

What is Oneness Pentecostal theology?

Oneness Pentecostal theology affirms that there exists only one God in all the universe. It affirms the deity of Jesus and the Holy Spirit. However, Oneness theology denies the Trinity. The [Trinity](#) is the doctrine that there is one God who manifests Himself as three distinct, simultaneous persons. The Trinity does not assert that there are three gods, but only one. This is important because many groups who oppose orthodoxy, will accuse Trinitarians of believing in three gods. But this is not so. The doctrine of the Trinity is that there is one God in three persons.

Oneness theology denies the Trinity and teaches that God is a single person who was "manifested as Father in creation and as the Father of the Son, in the Son for our redemption, and as the Holy Spirit in our regeneration."¹ Another way of looking at it is that God revealed himself as Father in the Old Testament, as the Son in Jesus during Christ's ministry on earth, and now as the Holy Spirit after Christ's ascension.

In addition, oneness theology also maintains that baptism is a necessary part of salvation; that is, in order to be saved, one must be baptized, by immersion. If you are not baptized you cannot be saved. However, not only must baptism be by immersion, it must also be administered with the formula "[In Jesus' name](#)" rather than the formula "*In the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit*" which is mentioned in [Matt. 28:19](#). Finally, this baptism must be administered by a duly ordained minister of a church that maintains oneness theology: United Pentecostal, United Apostolic, etc.

Oneness churches also teach that speaking in tongues is a necessary manifestation of the Holy Spirit. Since a person cannot be saved without the Holy Spirit ([Rom. 8:9](#)), it follows that only those who have spoken in tongues are really saved. There is, therefore, an emphasis that Oneness church members speak in tongues to "demonstrate" that they are saved and have the truth.

Oneness groups are decidedly Arminian in the doctrine of salvation. They deny predestination and maintain that it is completely up to the individual to decide whether or not he wants to be saved. They also teach that it is possible to lose one's salvation.

There is within the Oneness movement an attempt to represent themselves in a modest and holy manner. This is to be commended. However, sometimes it tends to become legalistic in that women are required to abstain from wearing makeup and pants. They also must have their heads covered. Likewise, men should be well dressed, preferably in ties (this has been my experience with them). Such practices are not wrong in themselves, and are good examples of propriety. However, when they become requirements for acceptance in a church, it is legalistic. Legalism leads to bondage and the requirements of keeping the law to maintain salvation. It then becomes a means by which a person's spirituality is judged. Oneness churches strongly imply that if you go to movies, or have a TV, or wear makeup, etc., then you are not "really" a Christian.

I am not saying that the Oneness Theology necessarily leads to legalism, but it seems to be quite evident that it has taken over much of Oneness practice.

1. <http://www.upci.org/about/index.asp>

What does Oneness Pentecostal teach?

Oneness Pentecostal people are many and varied. The two main groups that hold to Oneness theology are the United Pentecostal Church International (the largest) and the United Apostolic church. There are others like the Assemblies of the Lord Jesus Christ and the Bible Way Churches of Our Lord Jesus Christ as well as a host of independent Oneness churches scattered throughout the United States.

The following points of doctrine are generally held to by the Oneness Pentecostal groups.

Within Orthodoxy

1. There is only one God in all existence
2. The Bible is God's inerrant word
3. Jesus was born of a virgin
4. Jesus had two natures.
5. Justification by faith
6. Baptism must be by immersion.¹
7. The elements of communion are bread and wine and are only for believers.
8. Foot-washing (John 13:4-5), is a divine institution to be practiced by church members.²
9. Abstain from joining secret societies (James 5:12; 2 Cor. 6:14-18).
10. There will be a future rapture of the Church where the Christians will be transformed (1 Thess. 4:13-17; 1 Cor. 15:51-54; Phil. 3:20-21).

Outside of Orthodoxy

1. Denies the doctrine of the Trinity.
2. Denies justification by faith alone by stating that baptism is also required for salvation.
3. Jesus is God the Father.
4. Jesus is the Holy Spirit.
5. The name of God is "Jesus."
6. Baptism is necessary for salvation.
7. Denies pre-existence of the Word as the Son. Teaches that He existed as the Father.
8. Being born again means repentance, baptism, and speaking in tongues.
9. Baptism must be administered by an ordained Oneness minister to be valid.
10. Baptism must be administered with the phrase, "In the name of Jesus" instead of the phrase, "*In the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit*" (Matt. 28:19).
11. Speaking in tongues is a necessary requirement to demonstrate that a person has been baptized in the Holy Spirit, and is, therefore, saved. It is claimed to be **the** initial sign of the infilling of the Holy Ghost.
12. Restitution of all things, though the devil and the angels will not be restored.
13. Women may be pastors.³
14. Only Oneness people will go to heaven.

1. Orthodoxy allows for sprinkling as well.

2. Many Christian churches practice foot-washing. But it is not a required practice

according to the Bible.

3. Many Oneness people deny that women can be pastors, but the UPCI (United Pentecostal Church International) does. Also, there are many Trinitarian churches that practice women ordination and eldership. But generally speaking, women are not to hold these positions. If you are interested in more on this issue, please see [Can women be pastors and elders?](#)

Oneness and the word "person"

Oneness theology denies the [Trinity](#) doctrine and claims that there is one person in the Godhead who has manifested himself in three different forms: the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. These "forms" are not three separate persons, but one person who occupied consecutive modes. The Trinity, on the other hand, is the teaching that there is one God who exists in three separate, simultaneous, persons. Please note, though, this is not saying there are three gods.

In defending the doctrine of the Trinity and in examining the Oneness doctrine regarding the Godhead, it is first necessary to define the terms that are used. Since the Trinity doctrine states there are three persons in one Godhead, and Oneness Pentecostal theology states there is only one person, we first need to know what a "person" is before we try to discover whether or not God is three persons or one. Therefore, we need to ask what qualifies someone as having "personhood"?

I offer the following analysis as an attempt to adequately define personhood. After the outline, I will try and show that the definition and/or characteristics of personhood can be applied to both the Father and the Son in a context that shows they both existed as persons at the same time, thereby proving Oneness theology is incorrect.

