

What Must I Do To Be Saved?

The Apostolic answer to life's most important question and its implications for contemporary New Testament Churches

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The Philippian jailor, having first been filled with terror, and then overcome by extreme gratitude, asked Paul and Silas the most important question that can be asked by any living human being, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" (Acts 16:30).

The question and its answer are of eternal import. Regardless of how long one's earthly sojourn might be, in comparison to the millennia that have gone before and the eternity that looms in the future, one's earthly life is no more than a twinkle of the eye. Physical death and what follows death is a reality that cannot be avoided. The writer of Hebrews declares with absolute finality, *... it is appointed for men to die once and after this comes judgment...* (Hebrews 9:27)

Although theatre goers may find some sort of satisfaction in the bravado displayed in Western films when a desperado facing certain death declares to his assailant, "I'll see you in hell," the prospect of entering into hell after being judged by God is too horrible to be accepted with stoic resignation. Although the question, what must I do to be saved, may spring from many motives, both noble and ignoble, avoidance of hell certainly is a rational and sane reason to ask that question. If for no other reason than the certainty of death and the judgment, getting the answer right is the sanest reason for being certain that one answers the question correctly.

Contemporary churches respond to this question with a variety of answers. We will illustrate that variety by citing a few examples of how different churches answer this question.

The two most ancient institutional churches (of equal age), the Roman Catholic and the Eastern (Greek) Orthodox, have contrasting answers to the question. Both of these ancient churches consider baptism to be necessary for salvation:

- Until January, 2013, Roman Catholicism would have answered the question by stating that baptism by Roman Catholic clergy provides that salvation. In January 2013, the American Roman Catholic Church and Reformed Churches in America agreed to recognize one another's baptism.¹ These churches all have a common understanding of

¹ After about six years of dialogue, the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, the Reformed Church in America, Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), the Christian Reformed Church in North America, and the United Church of Christ signed a document recognizing each other's liturgical rites of baptism.

The Common Agreement, ratified by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops on Nov. 16, 2010, and publicly signed and celebrated January 29, 2013, was the result of six years of study and consultation by Catholic and Reformed scholars during the seventh round of the Catholic-Reformed Dialogue in the USA. The agreement reads, "Together we affirm that, by the sacrament of Baptism, a person is truly incorporated into the body of Christ (I Corinthians 12:13 and 27; Ephesians 1:22-23), the Church. Baptism establishes the bond of unity existing among all who are part of Christ's body and is therefore the sacramental basis for our efforts to move towards visible unity."

the role of baptism in salvation. Roman Catholicism does have a unique understanding of salvation, in that the baptized Catholic may (probably will) spend time in purgatory where he will be perfected for eternity, but the fact that he has been baptized as a Catholic guarantees his eventual entrance into heaven.²

- The Orthodox Church has a rather vague concept of personal salvation. The Orthodox Church (Greek Orthodox, Eastern Orthodox, etc.) teaches that salvation begins when one is baptized (immersed). Orthodox theologian, Thomas Hopko, states, “everything in the church flows out of the waters of baptism: the remission of sins and life eternal.”³ After baptism, the process of *theosis* begins. *Theosis* is the process whereby one becomes “more deified – in the sense that the Holy Spirit dwells with Christian believers and transforms them into the image of God in Christ, eventually endowing them in the resurrection with immortality and God’s perfect moral character.”⁴ Another term used by the Orthodox to describe this process is *chrismation*. The Eastern Orthodox Church emphasizes the language of I Corinthians 1:18, *to us who are being saved*, and Philippians 2:12, *work out your salvation with fear and trembling*.⁵

Thus, the process that most Protestant denominations would describe as progressive sanctification, the Eastern Orthodox Churches describe as progressive salvation. For the process to begin, one must be baptized.

Note that this dialogue and the resulting Common Agreement has been between the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops and the various expressions of the Reformed Church in America. There may be some question as to the acceptance of this agreement outside of the USA.

² See Reverent Joseph I. Malloy, C.S.P., *A Catechism for Inquirers* (New York, the Paulist Press) 1927, pages 14-19

³ Infants are immersed three times and then the priest anoints the infant with a special oil, making the sign of the cross on various parts of the body (see Daniel B. Clendenin, *Why I’m Not Orthodox* www.christianitytoday.com/ct/article_print.html?id=1063)

⁴ Deacon Victor E. Klimenko, PhD. *The Orthodox Teaching on Personal Salvation*, Chap. 1, pgph. 1.4 <http://www.pravoslavie.ru/english/46463.htm>

⁵ “Viewing the Church as the new and eternal life of the Kingdom of God given to man by God through Jesus Christ in the Holy Spirit, we understand first of all that for life to exist there must be birth. The birth into the eternal life of God is the mystery of **baptism**. But birth is not enough for living; there must be the ongoing possibility of life: its power, energy and force. Thus, the mystery of **chrismation** is the gift of the power to live the life of Christ which is born in man by baptism. It is the gift of the ‘all-holy and good and life-creating Spirit’ to man. (<http://oca.org/orthodoxy/the-orthodox-faith/worship/the-sacraments/the-sacraments>)

Among Protestants, there many different answers to this question. Here are some examples:

- Churches of the Reformed Tradition,⁶ emphasize the Sovereignty of God. God, in His Sovereignty has chosen certain ones to be saved. Through baptism, these chosen ones will align themselves with the Church and manifest their saved state through the lives that they live. Reformed churches, in many ways, display an Old Testament concept, i.e., Reformed Churches consider infant sprinkling to fulfill the same role in the New Covenant that circumcision fulfilled in the Law of Moses. As circumcision was the sign that made a male Jewish infant a part of the Covenant Nation, in the same manner infant baptism makes an infant (male or female) a part of the Covenant Community⁷ (it is the faith of the community, not the faith of the baby that gives validity to the baptism). At a later time in life, the individual must make a conscious decision about his faith. If an adult desires to become a part of a Presbyterian Church, for example, he must be baptized (spiritually circumcised) in order to become a part of the Covenant Community. Thus, whether infant or adult, baptism is the act that makes one a member of the Covenant Community.⁸ Those in the Covenant Community are saved.⁹ The Westminster Confession, to which Presbyterians adhere, says that "the grace promised" in baptism (which includes regeneration) "is not only offered, but really exhibited, and conferred, by the Holy Ghost, to such (whether of age or infants) as that grace belongs unto, according to the counsel of God's own will, in his appointed time."¹⁰ Baptism is the external vehicle that God uses to communicate the grace of regeneration—though it is properly received only by faith. That being true, the grace of baptism truly comes only to the elect (those chosen by God). Non-elect who are baptized receive only the "common operations of the Spirit",¹¹ thereby receiving only temporary and partial benefits.
- The Lutheran doctrine concerning salvation is similar to that of the Reformed position, although there are subtle differences. Lutheran theology states that regeneration (the new birth) comes through baptism, and that baptism is necessary.

“Lutherans teach that Baptism is ‘the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit’ (Titus 3:5) and that it is necessary because ‘it now saves you’ (I Peter 3:21). Through this divine, miraculous washing of water and His word, God works the forgiveness of sins and gives His Holy Spirit (Acts 2:38). Because Baptism is God’s work, and not a human work of committing oneself to

⁶ Churches of the Reformed Tradition include, among others, the Reformed Church in America, Presbyterian Churches, the Christian Reformed Church in North America, and the United Church of Christ

⁷ Colossians 2:10-12

⁸ Baptism in Reformed Churches is by sprinkling or pouring.

⁹ <http://www.beliefnet.com/Faiths/2000/09/Presbyterian-Views-On-Salvation-And-Non-Christians.aspx>

¹⁰ Westminster Confession of Faith 28.6

¹¹ Westminster Confession of Faith 10.4, referencing Heb. 6:4-6

the Lord, children also should be baptized because the promise of forgiveness ‘is for you and for your children’ (Acts 2:39)”¹²

Lutherans believe that baptism may be administered by sprinkling, pouring, or immersing.¹³

In the Lutheran view, the key to salvation is faith. Baptism supernaturally imparts faith into the heart of a baptized infant. Even though the infant cannot verbally express his faith, his faith is real and present, having been imparted by God in the act of baptism. At a later time, when old enough to express one’s faith (usually at around twelve years of age) in a ceremony of confirmation, the child does verbalize his faith. Adults who come to faith through the power of the Holy Spirit’s using the vehicle of the Word of God (hearing or reading) should quickly be baptized and thus receive the dimension of divinely imparted faith. Lutherans believe that the grace of baptism and its imparted faith can be resisted, resulting in the condemnation/damnation of the one baptized; unless the grace is overtly resisted, the baptized are considered saved. Baptismal regeneration is not seen as a contradiction to salvation by faith alone.¹⁴

- Methodists believe that salvation is by grace alone and by faith alone. The process of salvation is quite similar to the views of the Eastern Orthodox Church. Concerning the role of baptism and the process of salvation, the UMC website states,

“Salvation is a lifelong process during which we must continue to respond to God’s grace. Baptism offers the promise that the Holy Spirit will always be working in our lives, but salvation requires our acceptance of that grace, trust in Christ, and ongoing growth in holiness as long as we live....In all forms of Christian baptism (infant or adult) God claims those being baptized, whatever their age or ability to profess their faith, with divine grace”¹⁵

Concerning the conversion of adults who have not been baptized as infants, God sovereignly imparts “prevenient grace” to such individuals which enables them to make a free-will decision concerning whether or not to accept God’s “saving grace.”¹⁶ When such an individual comes under the conviction that he is a sinner (*prevenient grace*) and chooses to accept God’s grace, he begins to experience the wholeness that God has promised. Next, comes a time of conversion, in which the individual chooses to leave

¹² *What Lutherans Teach* Concordia Tracts (St. Louis, MO, Concordia Publishing House) 2005, page 6

¹³ Karl Kretzchmar, *What Lutherans Teach*, Concordia Tracts (St. Louis, MO, Concordia Publishing House) [uncopyrighted] page 10

¹⁴ LCMS Doctrinal Issues – Baptism PDF document www.lcms.org/document.fdoc?src=lcm&id=537 pages 2-3

¹⁵ *Does baptism mean that I am saved? and What’s the difference between infant baptism and believer’s baptism?* [WWW.umc.org/site/apps/ninet/content.aspx?](http://www.umc.org/site/apps/ninet/content.aspx?)

See also http://www.allaboutbaptists.com/distinctives_Church_Membership.html

¹⁶ Wesley taught that unregenerate man, bearing the impediment of original sin, did not have the free will to make an unhindered positive or negative response to the Gospel. God, therefore, extends prevenient grace, which enables an individual to have the free will to say, “yes,” or “no,” to the Gospel.

one life-orientation for another – being born anew. Baptism is the covenant moment in which one becomes a member of God’s Church – the Covenant Community. Children who are baptized must, at a later time (when they are old enough to make a profession of faith), confirm their faith in an official ceremony. Baptism does not guarantee salvation and baptism is not necessary for salvation. Salvation depends on a lifetime of surrender to God’s grace and an ongoing life expressing faith. Baptism usually is administered by sprinkling, but both pouring and immersion¹⁷ are offered in some Methodist Churches.¹⁸

- Southern Baptists, like, Methodists, believe that salvation is by grace alone and by faith alone. One is saved when he makes a profession of faith – present day Southern Baptists often have the convert pray the “sinner’s prayer,” inviting Jesus into the convert’s life. Baptism (by immersion) is the act whereby one joins the local church, but is not required for salvation. Baptists believe that only a church can baptize – independent evangelists do not have the right to do so.¹⁹ Once saved, always saved, is a cherished doctrine of most Southern Baptist Churches.²⁰

We could cite more examples of how contemporary churches answer the question, *what must I do to be saved*, but these are sufficient to illustrate the variety.

The answers cited above are based on:

- Tradition (Roman Catholic and Eastern Orthodox)
- Application of Scripture (Roman Catholic, Eastern Orthodox, Reformed, Lutheran, Methodist, and Baptist)
- Deductive Logic (Reformed)
- Practices that were inherited from Roman Catholicism (most Protestant Churches)²¹

Turning to Scripture, we find a number of different statements made concerning the answer to the question, *What must I do to be saved* and what is required for one to be forgiven his sins. Taken as isolated statements, apart from the context, some of the statements seem to be contradictory. Here are some random examples:

Mark 16:15-16 *And He said to them, "Go into all the world and preach the gospel to all creation."¹⁶ "He who has believed and has been baptized shall be saved; but he who has disbelieved shall be condemned.*

¹⁷ In one Tulsa Methodist Church, when the convert opts for immersion, a portable baptismal tank is wheeled out and used for baptism.

¹⁸ For a comprehensive discussion of Methodist views on salvation, baptism, etc. see www.umc.org

¹⁹ http://www.pbministries.org/Theology/Oscar%20Gibson/baptists_and_beliefs02.htm

²⁰ <http://www.sbc.net/knowjesus/baptism.asp>

²¹ Although immersion always was allowed in Roman Catholicism (the major expression of Christianity in Western Europe until the Reformation of Luther [1483-1546] and Calvin [1509-1564]), sprinkling and pedobaptism had become prevailing practices by the time the Reformation was born. Thus, the Protestant Churches that emerged from Roman Catholicism practiced sprinkling of infants and continue to do so.

I Peter 3:21 *Corresponding to that, baptism now saves you-- not the removal of dirt from the flesh, but an appeal to God for a good conscience-- through the resurrection of Jesus Christ,*

Acts 22:16 *'Now why do you delay? Get up and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on His name.'*

John 3:16 *"For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life.*

Acts 16:31 *They said, "Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved, you and your household."*

Romans 10:10 *for with the heart a person believes, resulting in righteousness, and with the mouth he confesses, resulting in salvation.*

Acts 2:38 *Peter said to them, "Repent, and each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.*

Matthew 10:32 *"Therefore everyone who confesses Me before men, I will also confess him before My Father who is in heaven.*

Luke 13:3, 5 *"I tell you, no, but unless you repent, you will all likewise perish....⁵ "I tell you, no, but unless you repent, you will all likewise perish."*

We could continue listing one verse after another, demonstrating the diversity of scriptural comments on the topic of salvation and forgiveness of sins. What are we to make of this; how can we make sense out of this confusion – which is so obvious in the varied answers offered by the different branches of Christendom.

In pursuing the answer, we will examine the post-Pentecostal apostolic response to the question. The reason for turning to the post-Pentecostal record, rather than examining episodes in the Gospels is the fact that the episodes in the Gospels preceded the cross, and therefore were contingent upon that atoning sacrifice. During His earthly ministry and prior to the sacrificial death, Jesus spoke forgiveness of sins upon individuals. One of the most noteworthy is recorded in Mark 2:1-12. Jesus was teaching in a house in Capernaum. Four men, who wanted their friend who was sick of palsy to be healed, sought to carry the man into Jesus' presence. They could not gain entrance into His presence because the crowd was so great, both inside and outside the house. So, they tore some tiles from the roof and lowered their friend to a spot right in front of Jesus.

And Jesus seeing their faith said to the paralytic, "Son, your sins are forgiven."

But some of the scribes were sitting there and reasoning in their hearts, "Why does this man speak that way? He is blaspheming; who can forgive sins but God alone?"

