

Ready To Be Free • Expanded Study

A Study of the Vital Topic of Salvation

By Doug Joseph

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Our Need of Salvation

We were all born with a sinful nature. Sin is any behavior contrary to the law of God, and sin separates us from God. Sin is very harmful to us in many ways—emotionally, physically and spiritually. Salvation refers to God redeeming a person, washing away that person’s sins, and bringing him into God’s community (the church) and into communion with God Himself.

- “But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us” (Romans 5:8).
- “For as by one man’s disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous” (Romans 5:19).
- “They that are whole have no need of the physician, but they that are sick: I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance” (Mark 2:17).

The New Birth: God’s Plan for Our Salvation

The gospel (good news) of Jesus Christ can be summarized very simply: Jesus Christ, the sinless Son of God, died for the sins of all humanity, was buried, and resurrected on the third day.

The Word of God (the Holy Bible) reveals a plan for our salvation, in which God, the church, and the believer all act in concert. This plan is explained in the Bible, and it involves three simple steps of faith. Each of these steps identifies us with Jesus and His gospel:

First: Repentance.

Repentance is an act of faith in which one turns away from sin and toward God. Your previous life as a sinner (the old man) ceases. A new life begins. Because the old man (your previous lifestyle) dies, this identifies with Jesus’ death on the cross. Repentance is an act of faith on the part of the believer.

Second: Water Baptism

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Proper baptism—being immersed in water with the name of Jesus invoked aloud—is an essential step in becoming a Christian. After Jesus was crucified, His followers buried Him in a borrowed tomb. Once a believer has repented—become dead to sin—he is to bury the old lifestyle through water baptism. This step identifies with the burial of Jesus. The Bible says, “We are buried with him [Jesus] by baptism” (Romans 6:4). Baptism is an act of faith on the part of both the church and the believer.

Third: The Gift of the Holy Spirit

God is a Spirit (John 4:24), and He is holy (righteous, without sin). Thus the Bible often refers to God by the terms Holy Ghost and Holy Spirit. The most amazing fact of Biblical salvation is that a person can go from being a sinner (separated from God) to being a Christian—so unified with God that His Spirit dwells inside the believer! No one is able to adequately describe this; it must be experienced. Because a Spirit-filled person has the power of God dwelling inside, that believer may live in a realm previously unattainable. God’s Spirit provides the power to live a new life, and thus identifies with the resurrection of Jesus. It is an act of God upon the believer who receives, through faith, the gift promised in the Word of God.

Jesus said, “Verily, verily, I say unto thee, except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God” (John 3:3). Jesus then explained what this new birth is: “Verily, verily, I say unto thee, except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God” (John 3:5).

Truth and Doctrine

Doctrine simply means teaching. There can be good doctrine (truthful teaching) and bad doctrine (false teaching). Any teaching that does not match with God’s Word is false doctrine. Different groups and individuals teach many different (often contradictory) doctrines regarding salvation and redemption. In spite of this, one may clearly know what a person must believe to be saved. The key is to look to God’s Word, not to groups or individuals. Some teach that doctrine is unimportant. But God’s Word reveals that doctrine is very important:

- “Take heed unto thyself, and unto the doctrine; continue in them: for in doing this thou shalt both save thyself, and them that hear thee” (I Timothy 4:16).
- “Till I come, give attendance to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine” (I Timothy 4:13).
- “But thou hast fully known my doctrine, manner of life, purpose, faith, longsuffering, charity, patience” (II Timothy 3:10).
- “All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness” (II Timothy 3:16).

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- “But speak thou the things which become sound doctrine” (Titus 2:1).
- “If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed” (II John 1:10).

God has revealed the truth. We have the responsibility to diligently seek for that truth.

Faith (Believing) and Repentance

Repentance means “a turning from sin to God” (*Holman’s Bible Dictionary*). Faith and repentance are foundational steps toward God. True repentance, as a step of faith, is a prerequisite for salvation. Repentance prepares one’s heart to obey the Scriptures further. God demands repentance of each of us!

Jesus strongly emphasized the necessity of repentance, and He said that repentance and remission of sins would be preached in His name:

- “Then opened he their understanding, that they might understand the scriptures, and said unto them, Thus it is written, and thus it behoved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day: And that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem” (Luke 24:45-47).
- “Bring forth therefore fruits meet for repentance” (Matthew 3:8).
- “From that time Jesus began to preach, and to say, Repent: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand” (Matthew 4:17).