What are the qualities and attributes of being a person?

1. A person exists and has identity.
2. A person is aware of his own existence and identity.
 - A. This precludes the condition of being unconscious.
3. A self aware person will use such a statement as "I am", "me", "mine", etc.
4. A person can recognize the existence of other persons.
 - . This is true provided there were other persons around him or her.
 - A. Such recognition would include the use of such statements as "you are", "you", "yours", etc.
5. A person possesses a will.
 - . A will is the capability of conscious choice, decision, intention, desire, and or purpose.
6. A single person cannot have two separate and distinct wills at the same time on the exact same subject.
 - . Regarding the exact same subject, a person can desire/will one thing at one moment and another at a different moment.
 - A. Separate and simultaneous wills imply separate and simultaneous persons.
7. A person has the ability to communicate -- under normal conditions.
8. Persons do not need to have bodies.
- . God the Father possesses personhood without a body, as do the angels.

- A. Biblically speaking, upon death we are "absent from the body and home with the Lord" ([2 Cor. 5:8](#)).

God qualifies as having personhood in that He exists, is self aware, has identity, uses terms such as "Me", "I AM", "My", and possesses a will.

The question now becomes whether or not there is more than one "person" in the Godhead.

"Let this cup pass from Me."

"And he was withdrawn from them about a stone's cast, and kneeled down, and prayed, ⁴²Saying, 'Father, if thou be willing, remove this cup from me: nevertheless not my will, but thine, be done'" ([Luke 22:42](#)).

"And he went a little further, and fell on his face, and prayed, saying, 'O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me: nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt'" ([Matt. 26:39](#)).

In both [Luke 22:42](#) and [Matt. 26:39](#) (which are parallel passages), the context is Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane, right before His betrayal. He was praying to the Father about the ordeal He was about to undergo. Several points are worth bringing out here.

First, in this passage, Jesus addresses the Father. He says, *"Oh my Father..."* Note that Jesus says "my" and "Father." These two words designate a "me and you" relationship.

Second, *"If it be possible"* is Jesus expressing a desire, a hope. What is that hope or desire? It is that *"this cup pass from me."* The cup Jesus is speaking of is the immanent ordeal of betrayal, scourging, and crucifixion. Jesus did not want to go through this. He was expressing His desire. It was His will not to undergo the severe ordeal ahead of Him. If this was not so, He would not have expressed the desire to have the cup pass from Him.

Third, in [Matt. 26:39](#), Jesus says, *"Nevertheless., not my will, but thine, be done."* In [Luke 22:42](#) he says, *"Nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt."* With this, Jesus is expressing His will and contrasting it to the will of the Father. Yet, He is stating that even though He does not want to undergo what lay ahead, *"Nevertheless,"* He would submit to the will of the Father -- and not his own will.

This shows that the person of Jesus had a separate and different will than the Father. Since we have two separate simultaneous wills, we have two separate and simultaneous persons and Oneness Pentecostal theology is incorrect.

Questions to ask the Oneness person:

1. Is Jesus His own Father?
2. If Jesus' will and the Father's will were identical (in an attempt to demonstrate that there is only one will), then why did Jesus express the desire to escape the cup but resigns Himself not to His own will, but the will of the Father?
3. Was Jesus praying to Himself at this point?
4. Was Jesus saying, "Not **My** will, but **My** will be done?" if there is only one person and one will involved?

Another look at Jesus, the Father, and two wills

Oneness theology teaches that there is only one person in the Godhead whose name is Jesus. Jesus is the Father and the Holy Spirit. Regarding His incarnation, oneness people say that Jesus was in heaven at the same time that He was on earth. Unfortunately, the oneness position presents a serious problem.

In the Garden of Gethsemane ([Luke 22:42](#)), Jesus prayed to the Father saying, *"Father, if You are willing, remove this cup from Me; yet not My will, but Yours be done."* See also, *"And he went a little further, and fell on his face, and prayed, saying, 'O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me: nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt'"* ([Matt. 26:39](#)).

Notice that Jesus says that he has a will and that the Father has a will. That is two wills: one of the Son and the other of the Father. Furthermore, notice that the wills were in opposition. Jesus did not want to have to go to the cross and endure the suffering, but he submitted not to his own will, but the will of the Father. If this is so, then how can Jesus, who is the Father in flesh (and therefore, they are one person) have two separate and opposing wills on the same subject at the same time?

The response is generally that Jesus was fully a man and that in his humanity he was not the everlasting Father. But if this is so, then what was Jesus if not God incarnate? If He is not fully God incarnate, then the atonement is void since it isn't God making the sacrifice but a mere man. This is the danger of oneness theology. Ultimately, it denies the true incarnation of God.

Sometimes oneness people say that Jesus had another existence outside His existence as a man because he also was existing as the Father. But this implies that there are two beings since each has its own existence different than the other. Furthermore, the Oneness position would have a will of the Father and a will of the Son which are in opposition to each other -- yet they are supposed to be one person? This makes no sense. If the oneness people state that Jesus' flesh was at odds with His own presence as the Father in heaven, then again we have no true incarnation.

The problem with the oneness position is serious and the fact that Jesus' will was separate from the Father's demonstrates that the Father and the Son are different persons within the Godhead. The oneness people are very wrong.

Questions:

1. If it was the flesh side of Jesus speaking to the divine side of Jesus in heaven, then that denies the true incarnation of God in Christ and invalidates the atonement.

Is Baptism Necessary for Salvation?