Immediately Jesus, aware in His spirit that they were reasoning that way within themselves, said to them, "Why are you reasoning about these things in your hearts?"⁹

"Which is easier, to say to the paralytic, 'Your sins are forgiven'; or to say, 'Get up, and pick up your pallet and walk '?" "But so that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins "-- He said to the paralytic,¹¹ "I say to you, get up, pick up your pallet and go home."

And he got up and immediately picked up the pallet and went out in the sight of everyone, so that they were all amazed and were glorifying God, saying, "We have never seen anything like this." (Mark 2:5-12)

Another memorable instance is Jesus words to the thief on the cross:

And he was saying, "Jesus, remember me when You come in Your kingdom!"⁴³ And He said to him, "Truly I say to you, today you shall be with Me in Paradise." (Luke 23:42-43)

Can we look to these and other pre-Calvary and pre-apostolic episodes as models? Several answers could be given as to why we cannot do so, but Hebrews 9:14-17 should suffice:

how much more will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without blemish to God, cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living God? For this reason He is the mediator of a new covenant, so that, since a death has taken place for the redemption of the transgressions that were committed under the first covenant, those who have been called may receive the promise of the eternal inheritance. For where a covenant is, there must of necessity be the death of the one who made it. For a covenant is valid only when men are dead, for it is never in force while the one who made it lives.

These verses point out that a will (covenant, testament) is not in force as long as the testator is alive. While the testator is alive, he can distribute his possessions in any manner that he wishes – but after his death, such distribution can be made only upon the conditions of his will. Thus, for Jesus' "will and testament" to be in force, He had to die. Prior to His death, Jesus distributed forgiveness and other graces totally apart from what His will decreed for the era after His death.

Today, we operate under the conditions of this New Testament (will or covenant), which became the authority after Jesus' death.

How can we know, clearly, the conditions of Jesus' will? We must look to the apostles and those who were of the generation immediately following the apostles for the answer to the question, *What must I do to be saved?*

Why should we trust the apostolic answer more than we trust the various answers given by sincere men such as Calvin, Luther, Wesley, and those of the Roman and Greek Catholic traditions?

There are four reasons why we look to the apostolic model as the answer to the question:

1. For more than three years, they had been instructed, daily, by the Lord.
2. They had the Great Commission.

And Jesus came up and spoke to them, saying, "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth."¹⁹ "Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit,²⁰ teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age." (Matthew 28:18-20)

And He said to them, "Go into all the world and preach the gospel to all creation."¹⁶ "He who has believed and has been baptized shall be saved; but he who has disbelieved shall be condemned. (Mark 16:15-16)²²

3. Jesus also had promised that after His departure, the Holy Spirit would guide them and lead them into all truth.

"But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all that I said to you. (John 14:26)

"I have many more things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now."¹³ "But when He, the Spirit of truth, comes, He will guide you into all the truth; for He will not speak on His own initiative, but whatever He hears, He will speak; and He will disclose to you what is to come."¹⁴ "He will glorify Me, for He will take of Mine and will disclose it to you. (John 16:12-14)

4. The statements in the Epistles concerning salvation were penned by the apostles. Certainly, the apostolic practices described in Acts would not have been done in contradiction to the doctrines they espoused in the Epistles. Therefore their writings must be understood in harmony with their practices and the sermons recorded in Acts.

Because of these reasons, we conclude that the model displayed by the apostles and the instruction accompanying that model, is the *faith once for all delivered to the saints* (Jude 3).

The question thus becomes, *what was the apostolic answer to the question, "what must I do to be saved?"* To discover the apostolic answer, we will survey the Acts of the Apostles and learn whether or not there is a consistent or varied apostolic response to the question. We will take the random statements concerning salvation noted above and see which of these elements were present in each situation and which ones were absent in some instances and present in others. There are nine reports of conversions in Acts that contain sufficient information and detail to aid us in our quest. There are seventeen episodes of which the report is so general or abbreviated

²² This portion of Mark (verses 9-20) apparently were not in the original document. However, the fact that they were added is testimony to the beliefs of the early church, and a record of what they experienced (the miracles, etc.), else, why would it have been added. There are four endings to the Gospel according to Mark in presently known manuscripts: (1) the last twelve verses are missing from the two oldest Greek manuscripts, from the Old Latin codex Bobienensis, the Sinaitic Syriac manuscript, about one hundred Armenian manuscripts, and the two oldest Georgian manuscripts (written about 897 and 913 AD), Clement of Alexandria and Origen show no knowledge of these verses. A number of later manuscripts that do contain these verses have notes indicating that the copyist considered them to be spurious additions to the document; (2) Several Uncial manuscripts of the seventh, eighth, and ninth centuries as well as Old Latin k, a marginal insertion in the Harclean Syriac, several Sahidic and Boharic manuscripts, as well as some Ethiopic manuscripts continue after verse 8 as follows, "but they reported briefly to Peter and those with him all that they had been told; and after this Jesus Himself sent out by means of them from east to west the sacred and imperishable proclamation of eternal salvation." All but one of these sources then continue on with verses 9-20. (3) The traditional ending of Mark, as displayed in the KJV, is found in the manuscripts that compose the Textus Receptus, from which the KJV was rendered. The Uncials of this group date from the fifth to the thirteenth century. (4) In the fourth century, according to Jerome, there was a very expanded form of the verses following verse 8, preserved today in one Greek manuscript, Codex Washingtonianus.

that they do not provide sufficient information to assist us in searching for the answer to the question that is the topic of this paper.²³ [NOTE: See ADDEMDUM for an examination of these seventeen episodes and an explanation why each one is not included in our survey].

In order to give some order to our study, we will use the following table and build it successively from event to event.

Scriptural event	Hearing	Believing	Repenting	Confessing	Baptism	Receive the Holy Spirit
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In each event we will list the elements in the following fashion:

- The element is clearly stated
- The element is strongly implied²⁴
- If neither of the above is true, the space will be left blank

Case Study No. 1 **Acts Chapter 2**

The first example before us is the proclamation of the Gospel in the inaugural event of the Church Age. Under the anointing of the Holy Spirit, Peter indicted the Pentecost crowd of having killed Jesus – the one whom God had elevated and made *both Lord and Christ*.

"Men of Israel, listen to these words: Jesus the Nazarene, a man attested to you by God with miracles and wonders and signs which God performed through Him in your midst, just as you yourselves know--²³ this Man, delivered over by the predetermined plan and foreknowledge of God, you nailed to a cross by the hands of godless men and put Him to death.... Therefore let all the house of Israel know for certain that God has made Him both Lord and Christ-- this Jesus whom you crucified." (Acts 2:22-23, 36)²⁵

Through Peter's Holy Spirit empowered preaching, the crowd was brought under conviction. We can only imagine the horror and fear that entered their hearts when they realized what they had done – they had murdered the Messiah! In desperation they cried out, *men and brethren, what shall we do!!!*

Now when they heard this, they were pierced to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, "Brethren, what shall we do?" (Acts 2:37)

Peter's answer, combined with Luke's record of the crowd's response to Peter's instructions, present a paradigm that is displayed, to some degree, in the eight other case studies. For this reason, we will devote considerable space in the examination of this first case study, giving special attention to the terms and a full-orbed discussion of their meaning. The conclusions reached in these explorations are relevant to the remaining eight episodes.

²³ Acts 2:47; 4:4; 5:14; 6:1; 11:21; 11:24; 12:24; 13:12; 13:49; 14:1; 14:21; 16:5; 17:4; 17:12; 17:34; 19:18; 28:24

²⁴ How strongly one of the unstated elements is implied in the account may be debated. We will be conservative in our evaluation.

²⁵ All scriptural quotes in this paper are from the 1995 edition of the New American Standard Bible, unless noted otherwise.

Peter said to them, "Repent, and each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. (Acts 2:38)

The first word that catches our attention is the first word of Peter's response, *repent*.

What was Peter telling them to do when he told them to repent? The Greek term is μετανοέω (*metanoeo*), which strictly means *to perceive afterwards*,²⁶ but functionally means *to change one's mind*. Certainly, the concept of regret must have been present in their outcry, but what did Peter mean when he told them to change their minds? From the preceding context, it would seem that Peter was instructing them to change completely their minds about Jesus, i.e., *you executed him as a criminal and someone to be mocked, but now I exhort you to own Him as Lord and Christ*. In other words, *change your mind about Jesus*.

This term expresses more than mere sorrow or grief resulting from one's actions. It expresses the appropriate action in response to that grief. There is another Greek term, also rendered as *repent* that expresses such sorrow and grief. That term is μεταμέλομαι (*metamelomai*). This is the term used for Judas' remorse.

Then when Judas, who had betrayed Him, saw that He had been condemned, he felt remorse (metamelomai) and returned the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priests and elders,⁴ saying, "I have sinned by betraying innocent blood." But they said, "What is that to us? See to that yourself!"⁵ And he threw the pieces of silver into the temple sanctuary and departed; and he went away and hanged himself. (Matthew 27:3-5)

Remorse and grief over one's sin and one's sinful condition is appropriate, but it is not enough. Judas *metamellomai*ed and went out and hanged himself.

Paul contrasts these difference between remorse/grief and the repentance that leads to salvation in II Corinthians 7:9-10

I now rejoice, not that you were made sorrowful, but that you were made sorrowful to the point of repentance (metanoeo); for you were made sorrowful according to the will of God, so that you might not suffer loss in anything through us.¹⁰ For the sorrow that is according to the will of God produces a repentance (metanoeo) without regret, leading to salvation, but the sorrow of the world produces death.²⁷

Thus, the repentance that leads to salvation is a change of mind, and the change of life produced by having this new mind.

And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect. (Romans 12:2)

Understood this way, the repentance that Peter was calling for is synonymous with belief/faith, i.e., *believe that Jesus is who I have declared Him to be – both Lord and Christ*.

²⁶ Friberg, Timothy and Barbara, *Analytical Greek Lexicon* (Victoria BC Canada, Trafford Publishing) 2005 μετανοέω entry

²⁷ The terms that Paul uses for sorrow and grief in this passage are the verb, λυπέω (*lupeo*), rendered as *sorrowful* in verse 9, the noun, λύπη (*lupe*), rendered as *sorrow* in verse 10.

Part two of Peter's instruction was to be *baptized everyone of you*.

Because contemporary churches display three different practices that they call, *baptism* (sprinkling, pouring, immersion), we must take the time to seek the definition that Peter, as recorded by Luke, would have given to the term. Is there a clear understanding concerning what both Jesus (in the great commission) and Peter meant when they spoke of *baptism*?²⁸

Quite naturally, the first place to turn seeking the answer would be Greek lexicons. The two most popular of these are Thayer's *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*,²⁹ and Bauer, Gingrich, Arndt & Danker, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature* (this volume is colloquially referred to as BGAD, referring to the names of the editors and translators of the English edition).³⁰ Both Thayer and BGAD give a number of examples of the use of these terms, and the outcome of their use. We will confine ourselves to those definitions given in these two volumes that are relevant to our pursuit.

Thayer, accompanied with citations gives the following definitions that are relevant to our study:³¹

- Primary meaning: to dip repeatedly, to immerge, submerge
- To cleanse by dipping or submerging, to wash, to make clean with water
- Metaphorically: to overwhelm

BGAD, accompanied with citations gives the following definitions that are relevant to our study:

- Primary meaning: to dip, immerse, dip oneself, wash, plunge, sink, drench, overwhelm
- Jewish ritual washings
- Typologically of Israel's passage through the Red Sea

Why do these lexicons give these definitions to the term? Where do the authors and editors of these important reference books go to obtain these definitions? They arrive at these definitions by researching literature where these terms are used and seek to find those instances in which the action described is irrefutably defined.

²⁸ The English term, *baptism*, is an Anglicization of the Greek term, βαπτίζω (*baptidzo*). At least as early as the Sixteenth Century (Tyndale – 1534, Bishop's Bible - 1595, Geneva Bible - 1599, etc.) the practice of Anglicizing the term in English translations, rather than translating this term, had become a common practice. The motive for Anglicization, rather than translation, can only be guessed, but by creating this English term, the resulting ambiguity allowed the continuance of a variety of modes of *baptism* among English speaking church groups.

²⁹ Joseph H. Thayer, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*, (Peabody, Mass. Hendrickson Publishers) 1896, Fourth Printing 2000.

³⁰ William F. Arndt, F. Wilbur Gingrich, and Frederick W. Danker, a translation and revision of the fourth revised edition of Walter Bauer's *Griechisch-Deutsches Worterbuch zu den Schriften des Neuen Testaments und der ubrigen urchristlichen Literatur* Second Edition (Chicago, University of Chicago Press) 1957, 1959

³¹ BGAD and Thayer, as well as most lexicons, cite texts illustrating the use of the term (such as the baptism of martyrdom – Mark 10:38; Luke 12:50), but the definitions that related to the mode are the ones that are of interest to our quest.

Interestingly, all of the definitions cited above indicate some sort of immersion or being placed into, in the midst of, or under some element – whether it be water or emotional experience. The possible exception is BGAD’s citation of *Jewish ritual washings* and Thayer’s, *to make clean with water*. It must be determined how these ritual washings were conducted in order for this use of the term to be an exception to the primary understanding of the term (which both BGAD and Thayer describe as *immersion, dipping, plunging, etc*). So, we will conduct a cursory examination of the use of the term, βαπτίζω [*baptidzo*], and its cognates.

A document in which there is no doubt as to the use of the term is an episode recounted by Flavius Josephus. Josephus describes how a jealous Herod assassinated the young Aristobulus whom Herod himself recently had made the High Priest. Aristobulus had been receiving praise of the people, which aroused Herod’s jealousy. Herod determined to do away with Aristobulus. While Herod and Aristobulus were being entertained by Alexander at a party at Jericho, a situation developed that provided Herod the opportunity to eliminate Aristobulus. It was a very hot day and a number of men, friends and servants of Herod, had jumped into the fish ponds to cool off. As they were swimming about, Herod and Aristobulus watched the playful action until Herod persuaded Aristobulus to join in the fun. At Herod’s instructions, some of his servants began to push Aristobulus under the water playfully, but then they got serious and immersed him until he had drowned. The term Josephus used to describe this action is, βαπτίζω. The form of the verb is the present tense participle, meaning that they immersed him, and immersed him, and immersed him, until he strangled.³²

“...the young man at the instigation of Herod, went into the water among them, while such of Herod’s acquaintance as he had appointed to do it, dipped him as he was swimming, and plunged him under water, in the dark of the evening, as if it had been done in sport only; nor did they desist till he was entirely suffocated.”³³

It would be quite a stretch to define the term in this passage in any other way than, *to immerse or submerge*.