Some have erroneously taught that belief in Jesus (in and of itself) is the new-birth experience, saying that if we “believe on the Lord Jesus Christ,” we need not go any further, because the new birth is complete. However, while it is true that believing on the Lord Jesus is a necessary step toward the new birth, it is only the initial step.

One Scripture that is often misused to prop up the doctrine that believing alone equals the new birth is “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved” (Acts 16:31). All Scriptures are true. Just what does this verse mean? Examine the setting, and you will see that the apostle Paul spoke this short verse to a Philippian jailer who was about to commit suicide. These words were spoken quickly to prevent the man from doing harm to himself. This verse was only the beginning of Paul’s instructions. It is certain that Paul later gave more directions, for the Bible tells us that the man was baptized with his entire household. Paul knew that “Without faith it is impossible to please him [God]: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him” (Hebrews 11:6).

Let’s look at this issue even closer. While one verse says, “And it shall come to pass, that whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved” (Acts 2:21), another verse shows that Jesus said, “Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the

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kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven” (Matthew 7:21). Apparently some call Him “Lord” yet neither obey His word nor do His will! Jesus made it very clear that simply attending church and claiming to have accepted Christ as savior is not the new birth experience! To the contrary, it is he that “doeth the will” of the Father that will be able to enter into the kingdom of heaven.

Water Baptism

After believing and repentance, the next step of obedient faith for any Christian is water baptism in the name of Jesus. The word *baptize* comes from the Greek word *baptizo* meaning to dunk or immerse. After Jesus was crucified on the cross, He was buried in a tomb, where He lay until His resurrection three days later. The Scriptures clearly reveal that Christian believers are to become identified with the Lord’s burial by being baptized. Practically speaking, water baptism is an act of faith in which each believer is buried momentarily in water while having the name of Jesus invoked aloud. Scriptures also reveal a connection between water baptism and our spiritual cleansing (from sin) for the salvation of the believer. Thus, water baptism has two distinct meanings:

Washing (or cleansing):

- “Then went out to him Jerusalem, and all Judea, and all the region round about Jordan, and were baptized of him in Jordan, confessing their sins” (Matthew 3:5-6).

Burial with Christ:

- “Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life” (Romans 6:4).
- “In whom also ye are circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, in putting off the body of the sins of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ: buried with him in baptism, wherein also ye are risen with him through the faith of the operation of God, who hath raised him from the dead” (Colossians 2:11-12).

Old Testament Typology:

During the great flood, Noah and his family were saved by water. So also we are saved by water baptism during the church age:

- “The longsuffering of God waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was a preparing, wherein few, that is, eight souls were saved by water. The like figure whereunto even baptism doth also now save us (not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God,) by the resurrection of Jesus Christ” (I Peter 3:20-21).

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Just as the Hebrews were saved by water while passing through the Red Sea (to escape from Pharaoh's armies), so also we are saved by water baptism:

- “Moreover, brethren, I would not that ye should be ignorant, how that all our fathers were under the cloud, and all passed through the sea; and were all baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea; and did all eat the same spiritual meat; and did all drink the same spiritual drink: for they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them: and that Rock was Christ” (I Corinthians 10:1-4).

While making their way through the wilderness, the Hebrews carried a tabernacle built according to God's instructions. Notice the symbolic representation of water baptism in the God-given design:

- “Thou shalt also make a laver of brass, and his foot also of brass, to wash withal: and thou shalt put it between the tabernacle of the congregation and the altar, and thou shalt put water therein. For Aaron and his sons shall wash their hands and their feet thereat: when they go into the tabernacle of the congregation, they shall wash with water, that they die not; or when they come near to the altar to minister, to burn offering made by fire unto the LORD: so they shall wash their hands and their feet, that they die not: and it shall be a statute for ever to them, even to him and to his seed throughout their generations” (Exodus 30:18-21).

The early church (the first-century church led by the Apostles) fulfilled the command of Jesus regarding water baptism:

- “Then Peter said unto them, 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).
- “They were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus” (Acts 8:16).
- “And he commanded them to be baptized in the name of the Lord” (Acts 10:48a).
- “When they heard this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus” (Acts 19:5).

How were believers baptized during the time of the apostles? According to the Bible, believers were baptized by immersion in water, and the name of Jesus was invoked aloud over each believer during the event.