Oneness Pentecostal theology states that baptism is necessary for salvation. It asserts that without it, a person cannot be saved. Is baptism necessary for salvation? No. It is not. The Oneness theologians are in error. Nevertheless,

disagreeing with them does not make it so, particularly when we have verses like the following:

- [John 3:5](#), *"Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God."*
- [Acts 2:38](#), *"Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost."*
- [Acts 22:16](#), *"And now why tarriest thou? arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord."*
- [1 Pet. 3:21](#), *"The like figure whereunto even baptism doth also now save us (not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God,) by the resurrection of Jesus Christ."*

The problem with baptismal regeneration (the belief that baptism is part of salvation and necessary for it) is that it contradicts other scriptures that state we are justified by faith. Justification is God's declaration upon a sinner that the person is declared righteous in God's site. In other words, only Christians are justified; only Christians are saved. Please consider the following verses:

- [Rom. 4:3](#), *"For what saith the scripture? Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness."*
- [Rom. 5:1](#), *"Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ."*
- [Gal. 3:8](#), *"And the scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the heathen through faith, preached before the gospel unto Abraham, saying, In thee shall all nations be blessed."*
- [Eph. 2:8](#), *"For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God."*
- See also [Rom. 4:5](#); [9:30](#); [John 5:24](#); [Gal. 2:16](#); [Gal. 3:11-14](#); and [Phil. 3:9](#).

There are other verses, but these are sufficient to show that we are made right in God's eyes -- justified, forgiven -- by faith, not by faith and baptism. If baptism were necessary for salvation, then these verses would state that we are justified by faith **and** baptism. But they don't. In fact, that is not what Paul says that the gospel is, and it is the gospel that saves us.

The Gospel is what saves

"Now, brothers, I want to remind you of the gospel I preached to you, which you received and on which you have taken your stand. By this gospel you are saved, if you hold firmly to the word I preached to you. Otherwise, you have believed in vain. For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures" (NASB) ([1 Cor. 15:1-4](#)).

The gospel is defined as the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus for our sins. Baptism is not mentioned here.

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). 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.

Additionally, in Acts, Peter was preaching the gospel, people got saved, and then they were baptized. [Acts 10:44-46](#) says,

"While Peter yet spake these words, the Holy Ghost fell on all them which heard the word. ⁴⁵And they of the circumcision which believed were astonished, as many as came with Peter, because that on the Gentiles also was poured out the gift of the Holy Ghost. ⁴⁶For they heard them speak with tongues, and magnify God..."

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 simply isn't an exception. It is a reality.

Let's Suppose...

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 confesses his sinfulness, cries out in repentance to the Lord, and receives Jesus as Savior and 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.

Saying that baptism is necessary for salvation is dangerous because it is saying that there is something we must do to complete salvation. That is wrong! See [Gal. 2:21](#); [5:4](#).

Alright, so this sounds reasonable. But still, what about those verses that seem to say that baptism is part of salvation? I'll address those now. But, because this subject can become quite lengthy, in fact, sufficient for a book in itself, I'll only address a few verses and then only briefly.

Baptism Verses

[John 3:5](#), "Jesus answered, 'I tell you the truth, no one can enter the kingdom of God unless he is born of water and the Spirit.'"

Some say that water here means baptism. But that is unlikely since Christian baptism hadn't yet been instituted. If this verse did mean baptism, then the only kind that it could have been at that point was the baptism of repentance administered by John the Baptist ([Mark 1:4](#)). If that is so, then baptism isn't necessary for salvation because the baptism of repentance is no longer practiced.

It is my opinion that the water spoken of here means the water of the womb referring to the natural birth process. Jesus said in verse three that Nicodemus needed to be born "again." This meant that he had been born once--through his

mother. Nicodemus responds with a statement about how he can't enter again into his mother's womb to be born. Then Jesus says that he must be born of water and the Spirit. Then in verse 6 He says that "flesh gives birth to flesh, but the Spirit gives birth to spirit.." The context seems to be discussing the contrast between the natural and the spiritual birth. Water, therefore, could easily be interpreted there to mean the natural birth process.

I would like to add that there are scholars who agree with the position and some who do not. Some believe that the water refers to the Word of God, the Bible, and others claim it means the Holy Spirit. You decide for yourself.

[Acts 2:38](#), "*Peter replied, 'Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.'*"

This verse is a tough one. It seems to say that baptism is part of salvation. But we know, from other scriptures that it isn't, lest there be a contradiction. What is going on here is simply that repentance and forgiveness of sins are connected. In the Greek, "repent" is in the plural and so is "your" of "your sins." They are meant to be understood as being related to each other. It is like saying, "All of you repent, each of you get baptized, and all of you will receive forgiveness." Repentance is a mark of salvation because it is granted by God ([2 Tim. 2:25](#)) and is given to believers only. In this context, only the regenerated, repentant person is to be baptized. Baptism is the manifestation of the repentance, that gift from God, that is the sign of the circumcised heart. That is why it says, repent and get baptized. In other words, the phrase "*each of you get baptized in the name of Jesus Christ*" is parenthetical since it is in the singular and "repent" is in the plural as is "your" of "your sins." Therefore, "repent" must go with the purpose of forgiveness of sins. Also, this concept fits with Peter's statement in [Acts 10:43](#) where the same phrase "sins may be forgiven" is used. There it is granted on the basis of faith alone.

Also, consider this from The Bible Knowledge Commentary: "The preposition used here is *eis* which, with the accusative case, may mean "on account of, on the basis of." It is used in this way in [Matt. 12:41](#); and [Mark 1:4](#). Though it is possible for this construction to mean "on the basis of," this is not its normal meaning; *eis* with the accusative case usually describes purpose or direction."¹

[1 Pet. 3:21](#), "*and this water symbolizes baptism that now saves you also -- not the removal of dirt from the body but the pledge of a good conscience toward God. It saves you by the resurrection of Jesus Christ.*"

This is the only verse that says that baptism saves. But, the NIV translation of the verse is unfortunate. A better translation is found in the NASB which says, "*and corresponding to that, baptism now saves you.*" The key word in this section is the Greek *antitupon*. It means "copy," "type," corresponding to," "a thing resembling another," "its counterpart," etc. Baptism is a representation, a copy, a type of something else. The question is "Of what is it a type?", or "Baptism corresponds to what?". The answer is found in the previous verse, verse 20: "*who once were disobedient, when the patience of God kept waiting in the days of Noah, during the construction of the ark, in which a few, that is, eight persons, were brought safely through the water.* ²¹*And corresponding to that, baptism now saves you*" (NASB).

