

“Into What Then Were You Baptized?”

by Walton Weaver

The question asked in the title of this article is a Bible question. It was raised by Paul before a group of men at Ephesus who had been baptized of John the Baptist, but they knew nothing about the Holy Spirit whom they would have received had they been baptized in the name of Jesus Christ (See Acts 19:1.,5). This is a clear example of some people who were baptized for the wrong purpose. Had they been baptized properly there would have been no need for them to be baptized again in the name of Christ.

Paul became suspicious of the baptism of these people when he asked them if they had received the Holy Spirit since they believed. When they responded by saying, "We have not so much as heard whether there is a Holy Spirit," Paul knew immediately something was wrong. Peter had promised the gift of the Holy Spirit to all who repent and are baptized for the remission of sins, in the name of Jesus Christ (Acts 2:38). Acts 5:32 says that the Holy Spirit is given to all who obey God. So Paul asked, "Into what then were you baptized?"

This is an important question. It shows that one cannot be taught wrong about baptism and be baptized right. It also shows that when one has been baptized wrong, he must be baptized again in the right way and for the right purpose.

Scriptural baptism does not put one into an earthly family, a fraternal or benevolent organization, or a religious denomination built by men (such as the Presbyterian, Methodist, Baptist, or Lutheran church). Some no doubt, practice a baptism that puts them into something other than that which the Bible teaches Christ's baptism does for people, but when that is the case it is a sure sign that the baptism they received was not Christ's baptism. What exactly is the baptism of Christ? Surely there are certain distinguishing marks of Christ's baptism that would clearly separate it from all others, or Paul's question, "Into what then were you baptized?" would serve no real purpose.

Let us now seek out the answer to Paul's question. What does the Bible say? Into what is one baptized when he is baptized of Christ? It is certain that Christ's baptism is immersion (Romans 6:3-4; Colossians 2:12) in water (Acts 8:36; 10:47-48; Ephesians 5:26) in order that sins might be remitted (Acts 2:38; 22:16). But exactly into what is one baptized?

BAPTIZED INTO CHRIST

Scripture teaches that water baptism puts one into Christ. Paul says, "Or do you not know that as many of us as were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death? Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life" (Romans 6:3-4). Again, he says, "For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ" (Galatians 3:27): It is at the point of baptism that one enters INTO Christ. Other things that precede baptism are equally important and necessary to salvation. One must believe in Jesus Christ (John 8:24), repent of his sins (Luke 13:1-3; Acts 17:30-31), and confess his faith in Jesus Christ (Matthew 10:32-33; Romans 10:9-10). But one does not enter into Christ at the point of faith in Christ. He is baptized INTO Christ. When one says that a person is saved at the point of faith without any further acts of obedience, he simply is not stating the truth. Is one saved before he enters into

Christ?

In Christ we have salvation (2 Timothy 2:10), redemption and forgiveness of sins (Ephesians 1:7), and, in fact, all spiritual blessings (Ephesians 1:3). What does one have OUT of Christ? No hope and alienation from God, because he is separated from Christ! (Ephesians 2:12). Everything that one needs is IN Christ, yet we are baptized INTO Christ. Therefore one does not have the blessings available IN Christ until he is baptized INTO Christ.

BAPTIZED INTO CHRIST'S DEATH

The passage we have already quoted from Romans 6:3-4 tells us that we are not only baptized into Christ, but that we are also "baptized into his death." The significance of Christ's death is to be found in the blood which he shed in His death. We are reconciled to God through the death of Jesus (Romans 5:14,3), but if it were not for the blood that was shed in His death there would be no remission of sins (Hebrews 9:22) and one could not be reconciled to God through Jesus Christ (Ephesians 2:13,16). So to be baptized into His death is the same as to have access to the precious benefits of His blood which was shed when he died upon the cross for us. See

No one should make light of the fact that one is baptized INTO.. the- death light of Christ? Why is that so? Because it is IN the death of Christ that we have forgiveness of sins and reconciliation to God. It is not at the point of faith, nor at the point of repentance nor at the time that we make the good confession that we enter into the death of Christ. It is at the time of our baptism INTO the death of Christ: Into what then were you baptized? Paul's answer thus far has been, if you were baptized for the right purpose you were baptized into Christ, and you were baptized into the death of Christ.