Here are a couple of quotes from Greek literature:

- Hippocrates, the father of modern medicine (460 to 357 BC), describing the breathing of a patient who was afflicted with an inflammation and swelling of the throat, wrote, "And she breathed, as a man does after being dipped (βαπτίζω) over head and ear."³⁴

³² Flavius Josephus, *Antiquities of the Jews*, Book 15, Chapter 3, section 3. καὶ πρῶτον μὲν ἑώρων τοὺς νέοντας τῶν οἰκετῶν καὶ φίλων, ἔπειτα προαχθέντος καὶ τοῦ μειρακίου τῷ καὶ τον Ἡρώδη παροξύναι, τῶν φίλων οἷς ταῦτα ἐπιτέτακτο σκότους ἐπέγοντος βαροῦντες ἀεὶ καὶ βαπτίζοντες ὡς ἐν παιδιᾷ νηρόμενον οὐκ ἀνάκαν, ἕως καὶ παντάπασιν ἀποπνίζαι. The term βαπτίζοντες, is the nominative, plural, masculine, present, active, participle, of the verb, βαπτίζω.

³³ Josephus *Complete Works*, William Whitson, AM, translator (Grand Rapids, Kregel Publications) 1981, page 317. The translation of this passage by Whitson is a very free rendering.

³⁴ John Redman Coxe MD *The Writings of Hippocrates and Galen* (Philadelphia Lindsay and Blakiston) 1846 page 426

- Aristotle (384-322 BC) “They say that the Phoenicians who inhabit the city called Gades, when they sail outside the Pillars of Heracles, under an easterly wind for four days, arrive at certain desolate places, full of rushes and seaweed, and that these places are not covered with water, whenever there is an ebb, but, whenever there is a flood, they are overflowed (βαπτίζω).³⁵

We would find the same use and definition of the term if we examined the host of other passages of literature in which the term is used describing some sort of immersion (sinking of a ship, dying a garment, etc.). No one denies that this is the normal definition of βαπτίζω, but what are we to make of the instances in which the term is used for *ritual washings*, as cited by BGAD and Thayer’s, *to make clean with water*? Are they exceptions to that definition?

Two passages are cited by BGAD: Mark 7:4 and Luke 11:38.

Mark 7:3-4 reads

For the Pharisees and all the Jews do not eat unless they carefully wash their hands, thus observing the traditions of the elders;⁴ and when they come from the market place, they do not eat unless they cleanse themselves; and there are many other things which they have received in order to observe, such as the washing [βαπτίζω] of cups and pitchers and copper pots.

The versions that follow the *Textus Receptus* [Received Text] also known as the *Byzantine Text* (on which the King James Version is based), add to the list of things that are baptized, *tables* or as some read, *dining couches*. Thus, in this family of manuscripts, there are four things mentioned as being baptized: cups, pitchers, brazen pots, and dining couches (tables). However, because a host of other manuscripts omit this fourth item, versions based on modern scholarship either omit this fourth item or list it in brackets as questionable. If the fourth item is omitted, then to immerse the other three items would be the normal manner of washing. Prior to having indoor plumbing and running water, the usual method of washing dishes was to put them into dishpan or some other vessel, cover them with water, wash them, and then rinse them in another pan of water – in other words, - *to baptize them....twice* (I speak from years of washing dishes).

Literally, the Greek states in verse 3 that the Jews do not eat unless they first wash *with the fist* (which some versions render as *carefully wash*). The term rendered, *wash*, is νίπτω (*nipto*) which simply means, *to wash*.

Verse 4, as rendered in most versions, states that *when they come from the market place, they do not eat unless they cleanse* [some versions, *wash*] *themselves* –. The term rendered as *wash* or *cleanse themselves* presents another textual challenge. Some manuscripts have the term, ῥαντίζω (*hrantidzo*), which means *to sprinkle*, and some have βαπτίζω (*baptidzo*). Manuscripts that have an Alexandrian (western) origin have *hrantidzo* and those from some other regions have *baptidzo*. So, it’s a toss up as to which rendering is correct. Wescott & Hort and Eberhard & Irwin Nestle opted for *hrantidzo* but Aland, Metzger, and their associates opt for

³⁵ *The Works Of Aristotle*, translated into English under the editorship of J A. Smith M.A. Fellow Of Balliol College W. D. Ross M.A. Fellow Of Oriel College (Oxford at the Clarendon Press) 1909 page 39

baptidzo. Regardless of which of these terms was in the original, the Greek text can be rendered as – *Unless they wash (sprinkle or immerse) what is from the market place, they do not eat it.*³⁶³⁷

In context, this rendering does make sense:

- They wash their hands thoroughly (with the fist)
- They wash (sprinkle or immerse) what they bring from the market place
- They wash (immerse in a dish pan) cups, pitchers, and copper pots.

If the above explanations are correct, and I believe that they are, there is nothing in this description of ritual washing that would require any other understanding of *baptidzo* than the usual meaning – *to immerse*.

The other passage cited by BGAD is Luke 11:38

When the Pharisee saw it, he was surprised that He had not first ceremonially washed before the meal.

There are no textual difficulties in this verse. The term rendered, *ceremonially washed*³⁸, is *baptidzo*. That being true, is there anything in this verse that would prohibit our understanding of *baptidzo* as something other than *to immerse*? Again, before the advent of indoor plumbing and running water, the custom followed in washing hands was to have a pan of water into which one immersed his hands and washed them (I speak from experience, having washed my hands in this manner in rural Oklahoma many times as a child, where water was drawn from a well or a spring and placed on a stand in which everyone washed his hands – immersing them, then wiping them off with a towel – everyone used the same towel). So, the fact that the term, *baptidzo* is used, would indicate how the washing occurred – the hands were dipped into a basin, even as a Roman Catholic priest dips his hands into a basin to be ceremonially clean. There is nothing in this passage to contradict the understanding of *baptidzo* as immersion. For that matter, I would argue that the use of the term, *baptidzo*, in this passage was deliberate, describing the method of ceremonial washing. Otherwise, the term, *νίπτω (nipto)*, which simply means, *to wash* (used seventeen times in the New Testament to describe a washing) would have been used.³⁹

Even though lexical considerations are important they are not as important to us as is the testimony of the apostles and the early Church. Is there evidence that the early church understood immersion in water to be the rite of initiation into the Kingdom? Yes, there is.

³⁶ Bruce M. Metzger, *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament* Mark 7:4. Βαπτίσωνται (United Bible Societies) 1971, page 93

³⁷ Literally, the Greek reads, *and from market, unless they....they eat not*. The translator must decide whether to render these words to mean what they bring from the market, or when they, themselves, come from the market.

³⁸ The term, *ceremonially*, is not in the Greek. The term was added by the NAS translators for clarification.

³⁹ The Modern Greek Bible uses the term *νίπτω* at this point in Luke 11:38

First we note the testimony of the Roman Catholic Church. The footnote on Romans 6:3 in the *New Catholic Edition of the Holy Bible*,⁴⁰ states,

“Ver. 3. St Paul alludes to the manner in which Baptism was ordinarily conferred in the primitive Church, by immersion. The descent into the water is suggestive of the descent of the body into the grave, and the ascent is suggestive of the resurrection to a new life. St. Paul obviously gives more than a mere symbol in the rite of Baptism. As a result of it we are incorporated into Christ’s mystical body and live a new life.”⁴¹

A second testimony is that of the Eastern Orthodox family of churches. Greek is the liturgical language of this family of churches, regardless of the nation in which the church is located. As noted in the beginning section of this paper, the Eastern Orthodox immerse infants, because you can’t tell a Greek-speaking church that *baptidzo* means anything other than *to immerse*. The Eastern Orthodox Churches continued the ancient practice of immersion, whereas the Western Latin Churches began to tolerate, and in time, practice sprinkling and pouring rather than to immerse.

It is significant that both of the most ancient institutional churches acknowledge immersion as the New Testament practice: Roman Catholicism by the footnote to Romans 6 and the Orthodox Church by continuing to immerse, rather than sprinkle or pour.

An ancient testimony relevant to our quest is found in the *Didache*, section VII. The *Didache* (the formal title is *The Teaching of the Twelve Apostles*) has been dated as early as 40-60 AD (J.A.T. Robinson).⁴² Dr. C. Bigg dated the document as late First or early Second Century, because the document allows for pouring, when circumstances prevented immersion – something he contended was not allowed until the late date – he also saw the practice of fasting prior to immersion as further evidence for its late date.⁴³ Most recently the date of its composition has been considered to be around 120 AD.⁴⁴ Here is the section pertinent to our study:

⁴⁰ *New Catholic Edition of the Holy Bible*, Confraternity Edition, A Revision of the Challoner-Rheims Version Edited by Catholic Scholars under the Patronage of the Episcopal Committee of the Confraternity of Christian Doctrine, Imprimatur: Francis Cardinal Spellman, Archbishop of New York (New York, Catholic Book Publishing Company) 1957, page 199

⁴¹ Some sources state that at a Council in Ravenna, in 1311, whether to immerse or to sprinkle was declared to be indifferent. For example, see Carl Mitchell, *The history of How Sprinkling Replaced Immersion As a Baptismal Form* www.searchforbiblicaltruth.com, which cites some references, but all are secondary sources. I have not been able to discover any evidence for a Council of Ravenna in 1311, even though non-Roman Catholic writers frequently mention it (even authorities such as the Edinburgh Cyclopedia, Vol. 33, pp. 245, 246). Roman Catholic sources contend that this was not a council but at best, no more than a synod of local bishops, and thus had no authority in the Church.

⁴² John A. T. Robinson, *Redating the New Testament* (SCM Press 1976)

⁴³ Bigg, C. (1904). "Notes on the Didache. I: On Baptism by Affusion". *The Journal of Theological Studies* (20): 579–84. doi:10.1093/jts/os-V.20.579. Bigg, C. (1904). "Notes on the Didache. II: On Certain Points in the First Chapter". *The Journal of Theological Studies* (20): 584–9. doi:10.1093/jts/os-V.20.584 Bigg, C. (1905). "Notes on the Didache". *The Journal of Theological Studies* (23): 411–5. doi:10.1093/jts/os-VI.23.411.

⁴⁴ <http://www.earlychristianwritings.com/didache.html>

“And concerning baptism, baptize this way: Having first said all these things, baptize into the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, in living water. But if you have no living water, baptize into other water; and if you cannot do so in cold water, do so in warm. But if you have neither, pour out water three times upon the head into the name of Father and Son and Holy Spirit. But before the baptism let the baptizer fast, and the baptized, and whoever else can; but you shall order the baptized to fast one or two days before.”

This document clearly indicates that the manner of baptizing was by immersion, but if such water were not available (for example, a conversion that took place in prison), then do what is expedient – do your best to make it like an immersion by pouring water three times on the convert. Clearly, a tradition had arisen of making the baptism as near as possible to the outdoor baptisms of the New Testament. Fasting prior to baptism, also was a non-biblical tradition, but that is not relevant to our point.

Another evidence of immersion’s being the manner of baptizing in the early church is the oldest church building discovered by archaeologists. In 256 AD, the city of Dura-Europas (located in modern day Syria), was attacked by the Sassanians. In order to prepare for the expected onslaught, the Roman garrison shored up the western city wall by filling with dirt and debris the street that ran along the inside of the wall. The buildings adjacent to Wall Street were covered to form a wider wall and the remaining buildings were leveled so that the garrison could defend the area more effectively. By doing this, they preserved one of the most important archaeological items related to the early Church. One of the buildings covered with dirt was a church building. In 1928, Dura-Europos was excavated by a team of French and American archaeologists. In the process of their excavation, the team uncovered this church building. Three stages of development were found on the site: (1) a very early dwelling (2) a later house (3) the adaptation of the house to be used as a church building. The house had been adapted into a church building sometime between 232 and 256 AD (the year of the Sassanian onslaught).

Of special significance to the question of immersion is the baptistery. The north side of the assembly room contained a baptistery, set into the wall. The construction of the baptistery is identical to the manner in which baptisteries built today by churches that practice immersion. When looking at a photo of the Dura-Europos baptistery, one would think that he might be looking at a baptistery in a Southern Baptist or Church of Christ church building. Clearly, the Dura-Europos Christians, before 256 AD, practiced immersion.⁴⁵

Interestingly, the first reliable record of anyone’s being baptized by *aspersion* (sprinkling with water), is that of Novatus, reported by Eusebius in his *Ecclesiastical History*, written in the time of Constantine (c325 AD).⁴⁶ Novatus was quite ill and all expected him to die –

⁴⁵ The architecture of ancient church buildings later than Dura-Europa attest to the fact that for 1300 years, immersion was the practice. Many of the beautiful ancient cathedrals, dating prior to 1300 either had baptisteries in them, or in some cases, a separate building which was a baptistery.

⁴⁶ The fact that Novatus, upon his sick bed was baptized by aspersion is evidence that the practice did exist during the Fourth Century.

too sick to take to a pool for immersion - so, they bestowed clinical baptism upon him (sprinkling or pouring). However, Novatus did not die – he recovered.⁴⁷ After his recovery, he aspired to be ordained to the office of bishop. He seems to have been an ambitious man. Many of the church members objected, and one of their main objections to Novatus' becoming a bishop was that he had not been immersed. They argued that one who had received only aspersion on his sick bed should not be ordained as a bishop – and Novatus refused to be immersed.⁴⁸ Eusebius agreed with those who objected. So, even in this document, it is clear that immersion was the understood manner of baptism, and the efficacy of clinical baptism, as expediency, was questionable to some.⁴⁹

The reformers understood the word to refer to immersion.

- **Luther, in his Works Vol XI p.76, 1551 edition:** *On this account I could wish that such as are baptized should be completely immersed into water according to the meaning of the word and signification of the ordinance... as also without a doubt it was instituted by Christ*⁵⁰ Philip Schaff, commenting on Luther's statements and actions, states, "Luther sought to restore immersion, but without effect."⁵¹
- **Calvin, in his Institutes Book IV, Chapter 15, section 19:** *It is evident that the term, baptize, means to immerse and that this was the form used by the Primitive church.*⁵²
It must be noted that even though Calvin recognized immersion as the meaning of the term, and that such was the practice of the apostles and the New Testament Church, he does not consider Christ's use of the term, nor the apostolic practice to be binding. He states, *Whether the person baptized is to be wholly immersed, and that where once or thrice, or whether he is only to be sprinkled with water, is not of the least consequence: churches should be at liberty to adopt either, according the diversity of climates.*⁵³
- **Philip Schaff, noted Reform Church historian and scholar, in his History of the Apostolic Church, page 568:** *Finally, as to the outward mode of administering the ordinance; immersion, and not sprinkling, was unquestionably the original normal form. This is shown by the very meaning of the Greek words, βαπτίζω, βάπτισμα,*

⁴⁷ Novatus was one of the leaders who insisted that Christians who caved in under persecution should not be admitted back into the Church after Constantine ended persecution. He was one of the leaders of those known as the *Cathari*. (Eusebius page 265)

⁴⁸ Eusebius Pamphilus, *Ecclesiastical History*, Book VI, Chapter XLIII (Grand Rapids, Baker Bookhouse) reprinted 1994, page 266

⁴⁹ The first theologian in the Roman Catholic Church that said that sprinkling was equal to immersion was Thomas Aquinas, who died in 1274. In his *Summa Theologica*, he argued against those who were contending that immersion should be the only form. Aquinas allowed for either immersion or sprinkling. *Summa Theologica*, 3rd Part, Question 66, Article 7

⁵⁰ *The Babylonian Captivity of the Church*, The Sacrament of Baptism, 3:23. See also sections 2.58, 3:12, 3:15, 3.22

⁵¹ Schaff, Philip, *History of the Christian Church*, Volume II (Peabody, Mass. Hendrickson Publishers) 1858, 1996, page 251, fn. 3

⁵² Calvin, John, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, translated by Henry Beveridge (Grand Rapids, WM. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company) 1989, 1994, page 524

⁵³ Calvin, *In loc.*

βαπτισμός, used to designate the rite. Then again, by the analogy of the baptism of John, which was performed in the Jordan (ἐν Matt. 3:6, compare 16; also εἰς τὸν ἰορδάνην, Mk. 1:9). Furthermore by the New Testament comparisons of baptism with the passage through the Red Sea (I Cor. 10:2), with the flood (I Pet. 3:21), with a bath (Eph. 5:26. Tit. 3:5), with a burial and resurrection (Rom. 6:4. Col. 2:12). Finally by the general usage of ecclesiastical antiquity, which was always immersion (as it is today in the Oriental and also the Graeco-Russian churches); pouring and sprinkling being substituted only in cases of urgent necessity, such as sickness and approaching death.⁵⁴

- **Wesley in his *Notes on the New Testament***, commenting on Romans 6:3, wrote, *We are buried with him, alluding to the ancient manner of baptizing by immersion. That as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory – Glorious power. Of the Father, so we also, by the same power, should rise again, and as he lives a new life in heaven, so we should walk in newness of life. This, says the apostle, our very baptism represents to us.*^{55 56}

In summary, it is clear that even though one might find instances in which βαπτίζω was used to describe some act of washing (as noted in the above discussion of Mark 7:3-4 and Luke 11:38), it is clear that the apostles and the early church understood that Jesus had commanded immersion. In obedience to Our Lord's command, from Pentecost onward, it was the universal practice to immerse converts – until clinical baptism emerged as an expedient substitute, when immersion was impossible – even then, it was questioned, until later centuries, when both Catholic and Protestant Churches that came directly from Catholicism, began to practice sprinkling and pouring.