What does baptism correspond to? Is it the flood? Or, is it the ark? What was it that saved Noah and his family? Was it the water or the ark? Obviously, it was the Ark. Noah built and entered the ark by faith and was saved ([Heb. 11:7](#)). The flood waters destroyed the ungodly. Peter, when referring to the flood waters, refers to them as the means of destruction of the ungodly ([2 Pet. 2:5](#); [3:6](#)). It was the Ark that saved. Noah entered the ark by faith. Baptism here, in my opinion, refers to the

Ark, not the waters. That is why the rest of the verse says, "not the removal of dirt from the body but the pledge of a good conscience toward God" which is consistent with what Paul said in [Col. 2:11-12](#) where He equates baptism with being circumcised of heart.

[Acts 22:16](#), *"And now what are you waiting for? Get up, be baptized and wash your sins away, calling on his name."*

Is the washing away of sins done by baptism, the representation of the circumcised heart ([Col. 2:11-12](#)) which means you are already saved, or is it by the blood of Christ ([Heb. 9:14](#); [Rom. 5:9](#); [Eph. 1:7](#))? Obviously it is the blood of Jesus and the washing here refers to the calling on Jesus' name.

Baptism is a picture of God's inner work of washing away sin (cf. [1 Cor. 6:11](#); [1 Pet. 3:21](#)).

[Rom. 6:4](#), *"We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life."*

Because the believer is so closely united to Christ it is said that the symbol of baptism is our death, burial, and resurrection. Obviously we did not die -- unless, of course, it is a figurative usage.

[Titus 3:5](#), *"he saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy. He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit."*

The washing of rebirth can only be that washing of the blood of Christ that cleanses us. It is not the symbol that saves, but the reality. The reality is the blood of Christ.

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

This is speaking of the believer's union with Christ. It is an identification with, a joining to, a proclamation of loyalty to, etc. In [1 Cor. 10:2](#) the Israelites were baptized into Moses. That means they were closely identified with him and his purpose. The same thing is meant here.

More on Baptism

It is an outward representation of an inward reality. For example, it represents the reality of the inward washing of Christ's blood upon the soul. That is why it is used in different ways. It is said to represent the death of the person ([Rom. 6:3-5](#)), the union of that person with Christ ([Gal. 3:27](#)), the cleansing of that person's sins ([Acts 22:16](#)), the identification with the one "baptized into" as when the Israelites were baptized into Moses ([1 Cor. 10:2](#)), and being united in one church ([1 Cor. 12:13](#)). Also, baptism is one of the signs and seals of the Covenant of Grace that was instituted by Jesus. It is in this sense a sacrament. A sacrament is a visible manifestation of something spoken. It is also said to be a visible sign of an inward grace. For example, the communion elements of bread and wine are called the sacrament of communion. When we take communion we are partaking of the sacrament.

The Covenant of Grace is the covenant between God and Man where God promises to Man eternal life. It is based upon the sacrifice of Jesus on the cross and the condition is faith in Jesus Christ. As the Communion Supper replaced Passover,

baptism, in like manner, replaces circumcision. "They represent the same spiritual blessings that were symbolized by circumcision and Passover in the old dispensation."²

Circumcision was the initiatory rite into the Abrahamic covenant; it did not save. A covenant is a pact or agreement between two or more parties and that is exactly what the Abrahamic covenant was. 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 8 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. ([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 all 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).

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. It comes after faith which is a gift of God ([Rom. 13:3](#)) and the work of God ([John 6:28](#)).

Conclusion

Baptism is not necessary for salvation. It is the initiatory sign and seal into the covenant of grace. As circumcision referred to the cutting away of sin and to a change of heart (Deut. 10:16; 30:6; Jer. 4:4; 9:25,26; Ez. 44:7,9) baptism refers to the washing away of sin ([Acts 2:38](#); [1 Pet. 3:21](#); [Titus 3:5](#)) and to spiritual renewal ([Rom. 6:4](#); [Col. 2:11-12](#)). The circumcision of the heart is signified by the circumcision of the flesh, that is, baptism ([Col. 2:11-12](#)).

One last thought: If someone maintains that baptism is necessary for salvation, is he adding a work, his own, to the finished work of Christ? If the answer is yes, then that person would be in terrible risk of not being saved. If the answer is no, then why is baptism maintained as being necessary the same way as the Jews maintained that works were necessary?

1. Walvoord, John F., and Zuck, Roy B., *The Bible Knowledge Commentary*, (Wheaton, Illinois: Scripture Press Publications, Inc.) 1983, 1985, [Online] Available: Logos Library System.

2. Berkhoff, Lewis, *Systematic Theology*, 1988, p. 620.

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."¹

2. There is another ending to Mark.

Another ending is found in L, Psi, 099, 0112, and minuscules 274^{mg} 579, k, Syr^h 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.

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." ⁴Nicodemus *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?"⁵Jesus answered, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. ⁶"That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. ⁷"Do not marvel that I said to you, 'You must be born again.' ⁸"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. ²⁶Moreover, 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. ²⁷And 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. ³⁸He who believes in Me, as the Scripture said, 'From his innermost being shall flow rivers of living water.'"³⁹But 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 Greek¹) 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 ἀφεσίν 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, ² by which also you are saved, if you hold fast the word which I preached to you, unless you believed in vain. ³ For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received, that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, ⁴ 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 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,'⁹ 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. ⁴⁵And 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. ⁴⁶For they were hearing them speaking with tongues and exalting God. Then Peter answered, ⁴⁷"Surely no one can refuse the water for these to be baptized who have received the Holy Spirit just as we did, can he?" ⁴⁸And 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.

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.

Must baptism be "in Jesus' name"?

Oneness Pentecostal theology maintains that baptism must be by immersion using the formula "in Jesus name" and not the formula "in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit" as is found in [Matt. 28:19](#). They reject the Trinitarian formula because they reject the Trinity. To support their method they cite various Bible verses that reference baptizing in Jesus' name and claim that this is proof for their doctrine. Following are some of the Bible references they quote.

- [Acts 2:38](#), " Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you **in the name of Jesus Christ** for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost."