Immersion in water:

- “And John also was baptizing in Aenon near to Salim, because there was much water there: and they came, and were baptized” (John 3:23).
- “And Jesus, when he was baptized, went up straightway out of the water: and, lo, the heavens were opened unto him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a

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dove, and lighting upon him” (Matthew 3:16).

- “And he commanded the chariot to stand still: and they went down both into the water, both Philip and the eunuch; and he baptized him. And when they were come up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord caught away Philip, that the eunuch saw him no more: and he went on his way rejoicing” (Acts 8:38-39).

What about sprinkling or pouring? What if one was baptized as an infant?

We simply do not find these practices in the Scriptures. Neither sprinkling, nor pouring, nor infant baptism can be found or substantiated in the Word of God. These are human traditions; therefore we should reject them in the light of scriptural truth. The Bible says that water baptism is “the answer of a good conscience toward God” (I Peter 3:20-21). Since infants are not old enough to comprehend the gospel, they cannot conscientiously decide to be baptized. While infants may be blessed and dedicated to God through prayer, they must still be baptized when they are old enough.

In the Scriptures, what formula was used in baptism? In whose name were they baptized? Does it matter?

Prior to the birth of the church, the prophet John (called John the Baptist) baptized many followers in Judea. The Bible does not mention John using anyone’s name during his baptisms, saying only that John baptized unto repentance.

After the birth of the church (read about it in the second chapter of the Book of Acts) water baptism was updated; a name was added to it. The greatest legacy the Lord left to his bride (the church) is His name!

- “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).

In the New Testament, the name of Jesus was invoked aloud over each believer during water baptism. No other baptismal mode was ever practiced in the church during the time of the apostles:

- “Then Peter said unto them, 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).
- “They were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus” (Acts 8:16).
- “And he commanded them to be baptized in the name of the Lord” (Acts 10:48a).
- “When they heard this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus” (Acts 19:5).

Other pertinent verses:

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- “Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death?” (Romans 6:3).
- “And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him” (Colossians 3:17).
- Jesus’ name must be invoked verbally in order to have a proper baptism! Notice the questions the apostle Paul asked the church at Corinth:
- “Is Christ divided? Was Paul crucified for you? Or were ye baptized in the name of Paul?” (I Corinthians 1:13).

Since Jesus is the one who was crucified for us, we should be baptized in His name! Look at Paul’s own baptism:

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

Does water baptism matter? Water baptism is a command to be obeyed for salvation!

- “And he commanded them to be baptized in the name of the Lord” (Acts 10:48).
- “And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned” (Mark 16:15-16).
- “For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ” (Galatians 3:27).
- “Then they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls” (Acts 2:41).
- “One Lord, one faith, one baptism” (Ephesians 4:5).

What about Matthew 28:19? Some use this verse to support a baptismal formula that does not include the name of Jesus.

Let’s examine it closely:

- “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).

There are only two ways to act upon this verse (and only one way is correct). Either we are to repeat these words when we baptize, or we are to obey these words, baptizing in a singular name. Notice in the verse above that “the name” is singular. This verse does not say “names.”

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When Jesus spoke the words of Matthew 28:19, He was speaking to His apostles. It is apparent that His apostles did not interpret the words as a formula to be repeated. Any study of the New Testament shows that the apostles obeyed this verse rather than repeating the words. The New Testament clearly confirms that believers were baptized in the name of Jesus.

To truly obey Matthew 28:19, one must discover the singular “name” of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. That singular name is Jesus.

Matthew 28:19 was obeyed in the Book of Acts, through baptism in the name of Jesus. We should obey this verse today, by being baptized in the name of Jesus.

Receiving the Gift of the Holy Spirit (Holy Ghost)

Once you repent and commit to being water baptized in the name of Jesus, you’re ready for the wonderful gift of the Holy Spirit!

Old Testament prophecy:

- “A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh. And I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments, and do them” (Ezekiel 36:26-27).
- “And it shall come to pass afterward, that I will pour out my spirit upon all flesh; and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions” (Joel 2:28).

Jesus prophesied of the outpouring of the Spirit:

- “He that believeth on me, as the scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water. (But this spake he of the Spirit, which they that believe on him should receive: for the Holy Ghost was not yet given; because that Jesus was not yet glorified)” (John 7:38-39).

