considering the overwhelming testimony of scripture, it is evident that speaking in tongues was the sign that always accompanied the baptism of the Holy Ghost in the days of the apostles. The same is true today.

The Holy Ghost Speaks When He Comes In

In talking to Nicodemus about the new birth experience, Jesus likened the birth of the Spirit to wind, or breath (John 3:8). The *Emphatic Diaglott* renders this verse as follows: "***The Spirit breathes where it will, and thou hearest its voice.. thus, it is with every one who has been born of the Spirit.***" This is a powerful promise that when the Holy Ghost comes in, He will speak. The infilling of the Holy Ghost accompanied by the sign of speaking in other tongues as described in the Book of Acts is the wonderful fulfillment of the birth of the Spirit as explained by Jesus in His conversation with Nicodemus.

The Holy Ghost is Promised to All

The baptism of the Holy Ghost was not just for the twelve apostles or a chosen few in the Early Church. The promise of the Holy Ghost is for all believers. On the Day of Pentecost, when the Apostle Peter set forth the New Testament plan of salvation, he made it plain that the promise of the Holy Ghost is for all believers throughout the entire church age. "***For the promise is unto you, and to your children and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call*** (Acts 2:39). " Everyone whom God calls to repentance is eligible to receive this wonderful gift. As long as the church age continues, God will fill those who believe with the Holy Ghost.

Are You an Acts 2:38 Christian?

Have you experienced the bible plan of salvation as given in Acts 2:38? God has never changed His plan of salvation for the church age. It is still the same today. The plan God has ordained for New Testament salvation is not difficult to believe and obey. A person must repent, be baptized (immersed) in water in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and then receive the Holy Ghost with the evidence of speaking in tongues as the Spirit gives utterance. Why not obey this original. plan of salvation that Jesus Christ instituted on the Day of Pentecost?