- [Acts 8:16](#), "For as yet he was fallen upon none of them: only they were baptized **in the name of the Lord Jesus.**"
- [Acts 10:48](#), "And he commanded them to be baptized **in the name of the Lord.** Then prayed they him to tarry certain days."
- [Acts 19:5](#), "When they heard this, they were baptized **in the name of the Lord Jesus.**"
- [Acts 22:16](#), "And now why do you delay? Arise, and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on His name.'

Let's take a look at what is going on in the verses. The phrase, "*in the name of the Lord*" is not a reference to a baptismal formula, but a reference to authority. It is similar to hearing someone say, "Stop in the name of the Law!". We understand that the "name of the Law" means by the authority of the Law. It is the same with baptism "in Jesus' name." To baptise in Jesus' name is to baptize in the authority of Jesus. Consider the following:

- "And when they had placed them in the center, they began to inquire, "**By what power, or in what name, have you done this?**"⁸ Then Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, said to them, "Rulers and elders of the people,⁹ if we are on trial today for a benefit done to a sick man, as to how this man has been made well,¹⁰ let it be known to all of you, and to all the people of Israel, that **by the name of Jesus Christ** the Nazarene, whom you crucified, whom God raised from the dead — **by this name** this man stands here before you in good health" ([Acts 4:7-10](#)). See also the following verses:
 - [Acts 4:17-18](#), "But in order that it may not spread any further among the people, let us warn them to speak no more to any man **in this name.** 18 And when they had summoned them, they commanded them not to speak or teach at all **in the name of Jesus.**"
 - [Acts 5:28](#), "We gave you strict orders not to continue **teaching in this name,** and behold, you have filled Jerusalem with your teaching, and intend to bring this man's blood upon us."
 - [Acts 5:40](#), "And they took his advice; and after calling the apostles in, they flogged them and ordered them **to speak no more in the name of Jesus,** and then released them."
 - [Acts 8:12](#), "But 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 9:27-28](#), "But Barnabas took hold of him and brought him to the apostles and described to them how he had seen the Lord on the road, and that He had talked to him, and how at Damascus he had **spoken out boldly in the name of Jesus.** 28 And he was with them moving about freely in Jerusalem, **speaking out boldly in the name of the Lord.**"
 - [Acts 16:18](#), "And this did she many days. But Paul, being grieved, turned and said to the spirit, I command thee **in the name of Jesus Christ** to come out of her. And he came out the same hour."

We can see that the phrase is used in the Bible as an expression of authority. This is particularly clarified [Acts 16:18](#) above. Let's look at it again. "And this did she many days. But Paul, being grieved, turned and said to the spirit, I command thee **in the name of Jesus Christ** to come out of her. And he came out the same hour." We also see that when people were being baptized that they did it calling on

Jesus' name ([Acts 22:16](#)); that is, they were calling upon Jesus who has all authority in heaven and earth ([Matt. 28:18](#)). The church is supposed to "call upon the name of the Lord Jesus" ([1 Cor. 1:2](#)) because it is by His authority ([John 1:12](#)) that we Christians have the hope and right of forgiveness of sins and adoption as His children ([Rom. 8:15](#)).

Therefore, the Oneness Pentecostal people are simply in error by demanding that baptism be done with the formula "In Jesus name." Instead, it should be done as Jesus commanded:

"Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit," ([Matt. 28:19](#)).

The proper way to baptize in Jesus' name is to say, "I baptize you in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit."

Is speaking in tongues a necessary sign of salvation

The Oneness Pentecostal people teach that speaking in tongues is a necessary manifestation of the Holy Spirit and without it a person is not truly saved.¹ It is so important to them that one ex-oneness person told me that her church had altar calls for people to come up and receive the gift of the Holy Spirit so they could speak in tongues. She said she never saw an altar call for people to come up and receive Jesus as savior. But, this is only one example and may not be typical.

We see in Acts that many people who became Christians immediately spoke in tongues ([Acts 2:4](#); [10:46](#); [19:6](#)). But is it a necessary sign of salvation? No. It isn't. Consider the following verses in 1 Cor. 12.

- [1 Cor. 12:7-11](#), "But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal. ⁸For to one is given by the Spirit the word of wisdom; to another the word of knowledge by the same Spirit; ⁹ To another faith by the same Spirit; to another the gifts of healing by the same Spirit; ¹⁰ To another the working of miracles; to another prophecy; to another discerning of spirits; to another divers kinds of tongues; to another the interpretation of tongues. ¹¹But all these worketh that one and the selfsame Spirit, dividing to every man severally as he will."
- [1 Cor. 12:29-30](#), "Are all apostles? are all prophets? are all teachers? are all workers of miracles? ³⁰Have all the gifts of healing? do all speak with tongues? do all interpret?"

We can see that the Holy Spirit gives gifts as He desires. He distributes them upon His people in the church as He wills ([1 Cor. 12:11](#)). It states in [1 Cor. 12:7-11](#) that different people have different gifts and we see in verses [29-31](#) that not all speak in tongues. Now, the Oneness person will state that all are supposed to speak in tongues, but that not all do. They maintain that speaking in tongues is a necessary sign gift of true salvation and that a true believer **will** speak in tongues. But, that is not what the text says.

Paul asks the questions: Are all apostles? No. Are all prophets? No. Are all teachers? No. In other words, within the body of Christ, different people are called by God to have different gifts. If someone states that all are supposed to speak in tongues, but that not all do, then are all supposed to be apostles as well but not all are? Are all called to be prophets? Are all called to be teachers? No. Likewise, not all are called by God to speak in tongues.

It is simple. Not all speak in tongues because God doesn't give the gift to everyone. Speaking in tongues is not **the** sign of salvation, but **a** sign. If anything, the fruit of the indwelling Spirit of God is listed in [Gal. 5:22-23](#) is **the** sign of salvation. I would ask the Oneness person if the following fruit are what the true signs of salvation in his or her life rather than speaking in tongues:

"But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, ²³gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law" ([Gal. 5:22-23](#)).

So, again I ask. What is **the** biblical sign of salvation, tongues or the fruit of the Spirit?