⁵⁴ Philip Schaff, translated by Edward D. Yeomans *History of the Apostolic Church with a General Introduction to Church History* (New York, C. Scribner) 1854, page 568

⁵⁵ Wesley Center Online: *Notes on St. Paul's Epistle to the Romans* (<http://Wesley.nnu.edu/john-wesley/john-wesley-notes-on-the-bible/notes-on-st-pauls-epist...>) Wesley wrote these notes in 1755, when he was 52 years of age. The following year, 1756, he wrote his *Treatise on Baptism* (footnote 53)

⁵⁶ During his tenure in Georgia, Wesley was so convinced that only immersion was permitted that he put his whole future at stake over the issue. In 1736, he was approached by a Mrs. Parker, the wife of the bailiff of Savannah. She brought her baby to Wesley to be baptized. Wesley, as was his custom, prepared to immerse the baby. Mrs. Parker protested and said that she wanted her baby sprinkled. Wesley refused, on the basis that immersion was the only way. In September 1737, Wesley was tried on a number of charges (ten charges were brought against Wesley) and one of these was that he had refused to sprinkle Mrs. Parker's baby (the charge, which was the fifth on the list, read, *By refusing to baptize Mr. Parker's child, otherwise than by dipping, except the parents would certify that the child was weak and not able to bear it*). He was forced to leave the colonies and return to England.

Later, in 1756, after Methodism was in full swing, Wesley wrote *A Treatise on Baptism*. In this treatise, (Section 1, paragraph 2), he contradicted his earlier position on immersion as the only form of baptism, *I say, by washing, dipping, or sprinkling; because it is not determined in Scripture in which of these ways it shall be done.* (personalpages.tds.net/~amiddlek/Theology/Treatise%20on%20Baptism.htm) Thus, he took one position in his firm stand in Georgia and his notes on Romans 6, but in his treatise, he espoused a contradictory position. All that can be said about this is that Wesley demonstrated ambiguity on the subject of the correct form of baptism.

We can only conclude that those who have received only sprinkling or pouring have not been baptized, since the meaning of the term is *to immerse* and the apostolic church clearly understood Christ to have commanded immersion. No doubt the event in which a convert received sprinkling or pouring was significant – perhaps even having some sort of conversion experience - but it was not baptism, regardless of the fact that a church so named it.

In the rest of this paper, we will, from time to time, substitute the term, *immersion* for the Anglicized term, *baptism*

Peter's next words were, *in the name of Jesus Christ.*

These words catch our attention because in most of our English Versions of the New Testament, Jesus commissioned the apostles to go and disciple all the nations and the manner in which that was to be done was *immersing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things whatever I commanded you.*

Was Peter disobeying Jesus by developing a new baptismal formula – *in the name of Jesus Christ*, rather than as Jesus had commanded, *in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit*? In an effort to resolve this issue (because in some quarters it has become an important issue), we must, once again, conduct a detailed examination of the two passages.

Of signal importance is the use of prepositions in these passages.

Matthew 28:19 contains the preposition εἰς (*eis*) which, carries the idea of movement. In English, this is communicated by the preposition, *into*. Understood in this manner, Jesus commanded the apostles to make disciples of the nations, *immersing them into the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.*

Acts 2:38 contains the preposition ἐπί (*epi*) with the dative case, which carries the idea, *on the basis of*.⁵⁷ Thus, Peter was urging them to be immersed on the basis of who Jesus is – in other words, based on the fact that you have changed your mind about Him, be immersed. This Greek construction also can be understood to mean that Peter, upon the authority of Christ and in obedience to Christ, was instructing them to be immersed. (Matthew 28:18ff)

This is in contrast to the use of εἰς in Matthew 28:19, which was speaking of the result of immersion – entering into a relationship with the Godhead. In essence, having one's identity defined by that relationship with the Godhead. Paul's use of this construction in I Corinthians 1:12-13 illustrates this point.

⁵⁷ Greek prepositions convey different ideas with different cases. For example, ἐπί with the genitive case, means *over, on, or at the time of*; with the dative, it is understood as *on the basis of, or at*; with the accusative case, *on, to, against*. Thus, when rendering many Greek prepositions, the case of the noun or pronoun with which it is associated must be known, in order to render properly the preposition. Εἰς, which is the preposition in Matthew 28:19, occurs only with the accusative and has as its normal meaning, *into*.

Now I mean this, that each one of you is saying, "I am of Paul," and "I of Apollos," and "I of Cephas," and "I of Christ." Has Christ been divided? Paul was not crucified for you, was he? Or were you baptized in (εἰς - into) the name of Paul?

Paul used the same Greek pattern here that Jesus used in the Great Commission. The Corinthians were divided into camps, each camp bearing the name of one of the preachers. Paul asks them about their immersion – literally, *were any of you immersed into the name of Paul* (i.e., *into the Paul camp*)?

Thus, in the Great Commission, Jesus spoke of immersion as bringing the convert into the God Camp – into a relationship – belonging to – the Godhead.

Is there a New Testament immersion liturgy?

Understood this way, there is no conflict between Matthew 28:19 and Acts 2:38, but there is more to be considered. The New Testament does not contain any record of what was recited as converts were immersed. There is no record of a recited immersion liturgy, so we don't know what, if anything, was said as converts were lowered into the water and lifted out to live in the newness of born-again life.

It is true that in the *Didache*, cited above, such a formula is presented. It also is of interest to note that later, in a discussion concerning who should and who should not partake of the Lord's Supper, the document uses the same structure as Matthew 28:19, only with the Name of the Lord

But let no one eat or drink of your Eucharist except those who have been immersed into the name of the Lord, for the Lord has spoken concerning this: "Do not give what is holy to the dogs."⁵⁸

Thus, in Section VII, the instruction is to immerse *into the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit*, whereas here in Section IX the individual is immersed *into the name of the Lord*. Could it be that the Church in 120 AD did not make as big a deal out of this as some contemporary Christians have made of it?

Bill Sanders, recognizing this interesting situation, when immersing converts always recited, *In the name of Jesus Christ, I baptize you in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit*. That recitation recognized what Peter said on Pentecost and what Jesus said in the Great Commission.

Peter's next words were, *for the forgiveness of sins*.

Once again, we encounter the preposition, εἰς - *into the forgiveness of sins* – or, as some scholars would render the preposition, *with a view toward*,⁵⁹ others, *to the forgiveness of sins*,⁶⁰ and many *for the forgiveness of sins* (i.e. – purpose). The declaration is forward looking, not

⁵⁸ Μηδεις δε φαγετω μηδε πιετω απο της ευχαριστας υμων, αλλ' οι βαπτισθεντες εις ονομα κυριου, και γαρ περι τουτου ειρηκεν ο κυριος. μη δωτε το αγιον τοις κυσι.

⁵⁹ Alfred Marshall, D.Litt, *The Interlinear Greeh-English New Testament Acts 2:38* (London, Samuel Bagster and Sons Limited) 1959

⁶⁰ Jay P. Green, *Pocket Interlinear New Testament Acts 2:38* (Grand Rapids, Baker Bookhouse) 1983

backward looking. Some would argue that one is to be immersed because he has been forgiven, i.e., he is saved and immersion is the response. This preposition however, is forward looking, i.e., forgiveness of sins is the result of immersion, rather than immersion is in response to having been forgiven of sins.

Peter's promise to them was, *and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.*

The term, *gift*, is δωρεά (*dorea*), which is the Greek term consistently used for the gift of the Holy Spirit, Himself,⁶¹ not for the gifts that the Holy Spirit distributes. Thus, Peter promised that everyone who changed his/her mind about Jesus – that He is both Lord and Christ – and accepted Him as such - signifying that by being immersed - would receive the Holy Spirit.

The reception of the Holy Spirit into the life of the convert is the guarantee that he is saved.⁶²

However, you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you. But if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Him.
(Romans 8:9)

In Him, you also, after listening to the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation-- having also believed, you were sealed in Him with the Holy Spirit of promise, who is given as a pledge of our inheritance, with a view to the redemption of God's own possession, to the praise of His glory. (Ephesians 1:13-14)

Do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. (Ephesians 4:30)

Now He who establishes us with you in Christ and anointed us is God,²² who also sealed us and gave us the Spirit in our hearts as a pledge. (2 Corinthians 1:21-22)

Peter then declared that this promise was not just for the Jerusalem Pentecost crowd, but for all present and future generations that God would call to Himself.

for you and your children and for all who are far off, as many as the Lord our God will call to Himself. (Acts 2:39)

The response was as Peter had commanded.

So then, those who had received his word were immersed; and that day there were added about three thousand souls. (Acts 2:41)

The Greek term rendered *received*, is ἀποδέχομαι (*apodexomai*) meaning, *to receive gladly or to welcome*. Thus, it is clear that they believed the word and acted upon it.

⁶¹ Acts 2:38; 10:45; 11:17

⁶² The seal in these passages refers to “branding.” When someone wrote a letter, wax was placed on the cover and the author would impress into the wax his personal seal – validating that it was from him – it was his letter. When the entrance to Jesus’ tomb was closed by rolling large stone over it, the Roman governor placed his seal upon it (Matthew 27:66), meaning that this was a Roman sealing of the tomb – it had the governor’s brand upon it. This is similar to the practice of branding cattle. When cattle graze in the open range, herds become mixed, but the ownership of each animal is established by noting the brand that has been burned on the hip. Thus, when one is saved, he receives the Holy Spirit as God’s brand – evidence that the believer belongs to the Lord and thus is assured of his/her place in the Kingdom of God.

With this exploration behind us, we complete the first portion of our table.

Scriptural event	Hearing	Believing	Repenting	Confessing	Baptism	Receive the Holy Spirit
Pentecost Acts 2:38-41	X	X	X		X	X

Case Study No. 2 The Samaritans Acts 8:4-24

Prior to the persecution of the Church by Saul, the Gospel had been preached only to Jews. When Saul of Tarsus began his aggressive campaign against the Jerusalem Church, every member of the Church, except the apostles, left town (Acts 8:1). Every place that they settled, they preached Christ. Some even traveled north to settle in the despised region of Samaria. To the Jews, the Samaritans were a mongrel race. When the Assyrians captured the Northern Kingdom of Israel, they carried away most of the ten tribes that inhabited the region. They did leave behind farmers, tillers of vineyards, and others to keep the region productive. The Assyrians then imported into Samaria, captives from other nations.⁶³ Over the years, the remnants of the ten tribes intermarried with the Gentile immigrants, producing a mixed-breed race. Later, the Jews of the Southern Kingdom were carried into captivity in Babylon, but they remained ethnically pure. Thus, when the Judeans were returned to their native land, they came as a pure Jewish people. Because the Jews of the North (Samaria) had intermarried with Gentiles, the Judean Jews considered the Samaritans to be a ceremonially unclean race. Jews avoided Samaria and Samaritans. For this reason, when Jewish Christians relocated to Samaria, it was a very significant event. One of those who went to very city of Samaria was Philip, a deacon in the Jerusalem Church. Upon his arrival, Philip began to proclaim Christ to the despised Samaritans. He had significant evangelistic success.

Philip went down to the city of Samaria and began proclaiming Christ to them.⁶ The crowds with one accord were giving attention to what was said by Philip, as they heard and saw the signs which he was performing.... when they believed Philip preaching the good news about the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, they were being baptized, men and women alike. (Acts 8:5-6, 12)

When the apostles, who had remained in Jerusalem, heard that Samaritans had heard the Gospel and that many had been converted, they sent Peter and John to visit the scene. We can see why it was important to send these two apostles, since, even though Jesus had said that they would be witnesses in Samaria (Acts 1:8), up to this point only Jews had received the Gospel. As noted above, Jewish Christians would have trouble accepting mongrel-race Samaritans into the Kingdom. This was a watershed moment in the fulfillment of the Great Commission and needed

⁶³ II Kings 17:5f; 18:9f; Josephus, *Antiquities*, IX, xiv, 1; II Kings 17:24; Ezra 4:10

to be credentialed by apostles – especially Peter to whom Jesus had given the keys to the Kingdom.⁶⁴ When Peter and John arrived, they discovered that even though the converts had been immersed in water, none had received the gift of the Holy Spirit. Thus they laid hands on them and they began receiving the Holy Spirit.

There is much ancillary material and questions about this episode that we could examine (for example, the nature of the reception of the Spirit), but we will confine ourselves to the pursuit of the answer to the question, *What must I do to be saved?* We construct the next portion of our chart.

