

# What is the International Church of Christ?

The International Church of Christ (ICC) is a break-off of the Church of Christ denomination. The ICC is Christian in its basic theology but has some aberrant practices.

The ICC was influenced by the discipling movement on the 1950's. Its roots can be traced back to 1967 to the Crossroads Church of Christ, in Gainesville Florida. The crossroads Church had a program on discipling which became known as the Crossroads Movement. It is out of this Crossroads connection that the present leader of the ICC, Kip McKeen, received his start. He and Roger Lamb were fired from the Houston, Texas, Church of Christ. Kip McKeen then found a Church in Boston MA, was asked to come on board and began what has come to be known as the Boston movement. The Boston Church grew by leaps and bounds due to its heavy discipling program. Soon other churches were being planted in the United States and then in England.

The ICC did not become known as the "International Church of Christ" until 1993 and its headquarters became Los Angeles, California. The ICC considers Christian denominations to be sinful. They will cite biblical passages that speak of the apostles establishing one Church per city, and claim that there should only be one Church in each city. Of course, the one Church should be an ICC Church. As of the year 2001, the ICC claims to have over 400 churches with a membership of 130,000 worldwide in over 150 countries.

The international Church of Christ considers itself to be "a family of Christian churches whose members are committed to living their lives in accordance with the teachings of Jesus Christ as found in the Bible." This commitment to biblical living includes a very strong emphasis on discipling. In fact, it is this overly strong emphasis on discipling that has drawn much criticism from outside the church as inside from those who were once were members.

The ICC is Orthodox affirms the Trinity, salvation by grace, Jesus' virgin birth and physical resurrection, His deity, the personhood of the Holy Spirit, heaven and hell, and much more. But, it deviates from orthodoxy in both its requirement of baptism as a necessary element for salvation and its heavy requirement of discipleship.

According to the ICC, baptism must be done in their church with the person being baptized having an understand that baptism saves. Combined with this, the ICC method of discipleship includes strong accountability to other members of the church as a necessary element to be considered a Christian. According to the ICC, one cannot be a Christian if he is not a true disciple, and being a disciple must precede baptism. Therefore, the International Church of Christ tends to be very legalistic and controlling. Many of its former members attest to requirements that they confess their sins to their disciple leaders, that they submit to the decisions of their disciple "leaders" regarding dating, frequency of sexual relations for married couples, jobs to take, places to move, and so on.

This discipling operation with in the ICC has drawn much criticism for its intrusive practices and has been labeled as a form of the brainwashing and psychological and emotional manipulation. There are numerous web sites on the Internet devoted to ex-members of the International Church of Christ who warn people not to be involved with the movement. There are also support groups to help those who have left to find healing and, hopefully, true Grace in Christ instead of legalism and bondage.

## What does the International Church of Christ teach?

The international Church of Christ is Orthodox in most of its theology. It accepts and affirms the following doctrines.

1. The Trinity is one God and three persons: Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.
2. The deity of Christ

3. The deity of the Holy Spirit.
4. The physical Resurrection of Christ
5. The Bible is the inspired word of God and the ultimate source of authority.
6. Baptism is for adults only.
7. there is a literal Hell.
8. Satan is a literal fallen Angel.

### Aberrant Doctrines/Practices

1. Baptism, by emersion, is essential to salvation.
2. Baptism must be as a true "disciple" or it is not valid.
3. Baptism must be performed in the International Church of Christ to be valid.
4. Being a disciple is necessary to be a Christian.
5. There should only be one Church in each city or town.
6. The ICC is **the** true remnant of God's people as the true Church.
7. Only ICC baptized members are saved.
8. Sin lists of disciples are often kept.
9. Heavy influence into the personal lives of disciples.

## Is the International Church of Christ a cult?

The answer to the question, "Is the International Church of Christ a cult?" depends on the definition of what makes a group a cult. The definition of a cult that CARM uses is a group that may or may not include the Bible in its set of authoritative scriptures. If it does include the Bible and it deviates from biblical doctrines sufficient to make salvation of no effect, then it is a cult. However, it is possible to have a truly Christian group that has cult like tendencies, such as the exercise of an abnormal amount of control over its people. This control may be centered around theological or social particulars. It is this issue of excessive control that to the international Church of Christ is known for. Add to this an exclusive attitude that it is the only true Church, it is no one wonder that the ICC has been labeled a cult by many people. Therefore, it is possible to have a Christian Church with cultic practices and still have it be, technically, Christian and aberrant.

Additionally, the doctrines that make Christianity "Christian" are the Trinity, the deity of Christ and the Holy Spirit, the physical resurrection of Jesus, and salvation by grace. There can be deviations within Christianity on other issues such as the mode of baptism, frequency of communion, when the rapture will happen, etc. Usually, it is these sorts of non-essential issues which cause denominational splits.

The International Church of Christ (ICC), does not deny any of the essential doctrines of Christianity. Aside from its requirements on baptism as a necessary part of salvation, it is Orthodox. Therefore, I do not categorize the ICC as a non-Christian cult. Rather, I see the ICC as a Christian Church with some serious problems; namely, legalistic and excessive control over its members.

I recommend that people avoid this group.

## The International Church of Christ

Also known as . . .

The Boston Church of Christ, The Crossroads Movement, Multiplying Ministries,  
The Discipling Movement, The International Church of Christ,  
The London Church of Christ, The San Diego Church of Christ, etc.

### 1. Doctrines

- A. Believe in the Bible as the inerrant and infallible word of God.
- B. Trinitarian, believe in the resurrection of Jesus, and the sacrificial atonement.

- C. The Boston Church of Christ is the only true church.
- D. Baptismal Regeneration
  - i. Baptism is necessary for salvation
  - ii. Baptism in their church with a proper understanding that baptism saves.
- E. Heavy discipleship
- F. Unquestioned submission to authority

## 2. History

- A. Its distant origins go back to 1967 in Gainesville Florida, under Charles Lucas.
  - i. Lucas started a program called the Multiplying Ministries program which was very successful.
- B. The movement we are concerned with here originated in the Crossroads Church of Christ in Florida in 1985.
  - . Kip McKean had been trained in the Discipling methodology by Mr. Lucas. From Charleston, Ill., early in the movement. Kip later moved to Massachusetts and using the methods he learned under Lucas. The church there began to grow.
- C. In the first year, 103 people were baptized into their church. The second year 200 were baptized; The third year 256; The fourth year 368; The fifth 457; the sixth 679, the seventh, 735; the eighth, 947; the ninth 1424; and in the tenth year, 1621 were baptized. *Total of 6790 people.* (as quoted in *What Does The Boston Movement Teach?* By Jerry Jones, Vol. 1, p. 125).
  - . "From its modest beginnings, the church has grown into 103 congregations all over the world with total Sunday attendance of 50,000" (Time, 18 May 1992, p. 62).
- D. In 1982 the Boston movement began planting their pillar churches.
  - . These are churches in key cities throughout the world. The first two were established in Chicago and London.
    - i. Then in 1986, a program called "reconstruction" was undertaken. This is the process whereby ministers in established Church of Christ churches are replaced with Boston Church of Christ trained ministers (Ibid., pp. 126-127).
    - ii. This caused problems among the organization, but it helped to solidify this group.