1. This paper is not dealing with the issue of whether or not the charismatic gifts are still in operation, but will assume, for this paper that they are.

Who did Jesus pray to?

Oneness theology states that the Father was in the Son and that the person of Jesus was also the person of the Father. Of course, when we see instances in the Bible where Jesus prays to the Father, we naturally wonder how this can be if they are they same person. But, according to Oneness theology, Jesus was praying to the Father, the true divinity though it was Jesus the man who was praying. But, how can this be? Was Jesus praying to Himself (since God is only one person) and making it appear that He was praying to someone else?

Oneness theology correctly states that Jesus has two natures. He was both God and man while He walked this earth.¹ But it states that the human part of Jesus was praying to the divine essence of God as the Father. What they do is divide Jesus into two parts and have the human nature address the divine nature.

The problem with this is that it threatens the incarnation of the Word made flesh as a complete and single person. Jesus was both God and man in one person. He had a will. He ate. He slept, etc. He was a man. He needed to be a human in order to bear the sins of people. He needed to be God in order to offer a sacrifice to God the Father sufficient to cleanse us of our sins. No mere man could do this. But the fact is, Jesus was one person -- and still is.² Jesus was both God and man at the same time in the form of a single person.

The Oneness explanation risks the error of Nestorianism which stated that Jesus was two separate persons: a human person and a divine person in the form of one man. No where in the Bible does it state that Jesus was two persons. Rather, we find scriptures where Jesus refers to Himself as "I" and "Me" and "mine" not "us" or "our." The Oneness position is simply in error.

Jesus was not praying to Himself. We see in Scripture, Jesus praying to the Father ([John 17](#)). We see Him addressing another person who is called God. We see

Jesus saying, "Not my will, but your will be done," ([Luke 22:42](#)) when He addressed God the Father. In other words, they had separate wills -- at the same time. He was not praying to Himself, or an extension of Himself, or a part of Himself. He was praying to the person of the Father.

Furthermore, according to Oneness theology, Jesus would have had to exist at the same time as the Father if Jesus the man was praying to the Father. If this is so and Jesus was addressing the Father, then we have two simultaneous persons. But in Oneness theology, this is a problem since God is only one person who occupies consecutive modes. How then could the "mode" of the Father and the "mode" of the Son be in existence at the same time if Oneness theology is correct? They cannot, which is another reason why Oneness theology is wrong.

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1. Actually, Jesus is still God and man. [Col. 2:9](#) states that in Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily. Note, the verse says "dwells", not dwelt. Dwells is in the present tense, not the past. Therefore, in Jesus, right now, dwells the fullness of the Godhead.
 2. See my article [Oneness and the word "person"](#) that deals with the nature of personhood.
 3. This heresy is attributed to Nestorius who was a preacher at Antioch and the Bishop of Constantinople around 428 A.D. However, Nestorius did not preach that Jesus was two persons in one body, but his name has become attached to this error.

Jesus' resurrection and ascension

One of the problems with oneness theology deals with the resurrection of Jesus. Oneness Pentecostal theology states that Jesus had two natures while he was walking the earth. That is, he was both God and man. This is correct theology in so far as it states that within the one person of the Son, there are two natures: God and man. But it also states that God is now in the "form/mode/manifestation" of the Holy Spirit. If this is the case, what happened to Jesus' body after the ascension? Where is it? Is it alive? Is it in a coma? Was it dissolved? Does it still exist? Is Jesus, the man, still a person? If so, how can Jesus, the person with flesh and bones, also be the Holy Spirit?

In Trinitarian theology the second person of the Trinity became flesh ([John 1:1, 14](#)). In other words, according to [Phil. 2:5-8](#), Jesus added to himself human nature. Likewise in [Col. 2:9](#) it states, "For in Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily." [1 Tim. 2:5](#) says that "there is one mediator between God and man, the man Christ Jesus." We know that Jesus rose from the dead in the same body He died in since He prophesied He would raise His body ([John 2:19-21](#)); He retained the scars of His ordeal after the resurrection ([John 20:27](#)); and He was seen as a man after the resurrection ([Luke 24:39](#)).

- *"Behold my hands and my feet, that it is I myself: handle me, and see; for a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye see me have" ([Luke 24:39](#)).*
- *"Then saith he to Thomas, Reach hither thy finger, and behold my hands; and reach hither thy hand, and thrust it into my side: and be not faithless, but believing" ([John 20:27](#)).*

As you can see from the above verses, Jesus retained His physical nature after His resurrection -- along with His scars. This is why it says in [Col. 2:9](#) that in Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily. Notice that the verb "dwells" is in the present tense. That is, right now Jesus has a body of flesh and bones. He is physical. He is in heaven. He is a man, the Godman.

Nevertheless, some deny Jesus' resurrection by stating that the Bible says flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God and therefore Jesus did not rise in the same body he died in. But, we need to realize that the Bible says, "*flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God*" ([1 Cor. 15:50](#)), not flesh and bones as Jesus said He had ([Luke 24:39](#)). Is this important? Yes it is. Jesus' blood was the sacrifice that cleanses us from sin ([Lev. 17:11](#); [Heb. 9:22](#)). I suspect that Jesus' resurrected body did not have any blood in it. It was shed from His body on the cross.

Jesus' Ascension and Return

The Bible tells us that Jesus ascended into the sky ([Acts 1:9-11](#)). When He did this He was still in physical form as I've demonstrated above. In addition, the Bible tells us that Jesus will return in the same manner.

- *"And when he had spoken these things, while they beheld, he was taken up; and a cloud received him out of their sight. ¹⁰And while they looked stedfastly toward heaven as he went up, behold, two men stood by them in white apparel; ¹¹Which also said, Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? this same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven"* ([Acts 1:9-11](#)).

Since the Bible teaches us that Jesus is in bodily form now ([Col. 2:9](#)), then how does the Oneness Pentecostal person maintain that God is in the form of the Holy Spirit? Also, when Jesus returns, will He return in His body? Will God's form then revert to the form of the Son at His return according to Oneness?