Notice that Jesus’ words (above) illustrate that all believers should receive the Holy Spirit!

The first baptism of the Holy Ghost (the birthday of the Church):

- “And when the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place. And suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting. And there appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance” (Acts 2:1-4).

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Contrary to the teaching of some, one does not automatically receive the gift of the Holy Spirit at the moment he believes. Receiving the gift of the Spirit is a separate, dynamic experience that completes the new birth! Consider receiving the Holy Ghost as you read the following passage of Scripture:

- “Then Philip went down to the city of Samaria, and preached Christ unto them. . . . And the people with one accord gave heed unto those things which Philip spake, hearing and seeing the miracles which he did. . . . and there was great joy in that city But when they believed Philip preaching the things concerning the kingdom of God, and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women. . . . Now when the apostles which were at Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the word of God, they sent unto them Peter and John: who, when they were come down, prayed for them, that they might receive the Holy Ghost: (For as yet he was fallen upon none of them: only they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus.) Then laid they their hands on them, and they received the Holy Ghost” (Acts 8:5-17).

In the passage below, the Scriptures reveal that “believing” is a separate event from water baptism and from the experience of receiving the Holy Ghost.

- “Paul . . . came to Ephesus: and finding certain disciples, he said unto them, Have ye received the Holy Ghost since ye believed? And they said unto him, We have not so much as heard whether there be any Holy Ghost. And he said unto them, Unto what then were ye baptized? And they said, Unto John’s baptism. Then said Paul, John verily baptized with the baptism of repentance, saying unto the people, that they should believe on him which should come after him, that is, on Christ Jesus. When they heard this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. And when Paul had laid his hands upon them, the Holy Ghost came on them; and they spake with tongues, and prophesied” (Acts 19:1-6).

Is the baptism of the Holy Ghost necessary for salvation?

- Jesus said, “Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God” (John 3:3).

Jesus then explained what this new birth is:

- “Verily, verily, I say unto thee, except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God” (John 3:5).

Both water and the Spirit are necessary for the new birth and to enter into the kingdom of God!

The Holy Ghost experience described in the Book of Acts is part of the new birth!

- “In whom ye also trusted, after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your

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salvation: in whom also after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise” (Ephesians 1:13).

Some ask honestly, “But will not my church attendance and my being a good person save me?” The answer is no. We all must be born again. If any man could have been saved by his own works, it would be the righteous Cornelius of Caesarea (described in the tenth chapter of Acts). But even that pious man had to be born again:

- “There was a certain man in Caesarea called Cornelius . . . a devout man, and one that feared God with all his house, which gave much alms to the people, and prayed to God alway. He saw in a vision . . . an angel of God coming in to him, and saying unto him, Cornelius . . . Thy prayers and thine alms are come up for a memorial before God . . . And now send men to Joppa, and call for Peter . . . he shall tell thee what thou oughtest to do” (Acts 10:1-6).

Cornelius called for Peter, and Peter came and preached to Cornelius and his entire household. God poured out His Spirit upon them all, and Peter commanded them to be baptized in the name of the Lord.

Good works is not enough. Being devout is not enough to save you. You must seek truth. Update your spirituality! We all must be born again!

Tongues: Sign of the Gift of the Holy Spirit

The single common sign of the baptism of the Holy Ghost is speaking in tongues as the Spirit gives the utterance.

Old Testament prophecy:

- “For with stammering lips and another tongue will he speak to this people” (Isaiah 28:11).

New Testament evidence:

- Acts 2:4, Acts 10:45-46, and Acts 19:6 all mention tongues as the sign of receiving the Holy Ghost.

Speaking with tongues as God’s Spirit gives the utterance is the initial, physical sign of the Holy Spirit baptism. While this is not the only sign, it is an immediately noticeable, miraculous sign of having received the gift of the Holy Spirit.

Have you received the Holy Ghost since you believed? Have you been water baptized in Jesus’ name?

Life magazine has noted that the Pentecostal phenomenon of receiving the Holy Ghost and speaking with tongues is one of the most significant events of the last hundred years.

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Millions upon millions of people worldwide have now been born again according to God's Word. Have you?

The promise of real freedom awaits those who are ready to be free:

- “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).

—End—

Visit www.ReadyToBeFree.com to find a church near you that preaches and practices the truth as discussed in this study. For a free catalog of our evangelism resources, email: HMDsales@upci.org

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