## 3. Church Structure

- A. Kip McKean is the director and unquestioned leader.
  - . Under Kip are Elders.
    - i. Under the Elders are Evangelists
    - ii. Then Zone Leader
    - iii. Then House Church Leaders (obsolete in most congregations)
    - iv. Then Assistant Bible Talk Leaders
    - v. McKean says these leaders govern by consensus but adds, 'I'm the one who gives them direction.'
    - vi. Al Baird, an important Boston Church of Christ elder said, "It's not a dictatorship. It's a theocracy, with God on top," (Time, 18 May 1992, p. 62).
    - vii. Baird also said, "In questions of spiritual leaders abusing their authority. It is not an option to rebel against their authority" (What Does The Boston Movement Teach? p. 7).
- B. They are highly authoritarian

## 4. Authority and Submission (Power corrupts and absolute power corrupts absolutely)

- A. In a discussion on submission, Al Baird, one of the uppermost leaders in the ICC said, "Let us begin our discussion of submission by talking about what it is not. (1) Submission is not agreeing. When one agrees with the decision that he is called to submit to, he does not really have to submit in any way. By definition, submission is doing something one has been asked to do that he would not do if he had his own way. (2) Submission is not just outward obedience. It includes that, but also involves obedience from the heart. It is a wholehearted giving-up of one's own desires. (3) Submission is not conditional. We submit to authority, not because the one in authority deserves it, but because the authority comes from God; therefore, we are in reality submitting to God."

- B. Later in this same series, Baird states, "When we are under authority, we are to submit and obey our leaders even when they are not very Christ-like. However, God has standards for His leaders, and they will be accountable to God for ignoring those standards" (Authority and Submission, parts III, V and VII as quoted in What Does The Boston Movement Teach?, pp. 59-63).
- C. Baird has said that if the leader commands one to do something, even if it is not "Christ-like," the member must submit! (Ibid., p. 104).
- D. Many who have left the Boston Church "complain that the advice, which members are expected to obey, may include such details as where to live, whom and when to date, what courses to take in school, even how often to have sex with a spouse" (Time, 18 May 1992, p. 62).
- E. Those who think for themselves and question the authority system are labeled.
  - . "Bad heart" "Struggling" and "not really a disciple" are terms used when someone disagrees with a leader.
    - i. The group, then, instantly accepts these labels upon a person.

## 5. Discipleship

- A. Step one: Invitation to a Bible talk.
  - . Non threatening environment and topics.
    - a. Covers basics of Christianity, easy to understand discussions.
- i. The potential converts are befriended, with invitations to further talks.
  - ii. Then he/she is urged to join with a discipler to study the Bible and learn how to be more like Jesus.
  - iii. From there the person is introduced into more strict and emotionally involving practices and studies.
- B. "*Hooking*" is when someone searches for another person's interests, hobbies, and other personal information for the purpose of flattering them. This is done to attract them to the group, rather than for a sincere interest.
- C. "*Love-bombing*" is where a visitor is inundated by flattery and friendliness in order to produce the feeling that the group will fulfill many of their needs and desires.
- D. Once a member is assigned a discipler, he is led through a series of Bible studies.
  - . First study is called, "**First Principles**." This is simple basics of the Bible.
    - i. Second, "**The Sins of Galatians**" study.
      - a. To get them to repent, to confess their sins, etc.
        - i. The person reads Galatians 5: 19-21 and then is told to make a list of their sins. They are guided to other scriptures that have similar effects of bringing a person to feel guilty and full of sin. More sin lists follow.
          - ii. Sometimes a list is kept of their sins which are sometimes brought up in various situations. . . ultimately, to keep control over the person.
          - iii. This can be used to break a person down emotionally
          - ii. Third, "**The Cross**" study.
    - . The disciple listens to the discipler read the crucifixion account and is asked to say, "I am Judas -- I am Peter."
      - a. The crucifixion is described in more of its unpleasant details and the discipler reads from the disciple's sin list.
      - b. Often, sentences are spoken such as, "You punched him in the face." "You taunted Him." "You whipped Him."
      - c. The disciple is supposed to be "broken" in this process, and often is...emotionally.

## 6. Baptism

- A. "The Boston Church of Christ teaches that when one initially receives Jesus Christ, one's response must include faith, repentance, confession, and water baptism. It teaches that apart from water baptism, one's sins are not forgiven" (The Issue of Water Baptism and the Boston Church of Christ, E. Bourland, P. Owen and P. Reid, p. 1).

- B. Not only must one be baptized, but one must also be baptized in the Boston Church of Christ. If a person had been a member of some other church, then joins the Boston Church, they must be rebaptized because their original baptism was done in a false church without a proper understanding of baptism.
- C. Therefore, salvation is gained by believing in Jesus' death on the cross and on being baptized.

Also, a person must be baptized by someone in authority in the Boston Church of Christ, i.e., International Church of Christ Movement.

#### 7. Miscellaneous Info

- A. Many people have been injured by the church's authoritarian and intrusive structure, so much so that the Boston University, Marquette University, University of Southern California, Northeastern University, and Vanderbilt University are some of the schools that have banned the Boston Church of Christ (Miami Herald, 25 March 1992, p. 1A, 15A).

This group is definitely to be avoided. Along with its erring doctrine that baptism is necessary for salvation, it is legalistic, manipulative, and uses guilt and aberrant doctrines to keep its members in line. Though it is not a cult per se, it has many cult practices. It has destroyed many lives and left many others wary of anything Christian.

## Issues and Answers

### Verses showing justification by faith.

Justification is the legal act where God declares the sinner to be innocent of his or her sins. It is not that the sinner is now sinless, but that he is "declared" sinless. This declaration of righteousness is being justified before God. This justification is based on the shed blood of Jesus, "...having now been justified by His blood..." ([Rom. 5:9](#)) where Jesus was crucified, died, was buried, and rose again ([1 Cor. 15:1-4](#)). God imputes (reckons to our account) the righteousness of Christ. At the same time our sins were imputed to Christ when he was on the cross. That is why it says in [1 Pet. 2:24](#), "and He Himself bore our sins in His body on the cross, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness; for by His wounds you were healed." Also, [2 Cor. 5:21](#) says, "He made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him." Additionally, we are justified by faith ([Rom. 5:1](#)) apart from works of the Law ([Rom. 3:28](#)).

To be saved means that God has delivered us (saved us) from His righteous wrathful judgment due us because of our sins against Him. It means that we will not be judged for our sins and be sentenced to eternal damnation. To be saved means that we are justified before God. Only Christians are saved. Only Christians are justified. The issue at hand is whether or not this salvation, this justification, is attained by faith or by faith and something else.

Following is a list of verses that show that salvation/justification is by faith. Bold references are particularly pointed.