I do not think Oneness Pentecostal theology is correct for many reasons. But here, with this issue of Jesus' resurrection and ascension, I see their theology denying the incarnation of God in flesh right now. After all, it says in [Col. 2:9](#) that Jesus is in bodily form now. Oneness denies that since God, according to its theology, is now supposed to be in the form of the Holy Spirit.

God was seen in the Old Testament. Who was it?

Oneness Pentecostal theology teaches that God exists as one person who revealed Himself in three modes, or forms. In the Old Testament, God revealed himself as the Father. When Jesus was on earth, the revelation was as the Son. Now, God is in the mode of the Holy Spirit. Basically, oneness teaches three consecutive modes of God: the Father who became the Son who became the Holy Spirit. There are variations on this model within Oneness churches, but I will focus on this model here.

However, in the Old Testament there are numerous places where God is seen. In some places this is the angel of the Lord. In others it is a vision or a dream. But, there are instances in the Old Testament where God is seen and it is not an angel, a vision, or a dream. Of course, this can raise some warning flags for Trinitarians as

well as Oneness people. But when you look at the totality of Scripture, you'll find that the Trinitarians have an easy answer where the Oneness Pentecostal people do not.

Basically, in those places where God was seen in the Old Testament, it was the person of Jesus; that is, it was the pre-incarnate Word that was seen. It was not the person of the Father that appeared in the OT because Jesus said that no one has ever seen the Father ([John 6:46](#)). Yet, God Almighty was seen ([Exo. 6:2-3](#)). For the Oneness people, this is a problem since God was in the mode of the Father in the Old Testament and to them, it had to be the Father.

- [John 6:46](#), *"Not that any man hath seen the Father, save he which is of God, he hath seen the Father."*
- [Exo. 6:2-3](#), "And God spake unto Moses, and said unto him, I am the LORD: ³And I appeared unto Abraham, unto Isaac, and unto Jacob, by the name of God Almighty, but by my name JEHOVAH was I not known to them."
- [Num. 12:6-8](#), *"And he said, Hear now my words: If there be a prophet among you, I the LORD will make myself known unto him in a vision, and will speak unto him in a dream. ⁷My servant Moses is not so, who is faithful in all mine house. ⁸With him will I speak mouth to mouth, even apparently, and not in dark speeches; and the similitude of the LORD shall he behold: wherefore then were ye not afraid to speak against my servant Moses?"*
- See also, [Exo. 24:9-11](#); [Gen. 17:1](#); [18:1](#); [19:24](#) with [Amos 4:10-11](#); [Acts 7:2](#).

As you can see from the above scriptures, God Almighty was seen, but it was not God the Father. How then can Oneness theology be correct if God was in the mode of the Father in the Old Testament, that God was seen, and yet Jesus said the Father was not seen? The only answer the Oneness people can give is that God appeared as an angel, or in a vision or dream. But if that is so, then is an angel God Almighty? Look at [Exo. 6:2-3](#). God identifies Himself as Jehovah (His self given name) and states He appeared to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob as God Almighty. Was that an angel? Was it an angel who said, "I am God Almighty"? No. It was God Almighty. Or look at Num. 12:6-8 where God Himself declares that He does not appear to Moses in a vision or a dream, but that Moses beholds His very form. This negates the possibility, at least in this scriptural occurrence, that God appeared to Moses in a vision or dream.

God was seen in the Old Testament, but it was not the Father. It was the Son, the pre-incarnate Christ. Therefore, the Son existed at the same time as the Father in the Old Testament and Oneness theology is shown to be incorrect because we have both the Father and Son existing at the same time.

Isaiah 9:6, Is Jesus the Everlasting Father?

"For a child will be born to us, a son will be given to us; And the government will rest on His shoulders; And His name will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Eternal Father, Prince of Peace." ([Isaiah 9:6](#)).

Oneness Pentecostal believers deny the Trinity and teach that Jesus, the Father, and the Holy Spirit are all one person. They sometimes quote Isaiah 9:6 in their

attempt to prove their position. However, [Isaiah 9:6](#) cannot be used to disprove the trinity nor bolster their oneness doctrine.

When [Isaiah 9:6](#) says that Jesus' name will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Eternal Father, etc., it is not saying that Jesus **is** the eternal Father, but that he has the characteristics of God. In other words, Jesus has all the attributes of God, including eternity.

In the ancient Jewish culture, names had meanings. We can better understand this by noting American Indian names such as "Running wolf" or "Fighting Bear." The same with Jewish names. They had meanings. Isaac, for example, means "laughter." Noah means "rest" or "peace." So, when Isaiah is speaking of the name of the coming Messiah and says his name will be Mighty God, Eternal Father, etc, it is telling us about the characteristics of the Messiah to come in a prophetic manner.

If Jesus' name is "Eternal Father," then why don't we call Jesus "Eternal Father"? For that matter, why don't we call his name "Wonderful counselor," or "Mighty God," or "Prince of Peace"? The text speaks of a name, yet has four things revealed in the name. Again, this shows us that it is the characteristics of the then-coming Messiah. The fact that the Messiah would be divine is verified in [Heb. 1:3](#), when it says, *"And He [Jesus] is the radiance of His [God] glory and the exact representation of His nature, and upholds all things by the word of His power..."* This also explains why Jesus said, *"...He who has seen Me has seen the Father,"* ([John 14:8](#)). It was because Jesus so precisely represented God the Father as His prophesied name reveals.

Furthermore, the oneness Pentecostal people assert that God's name is really "Jesus." But, if that is true, and if Jesus is the eternal Father as they claim, then why don't they call Jesus "The Eternal Father" as His name? Does it also mean that the mode that God is in right now is that of the Father since His name is "Eternal Father" implying He is always the Father. If that is taken literally, then God is the eternal Father, and the true person of the Godhead is the Father, not the Son as the Oneness people assert.

The oneness Pentecostal theology is incorrect and improperly describes the true and living God.

What is the real gospel message?