Scriptural event	Hearing	Believing	Repenting	Confessing	Baptism	Receive the Holy Spirit
Pentecost Acts 2:38-41	X	X	X		X	X
Samaritans Acts 8:4-24	X	X			X	X

Case Study No. 3 The Ethiopian Eunuch Acts 8:26-40

In some ways, the account of Philip and the Ethiopian Eunuch is one of the most unusual stories in Acts. It is unusual in that Philip was in the midst of a very successful evangelistic crusade, when an angel appeared, telling him to leave the scene and walk south to a spot fifty miles away, where he would intercept the Roman road between Jerusalem and Gaza. The place where he would enter the Roman road would be an uninhabited region.⁶⁵ No explanation was given to Philip as to why he was to make this trip, but he obeyed. When he arrived at the designated location, almost immediately a chariot passed by and the passenger in the chariot was an Ethiopian reading a scroll. The Ethiopian was the royal treasurer of Ethiopia who was a proselyte Jew. This Ethiopian had been to Jerusalem to worship. As a eunuch and a Gentile, he would have been barred from the inner portions of the Temple, but still he would have been able to send a sacrifice into the Temple to be offered in his behalf.⁶⁶

⁶⁴ It is significant that at each stage of the fulfillment of the Great Commission, Peter was Christ's agent to inaugurate or credential the next phase – at Pentecost (Jews), in Samaria (half-breed Jews), in the home of Cornelius (Gentiles). In Matthew 16:19, when Jesus said *I will give you the keys to the Kingdom of Heaven*, the *you*, is singular – i.e., *I will give to you, Peter, the keys....* Thus, It would seem that Peter was Christ's chosen agent to certify the presentation of the Gospel at each stage of development.

⁶⁵ The Greek term, ἔρημος, translated as, *desert*, does not necessarily mean a wasteland. It can refer to a relatively unpopulated district (see Matthew 14:15, 19; Mark 6:35, 39)

⁶⁶ Even though emasculated individuals were shut out of the assembly of Israel – as were Gentiles – yet, both Gentiles and eunuchs, if obedient to the Law of God, were encouraged to worship God and to send in sacrifices with the assurance that they would be accepted (see Deut. 23:1; Isaiah 56:1-8).

An angel had been dispatched to instruct Philip to leave Samaria and travel south, but it was the Holy Spirit who instructed Philip to approach the chariot. When Philip caught up with the chariot, he heard the Ethiopian reading aloud from the Septuagint scroll, Isaiah 53:7-8. Philip asked the Ethiopian if he understood the text. The Ethiopian admitted his inability to understand and asked Philip to get into the chariot and to explain the text. Philip used this text and others to preach Jesus to the Ethiopian.

Then Philip opened his mouth, and beginning from this Scripture he preached Jesus to him.³⁶ As they went along the road they came to some water; and the eunuch said, "Look! Water! What prevents me from being immersed?"³⁷ And Philip said, "If you believe with all your heart, you may." And he answered and said, "I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God."³⁸ And he ordered the chariot to stop; and they both went down into the water, Philip as well as the eunuch, and he baptized him.³⁹ When they came up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord snatched Philip away; and the eunuch no longer saw him, but went on his way rejoicing. (Acts 8:35-39).

We must note that verse 37 (underlined above) is of questionable integrity. The earliest extant manuscript which contains these words is from the 6th Century AD. Earlier manuscripts do not contain this verse. However, as early as the Second Century there was a tradition that the Ethiopian had made this confession, since Irenaeus quotes part of it (*Against Heresies*, III, XII, 8).⁶⁷ Therefore, based upon Irenaeus' quote, and the succeeding events, we will assume that such a statement was made by Philip and responded to by the Ethiopian, even though the verse is very suspect.

We proceed to complete our chart of this case study.

Scriptural event	Hearing	Believing	Repenting	Confessing	Baptism	Receive the Holy Spirit
Pentecost Acts 2:38-41	X	X	X		X	X
Samaritans Acts 8:4-24	X	X			X	X
Ethiopian Acts 8:26-40	X	X <i>questionable</i>		X <i>questionable</i>	X	

⁶⁷ Erasmus published the first printed Greek New Testament in 1516. When Erasmus was constructing the Greek text of the New Testament, he chiefly depended on a late medieval manuscript for his text. The main manuscript that he had did not contain this verse. However, another one in his possession had it written in the margin, but not in the text. Erasmus inserted the verse into the text because he "judged that it had been omitted by the carelessness of scribes (*arbitror omissum librarium incuria*). Most scholars are of the opinion that there was no reason why scribes should have omitted this material, if originally it had stood in the text. For commentary on this question, see Metzger, *Textual Commentary*, page 358-359.

Case Study No. 4
Saul of Tarsus
Acts 9:1-18; 22:1-16; 26:12-18

Saul of Tarsus was the hate-filled enemy of the Church. He was zealous for the Law of Moses and viewed the Church as a great threat to the Law. As a result, he persecuted Christians, voting for the death penalty when Christians were arrested and accused (Acts 26:10). When he learned that there were Christians in Damascus, he sought and received papers from the leading Jerusalem priests, authorizing him to take a contingent of soldiers and go to Damascus to arrest Christians. Not far from his destination, Saul had a divine encounter with Jesus.

As he was traveling, it happened that he was approaching Damascus, and suddenly a light from heaven flashed around him; and he fell to the ground and heard a voice saying to him, "Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?" And he said, "Who are You, Lord?" And He said, "I am Jesus whom you are persecuting, but get up and enter the city, and it will be told you what you must do." (Acts 9:3-6).

The soldiers who accompanied Saul saw the light and heard the voice but they were not able to understand what was being said (Acts 22:9).

Blinded by the light, Saul was led into the city where he fasted and prayed for three days. On the third day, a Christian in Damascus, Ananias, was overwhelmed by a vision of the Lord. He prostrated himself and then the Lord said,

"Get up and go to the street called Straight, and inquire at the house of Judas for a man from Tarsus named Saul, for he is praying and he has seen in a vision a man named Ananias come in and lay his hands on him, so that he might regain his sight." (Acts 9:11-12).

Of special interest to our quest is Our Lord's consistent use of human agents to deliver the answer to the question, *What must I do to be saved*. In the episode before us, Jesus sent Ananias to instruct Saul, rather than instructing Saul in the Divine vision (even as He had sent Philip to intercept the Ethiopian).

Ananias at first objected to the instruction to seek out Saul, because he knew of Saul's violent persecution of the Church. In response, the Lord told Ananias that this Saul was a chosen vessel who would bear the Gospel to Jews, Gentiles, even to kings. Ananias, in obedience, went to the home of Judas, where he found the blind Saul of Tarsus. He laid his hands on Saul and Saul was healed of his blindness. There are three records of this event,⁶⁸ but only two of the accounts are relevant to our quest: Luke's description of the episode in Acts 9 and Paul's recounting of the episode in Acts 22.

⁶⁸ Acts 9:3-19; 22:6-16; 26:12-18

So Ananias departed and entered the house, and after laying his hands on him said, "Brother Saul, the Lord Jesus, who appeared to you on the road by which you were coming, has sent me so that you may regain your sight and be filled with the Holy Spirit." And immediately there fell from his eyes something like scales, and he regained his sight, and he got up and was immersed; (Acts 9:17-18)

Now why do you delay? Get up and be immersed, and wash away your sins, calling on His name.' (Acts 22:16)

Of significance is the Acts 22 account, because it is the record of Ananias instructions to Paul, instructing him what he must do to have his sins washed away, i.e. to be saved. Acts 9 does not contain Ananias' instructions, but 9:18 does inform us that the episode concluded with Saul's being immersed, in harmony with the instructions of 22:16, *be immersed, and wash away your sins, calling on His name.*

We construct our table for this event.

Scriptural event	Hearing	Believing	Repenting	Confessing	Baptism	Receive the Holy Spirit
Pentecost Acts 2:38-41	X	X	X		X	X
Samaritans Acts 8:4-24	X	X			X	X
Ethiopian Acts 8:26-40	X	X <i>questionable</i>		X <i>questionable</i>	X	
Saul of Tarsus Acts 9:1-18; Acts 22:1-16	X	Implied			X	X

Case Study No. 5 Cornelius' Household Acts 10

Case Study No. 5, is the third watershed event of the expansion of the Kingdom (Pentecost in Jerusalem [Jews] and Samaria [half-breed Jews], being the first two). Once again, as in stages one and two, Peter is the one who certified this third stage of Gospel expansion. Cornelius, even though a Gentile, had come to accept Jehovah, the God proclaimed by the Jews, as the true God. He was a man of prayer and was very generous toward the Jewish population of Caesarea. Cornelius followed the Jewish custom of praying each day at designated times. One day, while praying at the designated 3 PM prayer time, he was confronted by angel who gave him instructions that were both unusual and very specific (shades of Philip in Samaria!). He was to send some men to Joppa, and they were to find the house of a tanner named Simon – the house was located by the sea - a man named, "Peter," was staying there - the men were to bring Peter to Caesarea.

At about the time that the men arrived at the specified house, Peter was on the roof praying while dinner was being prepared. Through a vision, God prepared Peter to enter the home of Gentiles - something an orthodox Jew would have considered unthinkable.⁶⁹ Cornelius' messengers explained their mission to Peter, explaining that they had come because an angel had instructed their master to send for Peter. Peter accompanied them back to the home of Cornelius, where Peter found a sizable company of Gentiles waiting for him. Cornelius recounted his experience with the angel and Peter then stated,

"I most certainly understand now that God is not one to show partiality, but in every nation the man who fears Him and does what is right is welcome to Him. (Acts 10:34-35)

Peter proceeded to preach the Gospel. While he was preaching, the Holy Spirit fell upon the audience and they began speaking in tongues. This convinced Peter and the Jewish Christians who had accompanied him, that God now was ready to open the doors of the Kingdom to Gentiles, as well as Jews. Peter stated,

"Surely no one can refuse the water for these to be immersed who have received the Holy Spirit just as we did, can he?" And he ordered them to be immersed in the name of Jesus Christ. Then they asked him to stay on for a few days. (Acts 10:47-48)

It was the reception of the Holy Spirit that assured the Jewish Christians that it was acceptable to immerse Gentiles. It is obvious that this is the reason for this sequence of events. When Peter returned to Jerusalem and was taken to task for fraternizing with Gentiles, and for preaching the Gospel to them, he defended his action by describing this action of the Holy Spirit. This is what convinced the Jerusalem church leaders, as it had Peter and his Jewish companions, that it now was acceptable to immerse Gentile converts.

It also is noteworthy that the reception of the Spirit was not a substitute for immersion – nor did it make immersion unnecessary. Clearly, Peter considered immersion to be necessary for one to become a part of God's saved company – the Church.

Here, for the first time, we encounter the preposition, ἐν (*en*) ... *in the name of Jesus Christ*, as a declaration of the authority for immersing. This is similar to what a policeman might say, "Stop, in the name of the law." The implication was that as representatives of Jesus Christ, Peter and the other Christians would immerse the Gentile converts.

We note that this is another example of Our Lord's using a human agent, rather than some spiritual entity to deliver the salvic message. The angel who appeared to Cornelius did not instruct him concerning salvation, but told him to send for Peter who would instruct him.⁷⁰

⁶⁹ Acts 11:1-3

⁷⁰ Acts 10:22, 33

We complete our table for the Fifth Case Study.

Scriptural event	Hearing	Believing	Repenting	Confessing	Baptism	Receive the Holy Spirit
Pentecost Acts 2:38-41	X	X	X		X	X
Samaritans Acts 8:4-24	X	X			X	X
Ethiopian Acts 8:26-40	X	X <i>Questionable</i>		X <i>questionable</i>	X	
Saul of Tarsus Acts 9:1-18; Acts 22:1-16	X	Implied			X	X
Cornelius Acts 10	X	Implied Acts 11:17			X	X

Case Study No. 6
Lydia & her household
Acts 16:12-15

Paul, Silas, and Timothy, in response to a vision given to Paul, sailed from Troas to the Roman colony of Philippi. They stayed in the city for a few days, and when the Sabbath day arrived (Saturday), they went to a riverside to pray. It was a custom for Jews who were in a region where there were no synagogues to go the riverside to pray on the Sabbath. When the apostolic team arrived at the riverside, they found a group of women who were there for the same purpose. The men sat down and began speaking to the women about Christ. One of the devout women was a business woman named Lydia. The Lord opened Lydia's heart to respond to the Gospel. She and her household were immersed.

A woman named Lydia, from the city of Thyatira, a seller of purple fabrics, a worshiper of God, was listening; and the Lord opened her heart to respond to the things spoken by Paul.¹⁵ And when she and her household had been immersed, she urged us, saying, "If you have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come into my house and stay." (Acts 16:14-15)

We construct our chart for this very brief case study.

Scriptural event	Hearing	Believing	Repenting	Confessing	Baptism	Receive the Holy Spirit
Pentecost Acts 2:38-41	X	X	X		X	X
Samaritans Acts 8:4-24	X	X			X	X
Ethiopian Acts 8:26-40	X	X <i>Questionable</i>		X <i>questionable</i>	X	
Saul of Tarsus Acts 9:1-18; Acts 22:1-16	X	Implied			X	X
Cornelius Acts 10	X	Implied Acts 11:17			X	X
Lydia & her household Acts 16:12-15	X	X			X	

Case Study No. 7 The Philippian Jailor Acts 16:25-34

It seems that the apostolic band, and possibly the women, went daily to the riverside to pray (Acts 16:16). As the men traveled to the place of prayer, a slave woman who was possessed by a spirit of divination followed them every day, and kept crying out, "*These men are bond-servants of the Most High God, who are proclaiming to you the way of salvation.*" (Acts 16:17). This seems to have been some sort of demonic harassment, rather than a positive declaration. In any case, after several days of this, Paul became annoyed and cast out the spirit (Acts 16:18). The owners of the slave girl had obtained much profit from her ability to tell fortunes, etc., and suddenly they had lost their income. So, they stirred up the crowd against the preachers, and as a result, Paul and Silas were beaten severely and then imprisoned. To make certain that they were secure, the jailor fastened their feet in stocks.

At midnight, Paul and Silas, in spite of their misery were praying and singing hymns, when, suddenly a huge earthquake shook the prison. All of the prison doors were opened and the shackles were loosed. If a Roman guard lost a prisoner, he was executed. The jailor, thinking that all of his prisoners had escaped started to kill himself, but Paul cried out, *Do yourself no harm, we are all here.*

The reputation of Paul and Silas was such that the jailor knew what they had been proclaiming before their arrest – that, after all, had been the stated reason for their arrest.⁷¹ As noted at the

⁷¹ Acts 16:19-21

beginning of this paper, his mood moved from horror to gratitude, realizing that he had witnessed the power of Divinity. Moved and convinced by the experience, he asked the question,

"Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" They said, "Believe in (ἐπί) the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved, you and your household." And they spoke the word of the Lord to him together with all who were in his house. And he took them that very hour of the night and washed their wounds, and immediately he was baptized, he and all his household. (Acts 16:30-33)

As noted earlier, ἐπί with the accusative (ἐπί τὸν κύριον Ἰησοῦν – *on the Lord Jesus*) is understood as indicating one of the following: *on, to, against*. In this passage, *on*, is the rendering that fits best the idea that Paul is conveying – the idea of *trust*, which is one of the ideas encompassed by the use of the term, πιστεύω (*pisteuo*). Paul declares that trusting in the work of Christ is the condition required for salvation. In order for the jailor and his household to come to that point of faith/trust, Paul and Silas preached the Gospel to them and then immediately immersed them.

We construct the chart for this case study.