1. [John 3:16](#), "For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have eternal life."
2. [Rom. 3:22](#), "even the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all those who believe; for there is no distinction."
3. [Rom. 3:24](#), "being justified as a gift by His grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus;"

4. [Rom. 3:26](#), "for the demonstration, I say, of His righteousness at the present time, that He might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus."
5. [Rom. 3:28-30](#), "For we maintain that a man is justified by faith apart from works of the Law.  
<sup>29</sup>Or is God the God of Jews only? Is He not the God of Gentiles also? Yes, of Gentiles also,  
<sup>30</sup>since indeed God who will justify the circumcised by faith and the uncircumcised through faith is one."
6. [Rom. 4:3](#), "For what does the Scripture say? "And Abraham believed God, and it was reckoned to him as righteousness."
7. [Rom. 4:5](#), "But to the one who does not work, but believes in Him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is reckoned as righteousness,"
8. [Rom. 4:11](#), "And he received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness of the faith which he had while still uncircumcised, that he might be the father of all those who believe, though they are uncircumcised, that righteousness might be imputed to them also,"
9. [Rom. 4:16](#), "Therefore it is of faith that it might be according to grace, so that the promise might be sure to all the seed, not only to those who are of the law, but also to those who are of the faith of Abraham, who is the father of us all."
10. [Rom. 5:1](#), "therefore having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ,"
11. [Rom. 5:9](#), "Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from the wrath of God through Him."
12. [Rom. 9:30](#), "What shall we say then? That Gentiles, who did not pursue righteousness, attained righteousness, even the righteousness which is by faith."
13. [Rom. 9:33](#), "just as it is written, "Behold, I lay in Zion a stone of stumbling and a rock of offense, And he who believes in Him will not be disappointed."
14. [Rom. 10:4](#), "For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes."
15. [Rom. 10:9-10](#), "that if you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you shall be saved; <sup>10</sup> for with the heart man believes, resulting in righteousness, and with the mouth he confesses, resulting in salvation."
16. [Rom. 11:6](#), "But if it is by grace, it is no longer on the basis of works, otherwise grace is no longer grace."
17. [Gal. 2:16](#), "nevertheless knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the Law but through faith in Christ Jesus, even we have believed in Christ Jesus, that we may be justified by faith in Christ, and not by the works of the Law; since by the works of the Law shall no flesh be justified."
18. [Gal. 2:21](#), "I do not nullify the grace of God; for if righteousness comes through the Law, then Christ died needlessly."
19. [Gal. 3:5-6](#), "Does He then, who provides you with the Spirit and works miracles among you, do it by the works of the Law, or by hearing with faith? <sup>6</sup>Even so Abraham believed God, and it was reckoned to him as righteousness."
20. [Gal. 3:8](#), "And the Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, preached the gospel beforehand to Abraham, saying, "All the nations shall be blessed in you."
21. [Gal. 3:14](#), "in order that in Christ Jesus the blessing of Abraham might come to the Gentiles, so that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith."
22. [Gal. 3:22](#), "But the Scripture has shut up all men under sin, that the promise by faith in Jesus Christ might be given to those who believe."
23. [Gal. 3:24](#), "Therefore the Law has become our tutor to lead us to Christ, that we may be justified by faith."
24. [Eph. 1:13](#), "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."
25. [Eph. 2:8](#), "For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God."
26. [Phil. 3:9](#), "and may be found in Him, not having a righteousness of my own derived from the Law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which comes from God on the basis of faith."

27. [1 Tim. 1:16](#), *"And yet for this reason I found mercy, in order that in me as the foremost, Jesus Christ might demonstrate His perfect patience, as an example for those who would believe in Him for eternal life."*

### James 2:24, not by faith alone

The scriptures clearly teach that we are saved (justified) by faith in Christ and what He has done on the cross. This faith alone saves us. However, we cannot stop here without addressing what James says in [James 2:24](#), *"You see that a man is justified by works, and not by faith alone."*

There is no contradiction. All you need to do is look at the context. James chapter 2 has 26 verses: Verses [1-7](#) instruct us to not show favoritism. Verses [8-13](#) are comments on the Law. Verses [14-26](#) are about the relationship between faith and works.

James begins this section by using the example of someone who **says** he has faith but has no works, *"What use is it, my brethren, if a man says he has faith, but he has no works? Can that faith save him?"* ([James 2:14](#)). In other words, James is addressing the issue of a dead faith, that is nothing more than a verbal pronouncement. It is empty of life and action. He begins with the negative and demonstrates what an empty faith is (verses [15-17](#), words without actions). Then he shows that that type of faith isn't much different from the faith of demons (verse [19](#)). Finally, he gives examples of living faith that is words followed by actions. He writes of Abraham and Rahab as examples of people who demonstrated their faith by their deeds.

In brief, James is examining two kinds of faith: one that leads to godly works and one that does not. One is true, and the other is false. One is dead, the other alive; hence, *"Faith without works is dead,"* ([James 2:20](#)).

Also, notice that James actually quotes the same verse that Paul uses to support the teaching of justification by faith in [Rom. 4:3](#). [James 2:23](#) says, *"and the Scripture was fulfilled which says, 'and Abraham believed God, and it was reckoned to him as righteousness.'"* If James was trying to teach a contradictory doctrine of faith and works than the other New Testament writers, then he would not have used Abraham as an example.

### Conclusion

Justification is by faith. True faith is God's work (John 6:28-29), granted by God (John 1:29), and is concurrent with regeneration (2 Cor. 5:17), which God works in us by his will (John 1:13). This result of this justification and regeneration is that the sinner turns from his sin and towards doing good works. But it is not these works that earn our place with God nor sustain it. Jesus accomplished all that we need to be saved and stay saved on the cross. All that we need, we have in Jesus. All we need to do to be saved, to be justified, is to truly believe in what God has done for us in Jesus on the cross; this is why the Bible says we are justified by faith (Rom. 5:1). This true belief with justification before God and regeneration in the new believer, results in good works.

## Is baptism necessary for salvation?

The simple and short answer to this question is, no. Baptism is not necessary to become a Christian. Of course, baptism is a very important part of the Christian life and all Christians should become baptized. But, baptism is not a requirement for salvation, faith is. In fact, the Bible tells us that we are justified by faith ([Rom. 5:1](#)). Justification is the declaration by God upon a sinner that the sinner is righteous in his sight. This is accomplished by faith.

However, the members of the International Church of Christ (ICC) maintain that baptism is a necessary requirement for salvation and that proper baptism must be by immersion in the International Church of Christ. Such a teaching is false and dangerous because it effectively retains the keys to salvation and can use them to control and manipulate their church members. Nevertheless, they quote verses such as [John 3:5](#) ([see related paper](#)) and [Acts 2:38](#) ([see related paper](#)) as proof of their position. In so doing, they ignore the numerous Scriptures to teach us that salvation is by grace through faith ([John 5:24](#); [Acts 13:38-39](#); [Gal. 2:16](#); [3:26](#); [Rom. 3:24](#); [4:5](#);

5:1; 5:9; 9:30; 10:10; Eph. 2:8; Phil. 3:9; etc.) For a list of these verse please see the list of [verses showing justification by faith](#).

Another way to make it obvious that baptism is not necessary to be saved, I offer in this illustration. Let's suppose that a person, under the conviction of the Holy Spirit ([John 16:8](#)), believed in Jesus as his Savior ([Rom. 10:9-10](#); [Titus 2:13](#)), and has received Christ ([John 1:12](#)). Is that person saved? Of course he is if you believe the Bible that says we are saved by faith ([Eph. 2:8](#)). Let's further suppose that this person who confesses his sinfulness, cries out in repentance to the Lord, and receives Jesus as Savior, then walks across the street to get baptized at a local church. In the middle of the road he gets hit by a car and is killed. Does he go to heaven or hell? If he goes to heaven then baptism isn't necessary for salvation. If He goes to hell, then trusting in Jesus, by faith, isn't enough for salvation. If a person responds that he does not know, then baptism is not necessary for salvation because if it were, then the person would be damned.

a further scriptural demonstration that baptism is not necessary for salvation, we need to take a look at [Acts 10:44-48](#).