BAPTIZED INTO CHRIST'S BODY

Not only are we baptized into Christ and into the death of Christ, but Paul adds in I Corinthians 12:13, "For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body-whether Jews of Greeks, whether slaves or free--and have all been made to drink into one Spirit." There is only one body (Ephesians 4:4), and that one body over which Jesus rules as head is the Church (Ephesians 1:22-23). Jesus purchased this Church with His own blood (Acts 20:28). It is the body of the reconciled because all those who have been reconciled to God through the blood of Christ have been reconciled "in one body through the cross" (Ephesians 2:16). Jesus is the Savior of this body, the Church (Ephesians 5:23).

The Church then is the saved, those who have been translated out of the power of darkness into the kingdom of his of the Son of His love (Colossians 1:13). This is why we are told that as people are saved the Lord adds them to the Church, or the body of the saved (Acts 2:47). But at what point in one's conversion does he become a part of the body, the Church? At the same time that he is brought into Christ and into the death of Christ. He is baptized into Christ, into the death of Christ, and into the body of Christ.

BAPTIZED INTO THE NAME OF CHRIST

Jesus commanded His apostles, "Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to

observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age. Amen" (Matthew 28:19-20). The preposition "in" in the phrase "baptizing them in the name of . . ." is translated "into" in the American Standard Version. Some more recent translations have given "into" as an alternate rendering. The footnote in the New International Version says, "Or into. See Acts 8:16; 19:5; Romans 6:3; I Corinthians 1:13; 10:2; Galatians 3:27."

The alternate rendering with the preposition "into" when the name of Christ is under consideration makes real good sense when one considers it's meaning. There is really little difference in being baptized into Christ and in being baptized into the name of Christ. This becomes apparent when one considers the meaning of the word "name" in such expressions. The word "name" was used in Bible times to include everything behind and involving the person referred to by the word. It represented the person and character of the one considered. So to receive a prophet "in the name of a prophet," and a righteous man "in the name of a righteous man," or to give even a cup of water .to a disciple "in the name of a disciple," (Matthew 10:41-42) is to do what one does with purpose, or out of regard for the person involved. Act in full view of what the person is, what he does, and what he stands for.

To be baptized into Christ is to leave an old relationship and to enter into a new one. This is what happened to the Israelites when they left Egypt-under the leadership of Moses by passing through the Red Sea, and were thus baptized into Moses (I Corinthians 10:1-2). They accepted Moses as their new leader; they trusted in him and entered into a new relationship with him as their leader and deliverer as they followed him through the Red Sea. We are doing the same thing in relation to the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit when we are baptized "into the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit:" At the point of baptism we are entering into a new relationship with them; we are entering into covenant with them, accepting their leadership. The same is true when we are "baptized into the name of Christ," or, for that matter, hen we are baptized "into Christ." We are putting our full trust in Him for who He is and what He has done and is doing for us as our Savior, Mediator and Benefactor, and we are being brought into Him as our new leader -- we are entering into a new covenant relationship with him as we are baptized into Him.

CONCLUSION

All four of these truths about baptism show that there is a definite change of state that takes place at the point of baptism. The preposition "into" conveys the idea of movement from one place to another place, or from one state of being into another state of being -- from out of something INTO something else. This change may be illustrated in the following way:

<u>FORMER STATE</u>		<u>PRESENT STATE</u>
(Prior to Baptism)		(Following Baptism)
Out of Christ	INTO	Christ
Out of Death of Christ	INTO	Death of Christ
Out of Body	INTO	Body of Christ

Out of Name

INTO

Name of Christ

Baptism then brings one FROM or OUT OF one state or thing INTO another state or thing. There is no/mistake about it. The Scripture is plain on this matter. Some people have been confused about this subject, but it is not because Scripture gives an uncertain sound. Any confusion on this subject comes from the doctrines and precepts of men.

There should be no talk about whether or not baptism is essential to salvation. Can one be saved out of Christ, or apart from His death, His one body of the saved, or His name? Scripture says that we are baptized INTO each of these, and we must therefore conclude that prior to baptism one has NONE of them!

Into what then were you baptized?