Scriptural event	Hearing	Believing	Repenting	Confessing	Baptism	Receive the Holy Spirit
Pentecost Acts 2:38-41	X	X	X		X	X
Samaritans Acts 8:4-24	X	X			X	X
Ethiopian Acts 8:26-40	X	X <i>questionable</i>		X <i>questionable</i>	X	
Saul of Tarsus Acts 9:1-18; Acts 22:1-16	X	Implied			X	X
Cornelius Acts 10	X	Implied Acts 11:17			X	X
Lydia & her household Acts 16:12-15	X	X			X	
Philippian jailor Acts 16:25-34	X	Implied V 31			X	

Case Study No. 8

Corinthians

Acts 18:8

When Paul first arrived in Corinth, he stayed with two Jewish tent-makers, Aquila and Priscilla. Paul was a tent-maker by trade and so he and the couple worked together in that endeavor. There was a Jewish synagogue in Corinth and so Paul went to the synagogue every Sabbath and sought to persuade the members of the congregation (Jews and Gentile converts to Judaism) that Jesus was the Messiah. When the rest of the apostolic team, Silas and Timothy, arrived in Corinth, Paul stopped making tents and devoted himself, fulltime, to the proclamation of the Gospel to the Jews. When the Jews resisted, Paul shook out his garments and declared,

"Your blood be on your own heads! I am clean. From now on I will go to the Gentiles."
(Acts 18:6).

Paul abandoned the synagogue and began preaching in the house next door to the synagogue, the home of a man named, Titus Justus. Some of the Jews came to the house to hear Paul preach and one of them, Crispus, who was the leader of the synagogue, became a convert. Many of the Corinthian Gentiles also became believers.

Crispus, the leader of the synagogue, believed in the Lord with all his household, and many of the Corinthians when they heard were believing and being baptized. (Acts 18:8)

Again , we explore the interesting and revealing terms used in this verse.

- *Crispus....believed in the Lord.* There is no preposition to be rendered as *in*, preceding *the Lord*. The reason for inserting that term is because the case of *the Lord*, is dative – a direct object of the past tense of the verb, *believe*. Thus, the idea of the Greek is *trusted in the Lord*.⁷²
- *Were believing and being baptized.* There is nothing complicated about this construction. They believed what Paul had preached and in response were immersed.

So, we construct the table related to this case study.

⁷² See Daniel B. Wallace, *Greek Grammar Beyond Basics* (Grand Rapids, Zondervan Publishing House) 1996, page 172

Scriptural event	Hearing	Believing	Repenting	Confessing	Baptism	Receive the Holy Spirit
Pentecost Acts 2:38-41	X	X	X		X	X
Samaritans Acts 8:4-24	X	X			X	X
Ethiopian Acts 8:26-40	X	X <i>questionable</i>		X <i>questionable</i>	X	
Saul of Tarsus Acts 9:1-18; Acts 22:1-16	X	Implied			X	X
Cornelius Acts 10	X	Implied Acts 11:17			X	X
Lydia & her household Acts 16:12-15	X	X			X	
Philippian jailor Acts 16:25-34	X	Implied V 31			X	
Corinthians Acts 18:8	X	X			X	

Case Study No. 9 Disciples of John the Immerser Acts 19:1-5

The final case of conversion, in which sufficient detail is given to make it relevant to our quest is the episode involving disciples of John the Immerser. After spending time at home-base in Antioch, Paul traveled through Galatia and Phrygia, strengthening the disciples. Eventually, he arrived in Ephesus, where he met some disciples, in whom he detected an inexplicable deficiency – something just didn't seem right about them. Puzzled, he asked them if they had received the Holy Spirit when they believed. It turned out that they were disciples of John the Immerser and had not heard the Gospel message in its entirety. Thus, they replied that they had not even heard of the Holy Spirit. Because every convert normally⁷³ receives the Holy Spirit when he is immersed, Paul asked them, *Into what then were you immersed?* They replied, *Into John's immersion.* Paul instructed them of the temporary nature of John's immersion, and that the purpose of John's ministry had been to prepare people for the soon to be revealed Messiah – and that Jesus is that Messiah. In response,

When they heard this, they were immersed in the name of the Lord Jesus.⁶ And when Paul had laid his hands upon them, the Holy Spirit came on them, and they began speaking with tongues and prophesying. (Acts 19:5-6)

⁷³ “Normally,” because God in His Sovereignty is free to alter that order, of events. This He did in the case of the Samaritans and the household of Cornelius – for obvious reasons in both instances.

They received the Holy Spirit and with that reception there were manifestations, removing any doubt that there was a difference between the immersion of John and the immersion of Jesus.

We create our chart for this final case study.

Scriptural event	Hearing	Believing	Repenting	Confessing	Baptism	Receive the Holy Spirit
Pentecost Acts 2:38-41	X	X	X		X	X
Samaritans Acts 8:4-24	X	X			X	X
Ethiopian Acts 8:26-40	X	X <i>Questionable</i>		X <i>questionable</i>	X	
Saul of Tarsus Acts 9:1-18; Acts 22:1-16	X	Implied			X	X
Cornelius Acts 10	X	Implied Acts 11:17			X	X
Lydia & her household Acts 16:12-15	X	X			X	
Philippian jailor Acts 16:25-34	X	Implied V 31			X	
Corinthians Acts 18:8	X	X			X	
Disciples of John Acts 19:1-5	X	Implied			X	X

Summary, Analysis, and Conclusions

- **Hearing** and **immersion** are stated clearly in each instance.
- **Believe** is stated clearly in four instances, implied in four and the testimony is uncertain in one.
- **Receiving the Holy Spirit** is mentioned in five of the episodes.
- **Repenting** is mentioned once.
- **Confession** of one's faith occurs only once, in a questionable text

It would seem that the apostolic model is clear, as far as hearing, believing, and immersion are concerned. This, of course, rules out infant baptism.⁷⁴

- Yet, we must not conclude that because repenting is mentioned only once and confession is mentioned only once does not mean that they did not occur in each instance – they just are not mentioned in the summary record of the particular episode.
- Neither does this mean that in four of the examples, the converts did not receive the Holy Spirit after being immersed – as noted earlier, the epistles testify to the necessity of that presence in the heart of all who are saved. For that matter, I Corinthians 12:13 informs us that in some manner, the Holy Spirit is involved in one's immersion – the event that makes one a part of the Church – God's Redeemed Community.

For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free, and we were all made to drink of one Spirit.

What this data does reveal is that most denominations and the evangelical movement (especially evangelical para-church organizations) have substituted humanly developed procedures for the biblical model. Many have assumed the right to replace Christ's command to immerse and the apostolic example of immersion, with sprinkling. The evangelical movement has made the "sinner's prayer," the terminal act of salvation, whereas the apostles, in obedience to Christ, made immersion the terminal act.

Some have argued that Mark 16:15-16 nullifies the apostolic model.

And He said to them, "Go into all the world and preach the gospel to all creation."⁷⁵ "He who has believed and has been baptized shall be saved; but he who has disbelieved shall be condemned. (Mark 16:15-16)

Those who take this position, point out that verse 16 states that those who disbelieve will be condemned, but does not say that those who are not baptized will be condemned. Thus, according to this view, the apostolic model cannot be binding. In other words, Jesus considered belief to be the terminal act.

Two responses to this argument seem rather obvious.

- As noted earlier, this is a very questionable text (Mark 16:9-20) and thus should not be the basis for any doctrine. The only appropriate role for these disputed verses is to substantiate truths present in clearly authentic texts.
- It also is obvious that if one did not believe, he would not be baptized. The Mark 16:16 statement is made in the same way that one might say to a person desiring an M.Div degree from a seminary, "If you enroll in our graduate program and complete the requirements, we will award you an M.Div degree. Of course, if you don't enroll in our

⁷⁴ The issue of the salvation of those who die in their infancy or early childhood is not within the purview of this paper. However, those who believe that the doctrine of original sin includes guilt, must find a way to remove that guilt, and thus those who hold this belief practice infant baptism.

⁷⁵ The Greek term is rendered either as *creature* or *creation*. The term, κτίσις, refers to God's creative action and either of these renderings is correct. The context must determine which rendering is the best.

program, then we won't award you an M.Div degree." Enrollment is the gate, whereas completing the requirements is what causes the degree to be awarded. Thus, in Mark 16:16 belief is the gate, whereas immersion completes the process.

Implications for Contemporary New Testament Churches

With this data before us, we face the question of its relevance for contemporary New Testament churches. How important is it for us to follow the apostolic model? Even though both Jesus and the apostles commanded and practiced immersion, do we have the right to offer a substitute – sprinkling or pouring? The statement frequently is made today that the only thing important is the application of water and the mode is not relevant – is this statement correct?

Do we have the authority to ask people to pray the sinner's prayer, inviting Jesus into their hearts, and declare them to be "saved," even though there is no evidence of any such practice in the New Testament? Do we have the right to omit immersion, or relegate it to some vague role – something to be done sometime in the future? Do we have the right to tell someone who was sprinkled as an infant that they are, "OK"?

How important is it for us to adhere to the command given by the resurrected Christ and the apostolic understanding of that command? Where can we find an answer to these questions? As always, we turn to the Scriptures for an answer.

The Old Testament sheds significant light on this issue. Even though the ceremonies in the Law and the Old Testament sacerdotal commands no longer are relevant, truths and principles concerning God and His purposes are both relevant and abiding.

It is clear that Jesus and the apostles considered the revelation of the Old Testament to be of ongoing relevance.

- The New Testament cites the Old Testament sixty times (sixty-three, in the Greek text on which the KJV is based), with the phrase, "it is written...."⁷⁶
- Frequently in His debates with the religious leaders who opposed Him, Our Lord Jesus declared God's perspective with the statement, "It is written...."
- Paul wrote to his younger associate, Timothy,

You, however, continue in the things you have learned and become convinced of, knowing from whom you have learned them; and that from childhood you have known the sacred writings which are able to give you the wisdom that leads to salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work. (II Timothy 3:14-17)

⁷⁶Matt. 2:5; 4:4, 6f, 10; 11:10; 21:13; 26:24, 31; Mk. 1:2; 7:6; 9:12f; 14:21, 27; Lk. 2:23; 3:4; 4:4, 8, 10; 7:27; 19:46; 24:46; Jn. 6:31, 45; 12:14; Acts 1:20; 7:42; 15:15; 23:5; Rom. 1:17; 2:24; 3:4, 10; 4:17; 8:36; 9:13, 33; 10:15; 11:8, 26; 12:19; 14:11; 15:3, 9, 21; I Co. 1:19, 31; 2:9; 3:19; 9:9; 10:7;. 14:21; 15:45; II Co. 4:13; 8:15; 9:9; Gal. 3:10, 13; 4:22, 27; Heb. 10:7; 1 Pet. 1:16

The Scriptures to which Paul referred were the Genesis through Malachi record of God, His relationship with His creation, His sovereignty over the nations, His dealing with His people, and His sacerdotal institutions.

From these, and a host of other examples that could be cited, it is apparent that the New Testament preachers and teachers did not hesitate to look to the Old Testament for abiding truths concerning God and His Will. We are wise when we follow in their train.

The primary truth communicated in the Old Testament is this: *God is God.*

Because God is God, no creature has a right either to ignore or to alter any of His orders. When Jehovah gave His people a command or an instruction, He expected explicit obedience. No substitute was acceptable in place of that which God had commanded or imparted. To offer something less than, or different from, what God prescribed or commanded, was to show irreverence and to commit blasphemy.

In the following section, we will note a number of examples, then we will draw conclusions from these episodes.

The Tabernacle and The Temple

A clear demonstration of the truth just stated is seen in God's design of the Tabernacle, and later the Temple. Associated with these were God's instructions concerning how worship was to proceed as well as the proper conduct toward the holy items associated with these two worship structures.

When Jehovah gave the plan for the Tabernacle and the elements associated with it, He gave this warning:

According to all that I am going to show you, as the pattern of the tabernacle and the pattern of all its furniture, just so you shall construct it... And see that you make them after the pattern for them, which was shown to you on the mountain. (Exodus 25:9, 40)

Then you shall erect the tabernacle according to its plan which you have been shown in the mountain. (Exodus 26:30)

...who serve a copy and shadow of the heavenly things, just as Moses was warned by God when he was about to erect the tabernacle; for, "See," He says, "that you make all things according to the pattern which was shown you on the mountain." (Hebrews 8:5)

When the Tabernacle and its appointments were made, Jehovah's pattern was followed without deviation.

Now this was the workmanship of the lampstand, hammered work of gold; from its base to its flowers, it was hammered work; according to the pattern which Jehovah had showed Moses, so he made the lampstand. (Numbers 8:4)

Our fathers had the tabernacle of testimony in the wilderness, just as He who spoke to Moses directed him to make it according to the pattern which he had seen. (Acts 7:44)

Four hundred eighty years after the Israelites left Egypt, Solomon began the construction of the Temple. He did not employ great architects to design what would be the most important

building ever constructed. He followed the plan and design that Jehovah had given to his father, David. I Chronicles 28:11-18 records David's impartation of the plan to Solomon. Following the description of the future Temple, David declared,

"All this," said David, "Jehovah made me understand in writing by His hand upon me, all the details of this pattern." (I Chronicles 28:19)

Like the Tabernacle, the Temple of Jehovah was designed by Jehovah, Himself. When the Temple was dedicated, God demonstrated His approval by filling the Temple with a thick cloud that was permeated with His glory. (II Chronicles 5:13-14; 7:1-3)

All had been done according to God's plan.

Episodes that shed light on the question

A number of episodes recorded in the Old Testament shed light on the question before us. The following are a few examples.

Moses and Gershom

The Old Testament records instances in which Jehovah, in His grace, sometimes tolerated less than perfect obedience for a season, but ultimately demanded conformity. An example is Moses' failure to circumcise Gershom. Circumcision had been established by Jehovah as the abiding seal of the Covenant for all Israelites. Moses' failure to circumcise his son was tolerated until he began the trip to Egypt to fulfill the ministry to which Jehovah had called him. The seriousness of this infraction is seen in that even though Jehovah had called Moses to be the human agent of Israel's deliverance, He sought to kill Moses because of this disobedience.

Now it came about at the lodging place on the way that Jehovah met him and sought to put him to death. Then Zipporah took a flint and cut off her son's foreskin and threw it at Moses' feet, and she said, "You are indeed a bridegroom of blood to me." So He let him alone. At that time she said, "You are a bridegroom of blood"-- because of the circumcision. (Exodus 4:24-26)

One can only speculate as to why Moses had failed to circumcise Gershom. Zipporah's statement, indicating resentment at having to circumcise Gershom, would lead us to believe that circumcising their son had been a point of contention between them and that Moses had bowed to her opposition. For whatever the reason, it would seem that obedience to this command outweighed God's call on Moses' life.

Again, the lesson is that God expects explicit obedience. He expects His people to do things His way. By our obedience we honor Him as God.

The Meribah Episode

Moses' most notable failure to obey God explicitly and the consequence therefrom is recorded in the Meribah episode, recorded in Numbers Chapter 20.

Thirty-seven years and six months after Jehovah miraculously delivered the Israelites from Egypt and two and one-half years before they entered the Promised Land, they faced a season of severe drought. Throughout the Exodus experience, even though Jehovah had provided for them in

every circumstance, the people continually grumbled, whined, and complained. Facing this shortage of water, they began to complain again. They even accused Moses of bringing them into the wilderness to die. Moses and Aaron went into the Tabernacle to seek Jehovah.