*"While Peter was still speaking these words, the Holy Spirit fell upon all those who were listening to the message. <sup>45</sup> And all the circumcised believers who had come with Peter were amazed, because the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out upon the Gentiles also. <sup>46</sup> For they were hearing them speaking with tongues and exalting God. Then Peter answered, <sup>47</sup> "Surely no one can refuse the water for these to be baptized who have received the Holy Spirit just as we did, can he?" <sup>48</sup> And he ordered them to be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ. Then they asked him to stay on for a few days," ([Acts 10:44-48](#)).*

Notice that Peter had been preaching the gospel and the Holy Spirit fell upon the people listening. In verse 45 we see that "*the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out upon the Gentiles also.*" These people were saved. The gift of the Holy Spirit was on the Gentiles and they were speaking in tongues. This is significant because tongues is a gift given to believers, see [1 Cor. 14:1-5](#). Also, unbelievers don't praise God. They can't because praise to the true God is a deep spiritual matter that is foreign to the unsaved ([1 Cor. 2:14](#)). Therefore, the ones in [Acts 10:44-48](#) who are speaking in tongues and praising God are definitely saved and they are saved before they are baptized. This simply isn't an exception. It is a reality.

### Conclusion

To say that baptism is a requirement in order to be saved goes against the Scriptures that say that salvation is a free gift ([Rom. 6:23](#)) received by faith ([Eph. 2:8](#)). Baptism is not necessary for salvation. However, out of obedience to Christ, every Christian should be baptized. To refuse baptism is to be willfully disobedient and sinful.

## Baptism and Mark 16:16

*"He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned."*

This verse is frequently used by baptismal regenerationists to show that baptism is necessary for salvation. It says he who believes **and** is baptized will be saved. Therefore, they conclude that baptism is a necessary part of becoming saved. But, does this verse prove that baptism is necessary for salvation? Not at all.

[Mark 16:16](#) does not say that baptism is a requirement for salvation. Let me show you why. I could easily say that he who believes **and** goes to church will be saved. That is true. But it is belief that saves, not belief **and** going to church. Likewise, if you believe **and** read your Bible, you'll be saved. But it isn't reading your Bible that saves you. Rather, belief in Christ, in His sacrifice, is what saves. As I've stated in other papers on this subject, there are numerous verses that clearly

demonstrate that justification is by faith ([Rom. 5:1](#); [Eph. 2:8](#); [Phil. 3:9](#); etc.). Belief in what God has done, not what man can do, is what results in salvation. Baptism is simply a public demonstration of the inner work of regeneration. This is why the rest of the verse says, "...but he who does not believe will be condemned." [Mark 16:16](#) focuses on the issue of belief, not baptism.

### A textual issue with Mark 16:9-20

What I will share here may not be very popular with some readers. Therefore, I need to say upfront that I believe in the absolute inspiration and authority of the Bible. It is the word of God and what it says is authoritative. However, the simple fact is that there are textual variations within the biblical manuscripts. The originals are what are inspired, not the copies. We have copies of inspired documents. These copies are not perfect, but they are very close to it.

Again, I am not saying the Bible is untrustworthy. It is 98.5% textually pure. The remaining 1.5% of textual variation are almost entirely of insignificant spelling errors and minor word omissions or additions that do not change the meaning of the text. However, [Mark 16:9-20](#) is a significant textual variant. Many scholars, Christian scholars, consider the ending of Mark to lack authenticity. Please consider the following evidence.

#### 1. Manuscript attestation

A. [Mark 16:9-20](#) doesn't appear in many of the oldest ancient manuscripts. "The last twelve verses of Mark (16:9-20) are lacking in the two earliest parchment codices, B and Aleph, in the Old Latin manuscript *k*, the Sinaitic Syriac, many manuscripts of the Old Armenian version, the Adysh and Opiza manuscripts of the Old Georgian version, and a number of manuscripts of the Ethiopic version. Clement of Alexandria, Origen, and Ammonius show no knowledge of the existence of these verses; other Church Fathers state that the section is absent from Greek copies of Mark known to them (e.g. Jerome, *Epist. cxx. 3, ad hedibiam*,)...The original form of the Eusebian sections makes no provision for numbering sections after 16:8. Not a few manuscripts which contain the passage have scholia stating that older Greek copies lack it (so, for example, MSS. 1, 20,22, &c.), and in other witnesses the passage is marked with asterisks or obeli, the conventional sigla used by scribes to indicate a spurious addition to a literary document."<sup>1</sup>

#### 2. There is another ending to Mark.

. Another ending is found in L, Psi, 099, 0112, and minuscules 274<sup>mg</sup> 579, k, Syr<sup>h</sup> and more is as follows:

i. "But they reported briefly to Peter and those with him all that 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."

#### 3. Apparent, theological error.

. [Mark 16:12](#) says, "And after that, He appeared in a different form to two of them, while they were walking along on their way to the country." This verse may be problematic. Jesus rose in the same body that he died in ([John 2:19](#)), though it was a glorified body. This is problematic because it suggests "a different form." Jesus did not appear in a different form. He appeared in the same body he rose in. This is a significant problem and seems to support the idea that this section of scripture is spurious, a later addition, or a possible attempt to recount a lost section of the gospel.

#### 4. Vocabulary usage.

. There are 17 non-marcian words used in a non-marcian sense in these verses. In other words, in the last 11 verses under discussion there are 17 "new" words that don't occur in the entire gospel of Mark. It appears that someone wrote the ending of Mark and added it to the gospel because the style is different and the vocabulary is different.

This information about the ending of Mark is not intended to cast doubt upon God's word. But the fact is that the ending is under a large cloud of doubt as to its authenticity. I would not use it as a defense for baptismal regeneration.

It appears that the ending of Mark may have been lost and someone rewrote it and attached it to a copy at sometime. It is possible that the ending under question was never there to begin with.

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## Footnote.

1. *"The Text of the New Testament,"* by Bruce Metzger (Professor of New Testament Language and Literature, Princeton Theological Seminary), 2nd ed., Oxford University Press, New York, 1968, p. 226.

## Baptism and John 3:5

*"Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God."* <sup>4</sup>Nicodemus *\*said to Him, "How can a man be born when he is old? He cannot enter a second time into his mother's womb and be born, can he?"* <sup>5</sup>Jesus answered, *"Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God."* <sup>6</sup>*"That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit."* <sup>7</sup>*"Do not marvel that I said to you, 'You must be born again.'* <sup>8</sup>*"The wind blows where it wishes and you hear the sound of it, but do not know where it comes from and where it is going; so is everyone who is born of the Spirit,"* ([John 3:3-8](#)).

There are five basic interpretations to this section of scripture in reference to water.

1. The water refers to the natural birth.
2. The water refers to the Word of God.
3. The water refers to the Holy Spirit.
4. The water refers to the ministry of John the Baptist.
5. The water refers to the water of baptism as a requirement for salvation.

The first option looks to the context of Jesus' words dealing with being born "again" ([3:3](#)). Nicodemus responds by mentioning the experience of being born from the womb (v. 4). Jesus then speaks of water and the Spirit and then says, *"That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit"* ([3:6](#)). The implication is that the first birth is the natural birth and the second birth is the spiritual birth. In other words, the water refers to the water of the womb -- the first birth. This seems to have support in the understanding of Nicodemus about entering into the womb to be born a second time. However, this view is not the most commonly held view.

The second option holds that the water is referring to the Word of God. [Eph. 5:26](#) says, *"that He might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word."* Some believe that the washing of water is done by means of the Word of God.

The third view says that the water refers to the Holy Spirit. Perhaps Nicodemus was reminded of [Ezek. 36:25-27](#), *"Then I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you will be clean; I will cleanse you from all your filthiness and from all your idols."* <sup>26</sup>*"Moreover, I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; and I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh."* <sup>27</sup>*"And I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will be careful to observe My ordinances."* Certainly, Jesus' own words are applicable here when He says in [John 7:37-39](#), *"Now on the last day, the great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried out, saying, 'If any man is thirsty, let him come to Me and drink.'" <sup>38</sup>"He who believes in Me, as the Scripture said, 'From his innermost being shall flow rivers of living water.'" <sup>39</sup>"But this He spoke of the Spirit, whom those who believed in Him were to receive; for the Spirit was not yet given, because Jesus was not yet glorified."*

The fourth view holds that the water is in reference to the water baptism of repentance taught by John the Baptist. [Matt. 3:1-6](#) describes John's ministry in the desert, his teaching about repentance, and baptizing people into that repentance. Contextually, the first chapter of John mentions John the Baptist in verses [6-8](#) and [19-36](#). Certainly, John and his ministry is in view here. If this is the case, then Jesus would have been speaking of the "baptism" (the initiatory ordinance) of repentance preached by John the Baptist.

The fifth view is the one held by the International Church of Christ and other churches that require baptism in order to be saved. They state that the water is referring to baptism and that it is essential to salvation.

## Does John 3:5 teach that baptism is essential to salvation?

As you can see, there are different interpretations to [John 3:5](#). But, to simply say that [John 3:5](#) does **not** teach the necessity of baptism isn't enough. Some sort of proof must be offered. The proof is found in God's word, the word that has no contradictions. Clearly, salvation is by faith. For example, [Rom. 5:1](#) states that we are justified (declared righteous) by faith. It does not say faith and baptism. If baptism were part of salvation, then it would say we were justified by faith and baptism. But it does not. If justification is by faith, then it is by faith. Baptism is not faith. It is a ceremony. It is something we do as a ritual. Furthermore, please consider the following verses when declare how we are saved.

1. [Rom. 3:22](#), *"even the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all those who believe; for there is no distinction."*
2. [Rom. 3:26](#), *"for the demonstration, I say, of His righteousness at the present time, that He might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus."*
3. [Rom. 3:28](#), *"For we maintain that a man is justified by faith apart from works of the Law."*
4. [Rom. 4:5](#), *"But to the one who does not work, but believes in Him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is reckoned as righteousness."*
5. [Rom. 5:1](#), *"Therefore having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ,"*
6. [Gal. 3:8](#), *"And the Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, preached the gospel beforehand to Abraham."*
7. [Gal. 3:24](#), *"Therefore the Law has become our tutor to lead us to Christ, that we may be justified by faith."*
8. [Eph. 2:8](#), *"For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God."*

Additionally, Paul tells us that the gospel is what saves us and that the gospel is the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus, ([1 Cor. 15:1-4](#)). Baptism is not included in the description of the gospel. This explains why he said he came to preach the gospel, not to baptize: *"I am thankful that I did not baptize any of you except Crispus and Gaius, so no one can say that you were baptized into my name. (Yes, I also baptized the household of Stephanas; beyond that, I don't remember if I baptized anyone else.) For Christ did not send me to baptize, but to preach the gospel..."* ([1 Cor. 1:14-17](#)). If baptism is necessary for salvation then why did Paul downplay it and even exclude it from the description of what is required for salvation? It is because baptism isn't necessary for salvation. Therefore, [John 3:5](#) must be interpreted in a manner consistent with the rest of scripture.

Another way of making this clear is to use an illustration. Let's suppose that a person, under the conviction of the Holy Spirit ([John 16:8](#)), believed in Jesus as his savior ([Rom. 10:9-10](#); [Titus 2:13](#)), and has received Christ ([John 1:12](#)) as Savior. Is that person saved? Of course he is. Let's further suppose that this person who confesses his sinfulness, cries out in repentance to the Lord, and receives Jesus as Savior, then walks across the street to get baptized at a local church. In the middle of the road he gets hit by a car and is killed. Does he go to heaven or hell? If he goes to heaven then baptism isn't necessary for salvation. If He goes to hell, then trusting in Jesus, by faith, isn't enough for salvation. Doesn't that go against the Scriptures that say that salvation is a free gift ([Rom. 6:23](#)) received by faith ([Eph. 2:8-9](#))? Yes it does. Baptism is not necessary for salvation and [John 3:5](#) cannot teach that it is.

## Baptism and Acts 2:38

[Acts 2:38](#) is one of the more controversial verses in the Bible regarding baptism and whether or not it is the requirement for salvation. Some use this verse to say that one must be baptized in order to be saved. But when you look at the verse, and others, you will see that it does not teach baptismal regeneration, that baptism saves, or that baptism is necessary for salvation.

First of all, rarely is doctrine ever made from a single verse. We need to look at all of what God's

words says about a subject in order to accurately understand what it teaches. I will briefly tackle of this verse in the following manner.

- Examination of the verse's syntax, grammar and structure.
- Examine other verses dealing with the forgiveness of sins.
- Examine the verse in its covenant context.

### Grammar and Structure of Acts 2:38

In [Acts 2:38](#) the main verb is metanoesate (change mind), the aorist direct imperative (a command) of metaneo which means to repent (change mind). This refers to that initial repentance of the sinner unto salvation. The verb translated "be baptized" is in the indirect passive imperative (a command to receive; hence, passive voice in Greek<sup>1</sup>) of baptizo, which does not give it the same direct command implied in "repent." The preposition "for" in the phrase "for the remission of sins" in Greek is "eis," unto or into, and it is in the accusative case (direct object). It can mean "for the purpose of identifying you with the remission of sins." It is the same preposition we find in [1 Cor. 10:2](#) in the phrase "and were baptized unto Moses." Note that both contexts are dealing with baptism and identification. In [1 Cor. 10:2](#) the people were baptized or spiritually identifying themselves with the purposes and vision of Moses.

Repentance, therefore, is presented as identifying an individual with the remission of his sins, even as baptism following repentance provides an external identification visible by others. Repentance is something that concerns an individual and God while baptism involves others. That is why *baptistheto* (let be immersed) is in the passive voice indicating that one does not baptize himself, but is baptized by another usually in the presence of others. Repentance, however, is an act taking place within a person's heart as the Holy Spirit moves in the sinner.

Πέτρος δὲ πρὸς αὐτούς· μετανοήσατε, [ φησὶν, ]  
Peter but toward them change mind says  
καὶ βαπτισθήτω ἕκαστος ὑμῶν ἐπὶ τῷ ὀνόματι  
and let be immersed each of you on the name  
Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ εἰς ἀφεσιν τῶν ἁμαρτιῶν ὑμῶν καὶ  
of Jesus Christ into sending off of the sins of you and  
λήψεσθε τὴν δωρεάν τοῦ ἁγίου πνεύματος.  
you will receive the gift of the holy spirit

But, all this Greek stuff may be confusing. Let me break it down. All people are commanded to repent for their sins. This is what believers have already done by becoming Christians. Baptism, then, is the outward identification with being a Christian for those who have already repented. Also, as the Israelites were "baptized into Moses" ([1 Cor. 10:2](#)), so too, Christians are baptized into Jesus. That is, they are identifying themselves, publicly, with Christ. Likewise, in [Rom. 6:1-5](#) where baptism is related to death, burial, and resurrection, it is again and identification with Christ in His death, burial, and resurrection. That is why it is said of Christians that we have died to sin ([Rom. 6:2, 11](#); [Gal. 2:20](#); [Col. 2:20](#); [Col. 3:3](#); [1 Pet. 2:24](#)).

This verse is not demonstrating that baptism is essential for salvation, but that baptism is the thing which we receive, in order to publicly identify ourselves completely and totally with Christ as a manifestation of the inward work God has done within us.