Then Moses and Aaron came in from the presence of the assembly to the doorway of the tent of meeting, and fell on their faces. Then the glory of Jehovah appeared to them; and Jehovah spoke to Moses, saying, "Take the rod; and you and your brother Aaron assemble the congregation and speak to the rock before their eyes, that it may yield its water. You shall thus bring forth water for them out of the rock and let the congregation and their beasts drink." (Number 20:6-8)

Moses and Aaron took the rod and gathered the people before a specified rock, just as Jehovah had commanded. However, Moses' patience was at an end. After almost four decades of putting up with their constant complaining, Moses lost his temper. Instead of speaking to the rock, he spoke to the people and struck the rock.

"Listen now, you rebels; shall we bring forth water for you out of this rock?" Then Moses lifted up his hand and struck the rock twice with his rod; and water came forth abundantly, and the congregation and their beasts drank. (Numbers 20:10-11)

Jehovah responded immediately.

But Jehovah said to Moses and Aaron, "Because you have not believed Me, to treat Me as holy in the sight of the sons of Israel, therefore you shall not bring this assembly into the land which I have given them." (Numbers 20:12)

The sin was two-fold.

- Moses, in his frustration, gave the impression that he and Aaron would bring forth the water.
- Instead of speaking to the rock, Moses vigorously struck the rock twice, as if human energy and effort would make the miracle more certain.

One year and eleven months after the experience in Meribah, just seven months before Israel crossed the Jordan into the Promised Land, God commanded Aaron to leave the assembly and ascend Mount Hor.

- Aaron climbed the mountain and died.
- No one was with him to bury him;
- Jehovah attended to these things.
- Aaron was not allowed to enter the Promised Land with Israel.

Two and one half years after Meribah, Moses ascended to Nebo, the highest peak of Mount Pisgah, and looked over into the Promised Land; then he, like Aaron, died with only Jehovah as witness.

Moses and Aaron paid the penalty for Moses' failure at Meribah. He did not obey Jehovah, explicitly, and thus he failed to honor Him as God.

Nadab and Abihu

One of the most striking examples of God's displeasure with less than precise obedience involved Aaron's two eldest sons. Aaron had four sons, Nadab, Abihu, Eleazar, and Ithamar. The two oldest sons, Nadab and Abihu, were selected for a special role before Jehovah. They and their father, Aaron, along with seventy elders of Israel were invited by God to come to the base of the mountain when Moses ascended into the presence of God. They were given the privilege of experiencing a special epiphany (Exodus 24:1-11).

Later, Nadab and Abihu, along with their two brothers, were chosen by God to join their father, Aaron, as priests (Exodus 28:1). Yet, for Nadab and Abihu, this happy prospect was not to be. On the inaugural day of their priesthood, tragedy aborted the role to which God had assigned them.

Following the consecration of Aaron and his sons, the first offerings of consecration were presented to Jehovah. After Aaron had made the sin offering, the burnt offering, and the peace offering, he blessed the people and stepped down from the altar. Aaron and Moses then went into the Tabernacle for a brief time. When they came out, they again blessed the people and God responded – the glory of Jehovah appeared to all the people and fire came out from Jehovah and consumed the offerings that rested on the altar. (Leviticus 9)

The response of the people was ecstatic. The people shouted and fell on their faces. In the enthusiasm of the moment, Nadab and Abihu grabbed their respective firepans, put incense in them as an offering before Jehovah to accompany the praises of the people. Immediately, fire came from God and killed them. The record states that they had *offered strange fire before Jehovah, which He had not commanded them.* (Leviticus 10:1)

Various explanations have been given concerning the meaning of *strange fire*. What was the offense? It is most reasonable to conclude that they committed two sins:

- Clearly, they were presenting an incense-offering that was not commanded by Jehovah. Jehovah's ordained schedule for the offering of incense was at the time of the morning and evening sacrifice. (Exodus 30:7-8; Numbers 28:3ff)
- A probable additional sin was the offering of an incense other than that which was the prescribed incense (Exodus 30:9, 34-38)

Be that as it may, these two priests offered incense according to their own impulse, not in explicit obedience to Jehovah. Moses explained to Aaron,

*Then Moses said to Aaron, "It is what Jehovah spoke, saying,
'By those who come near Me I will be treated as holy,
And before all the people I will be honored.'"*

So Aaron, therefore, kept silent. (Leviticus 10:3)

By following their own impulse, rather than carefully complying with God's instructions, they were not treating Jehovah as holy. If this were the only example of God's emphasizing the

importance of explicit obedience (it is not), we would be warned sufficiently not to take the attitude,

I know what God commanded, but I have something just as good.

This episode strongly communicates the fact that God expects explicit, careful obedience, without deviation.

The Unnamed Prophet Who Believed a Lie

A strong lesson on explicit obedience is contained in the I Kings 13 record of an unnamed prophet whom Jehovah commissioned to go to Bethel and prophecy against the illegal altar. Jehovah told this prophet that he should neither eat nor drink while in Bethel, and that he was to return home by some road other than the one by which he came to the city. In obedience to this command, after his ministry was complete, the prophet refused the king's invitation to visit the palace and he began his journey back home by a different route (I Kings 13:7-10).

An old prophet who lived in Bethel heard about the exploits of this prophetic visitor. The old prophet pursued the visiting prophet and overtook him on the road. The old prophet invited the younger prophet to return to Bethel and be refreshed with bread and water. When the visiting prophet reported that God forbade him from doing that, the older prophet lied and told him that an angel had appeared to him and had spoken by the word of Jehovah, commanding him to bring the visitor back to Bethel for refreshment. Believing the old prophet's lie, the visiting prophet returned to Bethel, where he ate bread and drank water. (I Kings 13:11-19)

Immediately, the word of Jehovah came upon the older prophet and he cried out that because the visiting prophet had disobeyed Jehovah, he would die away from home. The old prophet, evidently feeling remorse for what he had done, saddled a donkey for his visitor, who began the journey home. On the road, he was slain by a lion. (I Kings 13:23-25)

This is an instance in which God's word was clear. The visiting prophet was deceived into believing that God had changed His mind. Even though he was not disobeying God deliberately, he paid the price for not obeying God's command explicitly.

Of note is the fact that as far as the record goes, the deceitful old prophet was not punished for his deception – the disobedient prophet paid the price.

This episode emphasizes the importance of being wary of anything that claims to be a substitute for or alternative to God's known command.

Many more Old Testament examples of the principle that God's plan, God's command, things imparted by God, were to be received, followed, and obeyed without failure. No deviation was sanctioned by the Ruler of the Universe.

Tolerated Deviations by Sincere Servants of Jehovah

Even though deviations were not sanctioned by Jehovah, fallen man created situations in which less than perfect conformity was tolerated temporarily by Jehovah. In such instances, Jehovah displayed both His grace and His severity. The obvious example of this is the tent that David built for the Ark of the Covenant and the events surrounding the transportation of the Ark.

As already noted, Jehovah had given the design for the tent, which was to be the place where He met with Israel (the tent of meeting), while Israel wandered in the wilderness. It was the place of worship, and the home of the Ark,⁷⁷ During the priesthood of Eli, Israel's spiritual condition had deteriorated to the point that the Ark had become a superstitious symbol. When Israel was losing a fight with the Philistines, the priests audaciously removed the Ark from the tent and marched with it into battle. Their attitude was, "We are losing the battle...Go get God." Jehovah, via the ark, was regarded as a rabbit's foot – a good luck charm - that Israel could use to guarantee the favorable outcome of its endeavor. Jehovah refused to be used by man; not only was Israel defeated, but the Philistines captured the Ark. (I Samuel 4)

Through the succeeding events associated with the Ark, Jehovah demonstrated that He was not just another god, but that He is God. Each place that the Philistines housed the Ark, there was evidence of His supernatural presence. The Philistines, suffering because of the presence of the Ark, sought to get rid of it (I Samuel 5; 6:19-21). The Ark finally was deposited in Kiriath-jearim, at the home of Abinadab.

After David was firmly established as king, he made plans to retrieve the Ark, and to bring it back into the heart of the nation. He erected a special tent to be the Ark's resting place. David and a selected retinue went to Kiriath-jearim to conduct the Ark to the resting place that David had prepared.

During this endeavor, Jehovah once again emphasized that He is to be obeyed, explicitly. God had designed the Ark to be carried by two special gold-covered poles. These poles were an essential part of the Ark and it was to be carried in this manner at all times. God had declared that no one was to touch the Ark; the porters were to touch only the poles. In all probability, David's men followed that instruction in lifting the Ark and placing it on the new cart - transporting it on a cart pulled by oxen was easier than carrying it by poles resting on the shoulders of the porters. When the oxen made a move that almost upset the cart, Uzzah, well intentioned, reached out to steady the Ark. Jehovah slew him instantly (II Samuel 6:6-7). After the slaying of Uzzah, David deposited the Ark in the nearby home of Obed-edom, the Gittite (II Samuel 6:9-11).

After three months, David and those with him moved the Ark according to God's original instructions (I Chronicles 15). They brought the Ark to a special tent that David had erected for

⁷⁷Later events demonstrate that the tent was temporary - Jehovah had planned for a Temple when Israel became settled.

this purpose (II Samuel 6:17; I Chronicles 16:1)). David set worshippers before the tent, instructing them to sing, play instruments, and worship Jehovah night and day (I Chronicles 16:4ff).

The original Tabernacle and the altar of sacrifice, both of which had been designed by Jehovah Himself, remained at Gibeon. This continued to be the site where the people of Israel fulfilled the ceremonial and sacrificial commands of Jehovah. Both of these Tabernacles existed at the same time, and both were under the protection of the King. (I Chronicles 16:37-41)

The one thing that this arrangement did not allow was the fulfillment of the blood sacrifices on the Day of Atonement. According to Jehovah's instruction, once a year the High Priest was to take the blood of a sacrificial lamb, go through the veil into the Holy of Holies, and sprinkle the sacrificial blood on the Ark. The original Tabernacle contained the Holy of Holies, but since the removal of the Ark in the Philistine episode, the Holy of Holies had been an empty chamber – the Ark wasn't there. On the other hand, there is no mention of such an arrangement in the Tabernacle that David had built. This second Tabernacle had the Ark, but no Holy of Holies and no Day of Atonement ceremonies. As best as can be determined, the ark was absent from the Holy of Holies for about 43 years.⁷⁸ After the construction of the Temple (God's ultimate plan), all came together again and functioned in a manner consistent with the original instructions Jehovah had given to Moses.

Thus, from the time of Eli's death, when the Ark was captured by the Philistines, until Solomon completed the building the Temple, Jehovah allowed a temporary arrangement, while His ultimate plan – a Temple – was in developmental stages, both cognitively and actively.⁷⁹

A number of important spiritual lessons can be seen in all of this, as well as major questions. The biggest question is, "why didn't David return the Ark to its rightful place – the Holy of Holies which Jehovah had designed for it?" For the purposes of this paper, we must not be sidetracked by such questions.

- The important point for our discussion is to note that God tolerated a temporary situation that was not according to the pattern that He had given to Moses, along with the dire warnings not to deviate from anything imparted.
- Linked with this illustration of God's tolerance is the importance of remembering the lesson associated with the death of Uzzah.
- This was a temporary situation that looked to God's ultimate plan of having the Ark in the Holy of Holies of the Temple that Jehovah Himself had designed.

⁷⁸ The Ark spent seven months among the Philistines (I Samuel 6:1), 20 years at Kiriath-jearim (ISamuel 7:1-2), 3 months at the house of Obed-edom (II Samuel 6:11). By following the time-line of David's life and the fact that the Temple was completed in the eleventh year of Solomon's reign (I Kings 6:1, 38) the Ark would have been 22 years in the Tabernacle that David built.

⁷⁹ It seems that the Tabernacle (including all of its vessels and utensils) was kept in the Temple as a sacred relic (I Kings 8:4ff)

Summary of Points made in these Old Testament Examples

1. When God gives a command, we are to obey that command without deviation. To do otherwise is to deny that God is God.
 2. When fallen man brings about a situation in which God's perfect will is not carried out, we should seek to begin a journey that will bring matters back to the place where God's will is displayed.
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Conclusion

What do we conclude from the apostolic example, the command of Jesus in the Great Commission, and the points made by the Old Testament examples?

Are we to conclude that all of those who have been told that all that they have to do is pray the "sinner's prayer," and from that moment on they are saved – really are not saved? Is every Presbyterian who was "christened" by sprinkling in infancy going to hell? I do not have the right to make such a pronouncement – I am not God. I don't know what God is going to do about all of the aberrations of the apostolic pattern - involving millions of souls - aberrations that for the most part began in the Fourth Century - including the development of Roman Catholic soteriology, the partial adjustments to Roman Catholicism among the various Protestant denominations, and the contemporary evangelical disdain for the necessity of any external element in the plan of salvation.

Rather than our becoming exercised over what others are doing and as a result embarking upon a crusade to condemn these aberrations and acts of disobedience, let us assume the responsibility for our own actions. May we who claim to be contemporary New Testament Churches be faithful to the command of Christ and the apostolic model:

- Preach the Word
- Call people to repentance/belief
- Joyously hear their confession of faith
- Bury the old man in the waters of immersion and raise the convert to live in the newness of life
- Rejoice as we observe the evidence of the Holy Spirit's indwelling the new believer as we teach him to observe all things, whatsoever Our Lord has commanded us.

ADDENDUM

When conducting an inductive study, integrity and honesty demand that the researcher avoid, on the one hand, presenting only those cases that are friendly to a certain conclusion and on the other hand, excluding those that might lead to a different conclusion. Every effort must be made to avoid biased selectivity. Because in the forgoing paper nine cases are cited and seventeen are excluded, it is appropriate to give an explanation as to why the seventeen are excluded. The reason for the exclusion of the seventeen is that these contain such general and ambiguous statements that they do not provide sufficient data to contribute information relevant to the subject of the paper.

In this addendum, we will examine each of the seventeen excluded cases and note why they were deemed insufficient to provide data relevant to the paper's quest.

The Day by Day Additions to the Jerusalem Church Acts 2:41-47

V 41 So then, those who had received his word were baptized; and that day there were added about three thousand souls... V 47 And the Lord was adding to their number day by day those who were being saved.

Verse 47 informs us that the embryonic Jerusalem Church increased in numbers, daily. No information is given as to how they were added to the Church. However, the beginning of the paragraph, Verse 41, informs us that those who believed were immersed and added to the church. Since verse 47 is the conclusion of the paragraph, it is logical to conclude that the day by day converts of verse 47 were added in the same manner as those in verse 41 were added – by being immersed. Even though such an assumption is a reasonable conclusion, no information is given in verse 47 relating to how they were saved or added. Thus, this statement is excluded from the cases cited in the paper.