### Other verses dealing with salvation

Justification is the work of God where the righteousness of Jesus is reckoned to the sinner so the sinner is declared, by God, as being righteous under the Law ([Rom. 4:3](#); [5:1,9](#); [Gal. 2:16](#); [3:11](#)). This righteousness is not earned or retained by any effort of the saved. Justification is an instantaneous occurrence with the result being eternal life. It is based completely and solely upon Jesus' sacrifice on the cross ([1 Pet. 2:24](#)) and is received by faith alone ([Rom. 4:5](#); [5:1](#); [Eph. 2:8-](#)

9). No works are necessary whatsoever to obtain justification. Otherwise, it is not a gift ([Rom. 6:23](#)). Therefore, we are justified by faith ([Rom. 5:1](#)).

Nowhere in the Bible does it state that we are justified by grace **and** baptism or faith **and** baptism or faith **and** anything else. On the contrary, baptism is excluded from the gospel message. Paul said that he came to preach the gospel, not to baptize: "*I am thankful that I did not baptize any of you except Crispus and Gaius, so no one can say that you were baptized into my name. (Yes, I also baptized the household of Stephanas; beyond that, I don't remember if I baptized anyone else.) For Christ did not send me to baptize, but to preach the gospel...*" ([1 Cor. 1:14-17](#)).

Likewise, Paul told us exactly what the gospel that saves is. He said in [1 Cor. 15:1-4](#), "*Now I make known to you, brethren, the gospel which I preached to you, which also you received, in which also you stand, <sup>2</sup> by which also you are saved, if you hold fast the word which I preached to you, unless you believed in vain. <sup>3</sup> For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received, that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, <sup>4</sup> and that He was buried, and that He was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures.*" Note that Paul state and that the gospel is what saints and he did not include baptism in the definition of the gospel.

So, we must ask if baptism is necessary for salvation, then why did Paul downplay it and even exclude it from the description of what is required for salvation? It is because baptism isn't necessary for salvation.

Further proof that baptism is not a requirement of salvation can be found in [Acts 10:44-46](#). Peter was preaching the gospel, people became saved, and then they were baptized. [Acts 10:44-46](#) says,

*"While Peter was still speaking these words, the Holy Spirit came on all who heard the message. The circumcised believers who had come with Peter were astonished that the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out even on the Gentiles. For they heard them speaking in tongues and praising God. Then Peter said, 'Can anyone keep these people from being baptized with water? They have received the Holy Spirit just as we have.' So he ordered that they be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ. Then they asked Peter to stay with them for a few days"* (NIV).

These people were saved. The gift of the Holy Spirit was on the Gentiles and they were speaking in tongues. This is significant because tongues is a gift given to believers, see [1 Cor. 14:1-5](#). Also, unbelievers don't praise God. They can't because praise to the true God is a deep spiritual matter that is foreign to the unsaved ([1 Cor. 2:14](#)). Therefore, the ones in [Acts 10:44-46](#) who are speaking in tongues and praising God are definitely saved and they are saved before they are baptized. This isn't an exception. It is a reality. This proves that baptism is not necessary for salvation and that [Acts 2:38](#) is not teaching its necessity either. But, if it isn't saying that, then why is baptism mentioned here?

### **Biblical Covenant Context**

A covenant is a pact or agreement between two or more parties. Very often, covenants have visible signs to represent them. The elements of bread and wine in the communion support are good examples of this. Circumcision was both a covenant sign and and the initiatory rite into the Abrahamic covenant ([Gen. 17:10](#)). But this covenant sign did not save anyone.

God said to Abraham, "*I will establish my covenant as an everlasting covenant between me and you and your descendants after you for the generations to come, to be your God and the God of your descendants after you*" ([Gen. 17:7](#), NIV). God later instructed Abraham to circumcise not only every adult male, but also eight day old male infants as a sign of the covenant ([Gen. 17:9-13](#)). If the children were not circumcised, they were not considered to be under the promissory Abrahamic covenant. This is why Moses' wife circumcised her son and threw the foreskin at Moses' feet after Moses failed to circumcise him, ([Exo. 4:24-25](#)). She knew the importance of the covenant between God and her children. But at the same time we must understand that circumcision did not guarantee salvation to those who received it. It was a rite meant only for the people of God, who were born into the family of God (who were then the Jews). It was an outward sign of the covenant promise. To reject it was to reject the covenant. But, accepting it did not guarantee salvation.

### **Another theological debate at risk here**

There is debate within Christianity on the nature of baptism and to whom it may be administered. I am not here trying to convince anyone of the proper objects of baptism whether it be infant baptism or adult only baptism. I only present the following information as a proof that baptism is a covenant sign, and not essential to salvation.

In the New Testament, circumcision is mentioned many times. But with respect to baptism it is specifically mentioned in [Col. 2:11-12](#): "*In him you were also circumcised, in the putting off of the sinful nature, not with a circumcision done by the hands of men but with the circumcision done by Christ, having been buried with him in baptism and raised with him through your faith in the power of God, who raised him from the dead*" (NIV). In these verses, baptism and circumcision are related. The extent of that relationship is still being debated. Nevertheless, Paul also says in [Rom. 2:29](#), "*But he is a Jew who is one inwardly; and circumcision is that which is of the heart, by the Spirit, not by the letter; and his praise is not from men, but from God.*" As you can see, for the Christian, circumcision is of the heart. And because it is, we Christians are now included the Abrahamic covenant where before, we, the Gentiles, were not. "*Remember that you were at that time separate from Christ, excluded from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world,*" ([Eph. 2:12](#), NASB).

In [Gal. 3:8](#), Paul calls the promise of the Abrahamic covenant, the gospel. He says, "*And the Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, preached the gospel beforehand to Abraham, saying, 'All the nations shall be blessed in you,'<sup>9</sup> So then those who are of faith are blessed with Abraham, the believer.*" ([Gal. 3:8-9](#)). So, Paul calls the Abrahamic covenant, the gospel. The sign of this Abrahamic covenant was circumcision.

Here is the catch. Since the Abrahamic covenant is still valid (we are justified by faith -- [Gal. 3:8](#)), then is there a covenant sign for us today? I think the answer is a resounding, yes. I believe that baptism replaces the Old Testament covenant sign of circumcision because 1) there was a New Covenant in the communion supper ([Luke 22:20](#)), and 2) in circumcision there was the shedding of blood, but in baptism no blood is shed. The covenant sign has changed now that the Law has been fulfilled in Christ.

If you understand that baptism is a covenant sign, then you can see that it is a representation of the reality of Christ circumcising our hearts ([Rom. 2:29](#); [Col. 2:11-12](#)). It is our outward proclamation of the inward spiritual blessing of regeneration, of "heart-circumcision." It comes after faith which is a gift of God ([Rom. 13:3](#)) and the work of God ([John 6:28](#)). Again, baptism is the covenant sign of our covenant with God.

### Acts 2:39 and "The Promise"

This would explain why Peter in verse [39](#) of Acts 2 says, "*For the promise is for you and your children, and for all who are far off, as many as the Lord our God shall call to Himself.*" What promise is Peter speaking of when he says "the promise"? Notice that he does not say "**this** promise" but "**the** promise." If Peter was referring to baptism as the promise he would have said "this promise." Instead, he used a phrase "the promise." This is significant.

The phrase "the promise" occurs in 26 Bible verses in the New Testament. It is used in reference to several different topics.

1. The Holy Spirit, ([Luke 24:49](#); [Acts 2:33](#); [Gal. 3:14](#)).
2. God's promise to Abraham to multiply his descendents in Egypt, physical as well as spiritual, ([Acts 7:17](#); [Heb. 6:13](#), [15](#), [17](#)).
3. The promise of the Messiah, ([Acts 13:32](#); [Acts 26:6-7](#); [Rom. 4:13,14,16](#); [Gal. 3:17,19,22](#); [Eph. 3:6](#); [2 Tim. 1:1](#)).
4. The promise of eternal redemption ([Heb. 9:15](#); [1 John 2:25](#)).
5. The promise that Sarah would have a child ([Rom. 4:20](#); [Gal. 4:23](#)).
6. The promise that through Isaac, the world would be blessed, ([Rom. 9:8](#)).
7. The promise of Jesus' return ([2 Pet. 3:4](#)).
8. The promise to kill Paul by Paul's adversaries ([Acts 22:21](#)).

But, we are most interested in its context in [Acts 2](#) which begins with the outpouring of the Holy Spirit ([Acts 2:1-13](#)). Peter then preaches a sermon and quotes many OT scriptures ([Acts 2:14-35](#)).

In verse [2:22](#), Peter specifically says, *"Men of Israel, listen to these words..."* Peter is speaking to the Jews. It was to the Jews that "the promise" of the outpouring of the Spirit was given. Peter is speaking covenant language of God as He quotes the OT. Since Peter quotes [Joel 2:28-32](#) in [Acts 2:17-18](#), we can easily see what Peter is talking about when speaking of "the promise" in [Acts 2:39](#).

- *"And it shall be in the last days," God says, "that I will pour forth of My Spirit upon all mankind; and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams, Even upon My bondslaves, both men and women, I will in those days pour forth of My Spirit," ([Acts 2:17-18](#)).*
- See also, *"For I will pour out water on the thirsty land, and streams on the dry ground; I will pour out My Spirit on your offspring, And My blessing on your descendants," ([Isaiah 44:3](#)).*

Peter states in [Acts 2:38](#), *"Repent, and let each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit."* Peter is clearly speaking of the promise of God to grant the Holy Spirit in a new and better way. But is he saying that people become saved by baptism in water or that baptism is part of salvation? Not at all. Peter is simply speaking covenantally about the covenant sign. Baptism!

Consider this proof, from Peter, that people are saved before baptism. *"While Peter was still speaking these words, the Holy Spirit fell upon all those who were listening to the message. <sup>45</sup>And all the circumcised believers who had come with Peter were amazed, because the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out upon the Gentiles also. <sup>46</sup>For they were hearing them speaking with tongues and exalting God. Then Peter answered, <sup>47</sup>"Surely no one can refuse the water for these to be baptized who have received the Holy Spirit just as we did, can he?" <sup>48</sup>And he ordered them to be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ. Then they asked him to stay on for a few days," ([Acts 10:44-48](#)).*

Notice that Peter had been preaching the gospel and the Holy Spirit fell upon the people. In verse 45 we see that *"the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out upon the Gentiles also."* These people were saved. The gift of the Holy Spirit was on the Gentiles and they were speaking in tongues. This is significant because tongues is a gift given to believers, see [1 Cor. 14:1-5](#). Also, unbelievers don't praise God. They can't because praise to the true God is a deep spiritual matter that is foreign to the unsaved ([1 Cor. 2:14](#)). Therefore, the ones in [Acts 10:44-48](#) who are speaking in tongues and praising God are definitely saved and they are saved before they are baptized. This simply isn't an exception. It is a reality.

## Conclusion

[Acts 2:38](#) so closely ties repentance and baptism because it is contextually covenant language and covenant concept. It is not stating that you must be baptized in order to be saved. It is saying that baptism is the complete and total covenantal identification with Christ in His death, burial, and resurrection. It is not the covenant representation (baptism) of what Christ did that saves us, but the reality of His sacrifice which we receive by faith ([Rom. 5:1](#); [Gal. 3:8](#)). That is why we can see in [Acts 10:44-48](#) a group of people who are saved before they are baptized.

Baptism is not what saves. It is not part of salvation. It is something someone does who is already saved.

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1. Active voice is "I hit the ball." Passive voice is "The ball hit me." Middle voice is "I was hit by the ball." In active voice, "I" performed the action. In passive voice, "I" received the action. In middle voice, "I" did something to myself.

## Baptism and Roman 6:3-5

[Romans 6:3-5](#) is often used as a proof text for the claim that baptism is essential for salvation. It is a strong comparison between our baptism and Christ's death, burial, and resurrection. On the surface, one could conclude that from these verses, that baptism is part of salvation.

*"<sup>3</sup>Or do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus have been baptized into His death?<sup>4</sup>Therefore we have been buried with Him through baptism into death, in order that as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life. <sup>5</sup>For if we have become united with Him in the likeness of His death, certainly we shall be also in the likeness of His resurrection,"*

Is this section of scripture teaching us that baptism is necessary for salvation? No, it is not. First, we know from the rest of scripture that [salvation is by faith](#), not by faith and something we do [Rom. 3:28-30](#). Second, we can see from other scriptures that baptism follows faith. Take a look at [Acts 16:30-33](#) where the Jailer specifically asks what he must do to be saved and where baptism fits in.

*"and after he brought them out, he said, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" <sup>31</sup>And they said, "Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you shall be saved, you and your household." <sup>32</sup>And they spoke the word of the Lord to him together with all who were in his house. <sup>33</sup>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](#), NASB).

If baptism were part of salvation, then Paul should have said, "Believe and be baptized and you will be saved." But, he did not. Also, consider [Acts 10:44-46](#).

*"While Peter was still speaking these words, the Holy Spirit came on all who heard the message. The circumcised believers who had come with Peter were astonished that the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out even on the Gentiles. For they heard them speaking in tongues and praising God. Then Peter said, 'Can anyone keep these people from being baptized with water? They have received the Holy Spirit just as we have.' So he ordered that they be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ. Then they asked Peter to stay with them for a few days" (NIV).*

These people were saved. The gift of the Holy Spirit was on the Gentiles and they were speaking in tongues. This is significant because tongues is a gift given to believers, see [1 Cor. 14:1-5](#). Also, unbelievers don't praise God. They can't because praise to the true God is a deep spiritual matter that is foreign to the unsaved ([1 Cor. 2:14](#)). Therefore, the ones in [Acts 10:44-46](#) who are speaking in tongues and praising God are definitely saved and they are saved before they are baptized. This isn't an exception. It is a reality. This proves that baptism is not necessary for salvation.

### What is [Romans 6:3-5](#) saying?

*"<sup>3</sup>Or do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus have been baptized into His death?<sup>4</sup>Therefore we have been buried with Him through baptism into death, in order that as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life. <sup>5</sup>For if we have become united with Him in the likeness of His death, certainly we shall be also in the likeness of His resurrection,"*

The phrase "baptized into" occurs five times in the NT in four verses as found in the KJV and the NASB..

1. [Rom. 6:3](#), "Or do you not know that all of us who have been **baptized into** Christ Jesus have been **baptized into** His death?"
2. [1 Cor. 10:2](#), "and all were **baptized into** Moses in the cloud and in the sea."
3. [1 Cor. 12:13](#), "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."
4. [Gal. 3:27](#), "For all of you who were **baptized into** Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ."

To be baptized "into Christ," "into His death," "into Moses," and "into one body" is to be publicly identified with the thing you are being baptized into. The focus is not the baptism itself, but on the thing the baptism represents. In the case of [Rom. 6:3-5](#), being baptized into Christ is a public identification with Christ's death, burial, and resurrection which is said to be the gospel that saves in [1 Cor. 15:1-4](#). Baptism, then is a public statement proclaiming that the person is trusting in the sacrifice of Christ.