The Audience at the Gate Beautiful Acts 3:1-4:4

As they were speaking to the people, the priests and the captain of the temple guard and the Sadducees came up to them,² being greatly disturbed because they were teaching the people and proclaiming in Jesus the resurrection from the dead.³ And they laid hands on them and put them in jail until the next day, for it was already evening.⁴ But many of those who had heard the message believed; and the number of the men came to be about five thousand. (Acts 4:1-4)

A number of days after Pentecost, Peter and John went to the Temple to pray at the 3 PM hour of prayer. They encountered a lame beggar at the Temple Gate Beautiful. By the authority of Christ, they healed the lame man. This miracle caused a large crowd to assemble around the apostles, thus providing an opportunity for Peter to preach the Gospel. His sermon was similar to the Pentecost message, with special emphasis on repentance (verse 19). Before Peter completed his sermon, Jewish authorities arrived and arrested the apostles. Thus, no opportunity

was given for the crowd to respond as had been done on Pentecost, nor did Peter have an opportunity to tell the crowd what to do be saved.

Acts 4:4 informs us that many of those in the audience believed. This verse also tells us that the membership of the Jerusalem Church grew to include about 5000 men (a growth of 2000 since Pentecost). The number of women is not stated.⁸⁰

Both valid and invalid assumptions can be made concerning this episode:

- We must not assume that all of the 2000 additions mentioned in Acts 4:4 came from the incident under consideration, since Acts 2:47 informs us that converts were being added to the Jerusalem Church daily.
- The arrival of the Temple authorities, including a coterie of the Temple guard and its captain, who abruptly arrested the apostles, would have been an intimidating experience for the audience. Thus, we cannot assume that all in this audience who believed were added to the Church, since even some who believed Jesus prior to His crucifixion did not follow him because of the fear of man.⁸¹
- It would be absurd not to assume that some of those who are described in Acts 4:4 as having believed, did constitute a portion of the approximately 2000 additions, since that is the immediate context of the statement.
- We also could assume that those believers in 4:4 who were added to the Church were added the same way as those in Chapter 2 (since that is its immediate antecedent), but we must not read into the text something that isn't there.

Recognizing these ambiguities and under these constraints we have not included this episode in the foregoing charts.

Continued Additions to the Jerusalem Church Acts 5:14

And all the more believers in the Lord, multitudes of men and women, were constantly added to their number, (Acts 5:14)

Acts Chapter 5 reports the nature of the ongoing life of the Church, including the death of Ananias and Sapphira (resulting from their lying concerning the price of a piece of land) and the ongoing miracle activity of the apostles. The report concludes with verse 14, stating that the Church experienced a season of dramatic growth. However, no details are given concerning the conversion experience of these additions, nor how these conversions were achieved.

Once again, assumptions could be made, but since no information is given, this case is not included in our study.

⁸⁰ The Greek term is ἀνήρ (*aner*) indicating *men*. If Luke had intended to use a term that could be understood as mankind, he would have used the term, ἄνθρωπος (*anthropos*)

⁸¹ John 7:13; 9:22; 12:42; 19:38;

Continued Multiplication of the Jerusalem Church

Acts 6:1

Now at this time while the disciples were increasing in number, a complaint arose on the part of the Hellenistic Jews against the native Hebrews, because their widows were being overlooked in the daily serving of food. (Acts 6:1)

Once again, Luke reports the growth of the Church, with no information given concerning how these numbers were added to the Church.

Thus, there is no information in this verse that is relevant to the topic of the paper.

The Gospel Reaches Antioch

Acts 11:19-21

So then those who were scattered because of the persecution that occurred in connection with Stephen made their way to Phoenicia and Cyprus and Antioch, speaking the word to no one except to Jews alone.²⁰ But there were some of them, men of Cyprus and Cyrene, who came to Antioch and began speaking to the Greeks also, preaching the Lord Jesus.²¹ And the hand of the Lord was with them, and a large number who believed turned to the Lord. (Acts 11:19-21)

These verses report the exciting advance of the Gospel into Antioch, which soon became the springboard for apostolic missions. However, once again, no details are given other than the statement that a large number believed the preachers and turned to the Lord. No details are given other than a report of evangelistic success. Once again, we could make assumptions, but since no details are given, this incident is excluded from our study.

Barnabas' Evangelistic Success in Antioch

Acts 11:22-24

The news about them reached the ears of the church at Jerusalem, and they sent Barnabas off to Antioch.²³ Then when he arrived and witnessed the grace of God, he rejoiced and began to encourage them all with resolute heart to remain true to the Lord;²⁴ for he was a good man, and full of the Holy Spirit and of faith. And considerable numbers were brought to the Lord. (Acts 11:22-24)

As with the previous report, all that we have in this paragraph is a summary, indicating that Barnabas' ministry was attended by many souls being brought to the Lord. No details are given that would assist us in our study.

The Ongoing Advance of the Gospel

Acts 12:21-24

On an appointed day Herod, having put on his royal apparel, took his seat on the rostrum and began delivering an address to them.²² The people kept crying out, "The voice of a god and not of a man!"²³ And immediately an angel of the Lord struck him because he did not give God the glory, and he was eaten by worms and died.²⁴ But the word of the Lord continued to grow and to be multiplied. (Acts 12:21-24)

Luke seems to contrast the hubris of Herod and his tragedy with the success of the Gospel. Even so, the only statement made here is a general one, that the Word of God continued to grow and to multiply. No information or details are given that would assist us in the foregoing paper.

Sergius Paulus Believes Acts 13:9-12

But Saul, who was also known as Paul, filled with the Holy Spirit, fixed his gaze on him,¹⁰ and said, "You who are full of all deceit and fraud, you son of the devil, you enemy of all righteousness, will you not cease to make crooked the straight ways of the Lord?"¹¹ "Now, behold, the hand of the Lord is upon you, and you will be blind and not see the sun for a time." And immediately a mist and a darkness fell upon him, and he went about seeking those who would lead him by the hand.¹² Then the proconsul believed when he saw what had happened, being amazed at the teaching of the Lord. (Acts 13:9-12)

When the apostolic team (Paul, Barnabas, and John Mark) arrived at Paphos, they encountered a false Jewish prophet, who was attached to the consul, Sergius Paulus. Fearing the loss of his position, the false prophet sought to dissuade Sergius Paulus from believing the apostles' preaching. Paul confronted the false prophet and declared that he would be blinded for a season, which occurred immediately. This so impressed Sergius Paulus that he believed the preachers.

No statement is made about his salvation or his being added to the Church. Of course, as always, assumptions could be made. Once again, a very general statement is given, without any details. Thus, we do not include this episode in our study.

The Gospel Message Spreads at Pisidian Antioch Acts 13:48-49

When the Gentiles heard this, they began rejoicing and glorifying the word of the Lord; and as many as had been appointed to eternal life believed.⁴⁹ And the word of the Lord was being spread through the whole region. (Acts 13:48-49)

When Paul preached to the congregation gathered in the Pisidian Antioch synagogue, his message was received with great interest. Many of the congregation began to follow about Paul and Barnabas, eager to hear more. This aroused jealousy among the Jewish leaders, who began contradicting the preachers. In response, Paul and Barnabas declared that they were turning to the Gentiles. When the Gentiles heard this pronouncement, they rejoiced and *those appointed to eternal life believed*. Again, nothing is stated about how they expressed that belief, nor what they were told to do in response to that belief nor any comment concerning their salvation. Of course, we can make many assumptions but once again, we have but a summary statement that some of the Gentiles, because of God's sovereign choice, believed the message.

Because of this paucity of detail, we have not included this episode in our study.

A Multitude of the Jews and Gentiles at Iconium Believed

Acts 14:1

In Iconium they entered the synagogue of the Jews together, and spoke in such a manner that a large number of people believed, both of Jews and of Greeks. (Acts 14:1)

Again, here is another instance of a summary statement with no indication of what was done to assure the believers of salvation, nor any detail as to how that belief was demonstrated. For this reason, this episode is not included in our study.

Many Disciples Result From Preaching in Derbe

Acts 14:21

After they had preached the gospel to that city and had made many disciples, they returned to Lystra and to Iconium and to Antioch, (Acts 14:21 NAU)

Once again, we encounter a summary statement that contains no detail to assist us in the study that is the topic of the paper. Thus, this episode is not included.

The Churches of Derbe, Lystra, and Iconium Increased in Number

Acts 16:5

So the churches were being strengthened in the faith, and were increasing in number daily. (Acts 16:5)

As in the previous episode, no information is given other than the growth of the churches. Thus, this episode is not included in our study.

Success in Thessalonica

Acts 17:4

And according to Paul's custom, he went to them, and for three Sabbaths reasoned with them from the Scriptures,³ explaining and giving evidence that the Christ had to suffer and rise again from the dead, and saying, "This Jesus whom I am proclaiming to you is the Christ."⁴ And some of them were persuaded and joined Paul and Silas, along with a large number of the God-fearing Greeks and a number of the leading women. (Acts 17:2-4 NAU)

Here we have another quite ambiguous statement, *persuaded and joined Paul and Silas*. Exactly what this statement means, other than that they sided with them, rather than those who opposed them, is not clear. Since details related to our study are not present in this account, we do not include it.

Many Bereans are Persuaded by the Gospel

Acts 17:12

Therefore many of them believed, along with a number of prominent Greek women and men. (Acts 17:12)

After being forced to leave Thessalonica, Paul and his companions, Silas and Timothy, traveled to Berea. Upon their arrival, as was their custom, the apostles showed up at the local Jewish

synagogue where they presented the Gospel. The Bereans took seriously the apostolic proclamation. They did not respond with the bias that was displayed in the synagogue at Thessalonica, neither did they accept at face value what the apostles proclaimed. The Bereans examined the Scriptures to see if the apostolic message were true. As a result, many of them believed the apostolic proclamation.

Here, again, is a summary statement that the message was believed, but no detail is given concerning what they were told to do to be saved, *i.e.*, how to respond to the message. Thus, since important details are missing from this summary statement, we have not included it in our study.

Measured Success in the Athens Areopagus Acts 17:34

Now when they heard of the resurrection of the dead, some began to sneer, but others said, "We shall hear you again concerning this."³³ So Paul went out of their midst.³⁴ But some men joined him and believed, among whom also were Dionysius the Areopagite and a woman named Damaris and others with them. (Acts 17-32-34)

When Paul's enemies arrived in Berea and stirred up crowds against him, the brothers escorted him out of the region and sent him to Athens. Silas and Timothy stayed behind Berea, but as Paul was leaving the region for Athens, he sent word back to Silas and Timothy to join him as soon as possible. While he waited for his two companions to arrive in Athens, Paul, as was his custom, visited the synagogue and disputed with the synagogue leaders concerning the Christ. Not only did he conduct his disputations in the synagogue, but he continued this discourse in the market place – the market place was an arena where orators and philosophers regularly made speeches and argued about concepts and religious matters.

Some of the Athenian intellectuals were intrigued by what Paul was proclaiming because they had not heard anything like it before. One trait of these intellectuals was their obsession with hearing new ideas and most of them had heard just about everything that there was to hear. So, when Paul proclaimed something that was totally new to them, they asked him to speak in the Areopagus (a forum that in pre-Roman times was the site of the supreme court of the region).

Paul presented a masterful oration, and it seems that the audience was following along with him until he mentioned Jesus' being resurrected from the dead. This produced three responses: some sneered, some said that they would like to hear more at a future time, and some followed Paul out of the meeting, believing what he had said.

Once again we encounter a summary statement, *i.e.*, that some believed what Paul had preached, but no information is given as what happened next. Neither is any statement given as to the salvation of those who followed Paul out of the Aeropagus.

Thus, because of the absence of details relevant to our study, this episode is not included.

Success Among the Practitioners of Magic Arts in Ephesus

Acts 19:18

Many also of those who had believed kept coming, confessing and disclosing their practices. (Acts 19:18)

Prior to Paul's lengthy ministry in Ephesus (recorded in Acts 19), he had passed through Ephesus the year before, while en route to Jerusalem. On his first brief visit, he had spoken in the synagogue and there was great interest in his message, but no evidence that anyone was converted (Acts 18:19-21). As Paul continued his journey to Jerusalem, he left in Ephesus two of his closest companions, Priscilla and Aquila. Later, a gifted Jewish orator, Apollos, who had become a believer, arrived in Ephesus. Apollos fervently proclaimed to the synagogue the message of Christ. However, he was deficient in his message, preaching only the immersion preached and practiced by John, rather than Christian immersion. Priscilla and Aquila took Apollos aside and fully informed him of the details that were lacking in his presentation.

When Paul returned to Ephesus, he encountered twelve disciples of John the Baptist and the episode recorded in Acts 19:1-6 took place (covered in detail in the paper). After three months of disputing in the synagogue, Paul moved his operation to the school of Tyrannus where he proclaimed Christ for about two years. He remained in Ephesus for about three years.

The Lord used Paul in an unusual way, during this period. Acts 19:11 states that God was performing extraordinary miracles⁸² through the hands of Paul:

so that handkerchiefs or aprons were even carried from his body to the sick, and the diseases left them and the evil spirits went out. (Acts 19:12)

There were many magicians and sorcerers in Ephesus. Among these were seven Jews, sons of a Jewish chief priest, Sceva. These men claimed to be able to cast out demons. Seeing the power that was exercised through Paul's use of the name of Jesus, these exorcists attempted to cast out a demon by proclaiming the name of Christ over the demon-possessed man. The evil spirit in the man said to these would-be exorcists, *I recognize Jesus, and I know about Paul, but who are you?* The man with the evil spirit then leaped upon them and subdued them. They fled the scene, naked and wounded.

All of this got the attention of the Ephesians and fear came upon many who practiced the magic arts. The result was that a large number of these practitioners believed what Paul was declaring. They came and confessed their sin of sorcery, expressing their repentance of that sin by burning their valuable books of sorcery.

What does this episode tell us about the answer to the question, "what must I do to be saved?" It tells us nothing. No record is contained in this episode of an apostolic instruction concerning salvation, nor any action directed toward that, other than confessing the sin of sorcery and destroying the instruments used in that practice. Thus, this episode is not included in our study.

⁸² δυνάμεις τε οὐ τὰς τυχοῦσας (*dunameis te out as tuxousas*) and powerful deeds not the ordinary

Mixed Results in Rome

Acts 28:23ff

When they had set a day for Paul, they came to him at his lodging in large numbers; and he was explaining to them by solemnly testifying about the kingdom of God and trying to persuade them concerning Jesus, from both the Law of Moses and from the Prophets, from morning until evening.²⁴ Some were being persuaded by the things spoken, but others would not believe.

²⁵ And when they did not agree with one another, they began leaving after Paul had spoken one parting word, "The Holy Spirit rightly spoke through Isaiah the prophet to your fathers, ...

"Therefore let it be known to you that this salvation of God has been sent to the Gentiles; they will also listen."²⁹ When he had spoken these words, the Jews departed, having a great dispute among themselves. (Acts 28:23-25, 28-29)

When Paul arrived in Rome to be tried before Caesar, the court docket was so full that he had to wait two years for his trial to take place. During those two years, he stayed in a private home, under house-arrest. He sent for the leaders of the Jews and, as was his custom, he preached Christ. There was no clear response to the message – no conversions are recorded during this period, even though Paul continued to preach.

Thus, since there is no data in this episode to assist us in resolving the question, “what must I do to be saved,” this episode is not included in our study.