Baptism by immersion is a perfect symbol for this work of Christ with which the Christian is identifying himself. As Christ died and was raised to a new life, so to the Christian, in Christ, is said to have died ([Rom. 6:11](#); [Col. 3:3](#)) and has a new life. This new life of regeneration is by faith, the internal work. Baptism, is the external work of identification with Christ. This is why the reference to baptism in the Bible is dealing more with "our union and identification with Christ than to our water baptism."<sup>1</sup>

- Baptism is being identified as a disciple ([Matt. 28:18-9](#)).
- Baptism may be compared to a new birth ([John 3:5](#)).
- Baptism is compared to Jesus' death and resurrection ([Rom. 6:3-5](#)).
- Baptism is compared to Israel's Exodus and passing through the Red Sea ([1 Cor. 10:2](#)).
- Baptism is compared to Noah's escaping the flood waters by entering the ark ([1 Pet. 3:21](#)).

In each of the references above, baptism is an identification with something. When people were baptized into John the Baptist's baptism of repentance, it wasn't the baptism that granted them repentance or made repentance real. Repentance is something that happens internally and is the work of God ([2 Tim. 2:25](#)). To participate in John's baptism was to publicly proclaim that the person being baptized was accepting John's message or repentance. Hence, it was called a baptism of repentance. It wasn't the baptism that brought repentance; rather, baptism was the result of repentance. The person had to first decide to repent, and then become baptized as a proclamation of his decision. Likewise, the Christian must first decide to repent, to receive Christ ([John 1:12](#)), to rely on the sacrifice of Christ, by faith, and then participate in the public proclamation of identifying with Christ's work.

It is an identification with the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ that baptism represents. Jesus' shed blood is what cleanses us from our sins ([Heb. 9:22](#)), not being washed with water. It is Christ's death that is the payment for sin. Jesus' burial is the proof that He, in fact, died. Jesus' resurrection is the proof of God the Father's acceptance of the sacrifice of Christ and that death is conquered. Again, for a Christian to be baptized is to make a public proclamation that he is trusting in Christ's work, that he is naming himself with Christ and trusting what Christ has done. This is why it says in [Rom. 6:11](#), "*Even so consider yourselves to be dead to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus*" (NASB). Why? Because "*I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me, and delivered Himself up for me,*" ([Gal. 2:20](#)). It is on the cross that Jesus paid for our sins, not in His baptism and not in our baptism. It is our identification with Him, being counted "in Christ" that allows us to say we have been crucified with Christ so that we can say we are dead to sin. We are not dead to sin by our baptism. Rather, we are dead to sin, by faith, in what Jesus did in His sacrifice.

## Conclusion

[Romans 6:3-5](#) speaks to us of Christ's work and our public identification with it. In that ancient world of religious plurality in Roman gods, in the strict Laws of the Jewish system, and in the gods of different cultures, to be baptized was to make a bold statement of commitment to Christ as the risen Lord. It was not the water that saved, but faith in Christ and His work.

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### Footnotes:

1. *Enhanced Strong's Lexicon*, (Oak Harbor, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc.) 1995.

# Baptism and Gal. 3:27

[Gal. 3:27](#) is often used by the baptismal regenerationists to support the idea that you must be baptized to be saved. They maintain that baptism is the place where a person "puts on Christ," where he is "clothed with Christ" and that it means that baptism saves. They teach that being immersed in the baptismal water is the place and time of deliverance from sins. This is simply not true.

[Gal. 3:27](#) cannot be understood alone. It must be examined in context.

<sup>24</sup>Therefore the Law has become our tutor to lead us to Christ, that we may be justified by faith. <sup>25</sup>But now that faith has come, we are no longer under a tutor. <sup>26</sup>For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus. <sup>27</sup>**For all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ.** <sup>28</sup>There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free man, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus. <sup>29</sup>And if you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's offspring, heirs according to promise" ([Gal. 3:24-29](#)).

In Roman society, children were often committed to the care of trusted slaves. This would often happen when the child was between six or seven, and it would last until puberty. "These slaves were severe disciplinarians and were charged with guarding the children from the evils of society and giving them moral training. This was like the Law's function until Christ came and people could be justified by faith in Him."<sup>1</sup> The Law was a harsh master to the Jews. It was very difficult to keep. This is why the Law points to Christ by showing us our inability to keep the the Law and by showing us that we must rely on faith instead. That is why justification is by faith (vv. 24-26), because we cannot attain justification by Law ([Rom. 3:28-30](#); [Phil. 3:9](#)).

"For all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ," ([Gal. 3:27](#)).

In Roman society when a child who had been under the care of a tutor and reached a mature enough age, he was given a special robe, or toga. It was symbolic of his full rights in the family.<sup>2</sup> Therefore, being "clothed with Christ" is a phrase meaning that the Christian moved out from the Law and into the gospel of grace and can enjoy full acceptance before God the Father. It is not saying that baptism is what saves us from our sins.

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1. Walvoord, John F., and Zuck, Roy B., *The Bible Knowledge Commentary*, (Wheaton, Illinois: Scripture Press Publications, Inc.) 1983, 1985, on Gal. 3:24.

2. *ibid*, on Gal. 3:27.

## Quotes from ex-members of the International Church of Christ

(If you have a quote you'd like to contribute, please [email it](#) to me. I will update this list as I receive and discover further comments.)

1. I quit the church about a month into my so-called membership, and the day ended by my calling the cops at 12:00AM to get one of their members off my front porch. The day after I ended up unplugging my phone and then I ordered "call-block" from my phone co...I remember after my departure from the ICoC about a month later I ran into some of the ICoC members at a football game, I tell you the truth that they would not even look at me. I have no idea what's going through their minds, but I know it has something to do with "mind control," (Ric).

2. I must admit, the ICC is a very strong church. I quit after two months of membership and the people who used to be my 'friends and family' no longer wish to speak to me as I am now in 'a church that is not ordained by GOD', i.e. a non-ICC church. Please stay away from this group, they are a very controlling group. Before you realize it, they have taken over your life and the longer you stay, the harder it becomes to quit. (Requested to be anonymous)
3. Let me start by saying I think, for the most part, the doctrine of ICC is great. I learned a lot and the discipleship was very intense and insightful. However, They are cult-like in their practices, but if other churches followed similar (not exact) practices, the church as a whole would be a lot better off. I was part ICC for a few months, but decided to leave for several reasons:
  - A. ICC put my friend out of the church because they said she would not submit to her husband and reconcile with him after they separated. they told her that she could not enjoy the benefits of the Kingdom as others did and remain unsubmitted and at ICC. They would not allow her to be baptized unless she reconcile with her husband and confessed her sins to him. They also told her that they hoped that Satan would have his way with her - so that she would self-destruct.
  - B. I disagreed with them that a woman could not teach in a mixed congregation. men and women always had to be separated when a woman taught.
  - C. They were heavily involved in the lives of the members which is fine, but I think they were extreme.
  - D. You could not become a member unless you were baptized in their church regardless if you had been previously baptized.
  - E. I also had issue with a situation occurring with my disciple partner and her family. They needed financial help (i.e., food). ICC told her that they could not help her and her family because of sin that caused them to be in that financial predicament. They had committed no sin to get into that situation. They had been struggling financially - low income people...They had no food and could barely keep the lights on. Therefore, they sought help from ANOTHER CHURCH who gladly came to their aid....(Requested to be anonymous)