The real gospel message is that salvation is by grace through faith ([Rom. 6:23](#)), not faith and something you do like baptism or faith and speaking in tongues, or faith and going to a oneness churches, etc. True salvation is freedom from the requirement of keeping any part of the Law to get or maintain salvation. True salvation is receiving Christ ([John 1:12](#)), being in the body of Christ, and being redeemed by the blood of the Lamb. It means that we are not obligated to keep a moral code such as women should not wear pants, shorts, makeup, or jewelry. It does not mean that we are in danger of losing our salvation if we go to movies, own TV's, swim in public, or wear facial hair as the Oneness Churches emphasis.¹ We have been set free from the Law. Of course, this does not mean that we are free to sin. Not at all, for how shall we who have died to sin still live in it ([Rom. 6:1-2](#))?

But after studying Oneness Pentecostal theology, I have concluded that it is not Christian since it denies the the true God by denying the Trinity and denies salvation by grace by adding a requirement: baptism. In addition, there is the legalistic expectation of a moral code that must be obeyed lest they be in danger of forfeiting

the forgiveness of sins which Christ so lovingly bought and freely gives. This is works righteousness.

As is the case in cult groups with false gods, false gospels follow. Such is the case with Oneness Pentecostal theology. It teaches a false god and a false gospel. The god of Oneness theology is not a Trinity. Its gospel is faith **plus** works: baptism, speaking in tongues as a necessary sign, and obedience to a moral code as a demonstration of salvation. Are we to obey God's word? Absolutely yes! Are we free to go and sin? No. We are obligated to obey God, but not as a requirement to be saved or keep salvation. We are saved by faith ([Rom. 5:1](#)) and because we are saved, **then** obedience follows. Keeping moral laws does not keep us in the faith. Being baptized is not what saves us.

The true gospel is defined by Paul in [1 Cor. 15:1-4](#) as that which saves us. Notice that baptism is not mentioned here:

*"Now, brothers, I want to remind you of the gospel I preached to you, which you received and on which you have taken your stand. **By this gospel you are saved**, if you hold firmly to the word I preached to you. Otherwise, you have believed in vain. For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures" (NASB).*

Faith is only as good as who it is placed in. It is, therefore, essential that we rightly understand God as He has revealed Himself, a [Trinity](#): Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. We see the Son speak to the Father and pray to Him ([John 17](#)). We know that God's word says that the Son bore our sins in His body on the cross ([1 Pet. 2:24](#)) and purchased us with His own blood ([Acts 20:28](#)). We are justified apart from the works of the Law *"because by the works of the Law no flesh will be justified in His sight . . ."* ([Rom. 3:20](#)), and *"for we maintain that a man is justified by faith apart from works of the Law,"* ([Rom. 3:28](#)), and *"For what does the Scripture say? 'And Abraham believed God, and it was reckoned to him as righteousness'"* ([Rom. 4:3](#)), and *"Therefore, having been justified by faith . . ."* ([Rom. 5:1](#)), and *"But to the one who does not work, but believes in Him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is reckoned as righteousness"* ([Rom. 4:5](#)).

Those in Oneness theology need to come to the true Trinitarian God and Savior, renounce the addition of baptism to salvation and rely completely and totally on God's saving grace by faith alone. Then, they need to look at the fruit of the Spirit ([Gal. 5:22-23](#)) instead of speaking in tongues as an evidence of their salvation.

May Jesus be glorified.

1. I am not saying that they do not have the right to practice holiness as they perceive it. I am addressing the issue of the externalities as a necessary sign of being saved.

Witnessing to those who are in oneness churches

The Oneness Pentecostal people, as a whole, absolutely believe they have the truth and that the Trinity doctrine is pagan in origin. With this in mind, when you speak to them, you'll encounter an attitude that they are absolutely right. It is very difficult to break through this and often takes a lot of time and effort. Think about it. If you are very convinced of your position in contradiction to theirs, how would you feel if they tried to convince you you were wrong? It'd be very difficult to do.

Nevertheless, it is important to keep a comfortable and humble dialogue going with them. Pride is not the answer to error. God's love must come through. So, when witnessing to them, or anyone, you need to show love and respect. They need to know the same love of Jesus in you that they claim they have from God. Jesus said that the world will know that we are His disciples by the love we have for one another, ([John 13:35](#)). Of course, being loving means being truthful with them. If you don't know something, admit it. If you aren't sure about something, that's okay. Be truthful.

You also need to demonstrate to them the love of Jesus in your life. You need to emphasize that Jesus Christ is the center of your faith. Oneness Pentecostals believe that they are the only ones who have the true love of God. In that sense, they believe that they are a privileged group of people enjoying a special knowledge and special relationship with God. That is why they emphasize so much the need to follow their doctrines, be baptized in their churches, by their ministers, according to their understanding of the gospel. They honestly believe it. So, you need to be patient, kind, and truthful with them in your witness.

Also, and this is quite common, correct any misunderstanding of the doctrine of the Trinity. So often, opposing groups have a misguided concept of the Trinity and end up attacking a straw man argument. Of course, to correct any misunderstanding, you must first understand it yourself. So, if you're rusty, read up on the [Trinity](#). Then, when you think you've got it down, you can share what you know with them. Show scriptures that demonstrate the Trinitarian nature of God.

You will need to demonstrate some of the problems with the Oneness Pentecostal position -- and they exist. In order to do that, you will need to read more about them and the issues here on this website as well as other websites and books on the subject. Unfortunately, witnessing to those in opposing theological beliefs often means that you have to study theology. It isn't that tough. It just takes some work and practice. But it is always worth it.

Do you know what they believe? You cannot refute error if you do not understand what you are talking about with them. Personally, I like dialoguing with them on the internet to learn what they believe. Reading Oneness material is helpful but it doesn't answer all the questions that I have. Bouncing things off of them gives me a feel for how they think as well as what they think. That helps me witness to them a lot.

Finally, pray. You must ask the Lord to bless your efforts and bring fruition to the seeds planted. It is God who bears the fruit of truth.

"So then neither the one who plants nor the one who waters is anything, but God who causes the growth" ([1 Cor. 3:7](#)).

Questions to ask Oneness Pentecostal believers.

The following questions are not "stoppers." That is, they are not questions to ask Oneness people so you can "stump them for sure." Instead, they are questions to ask to generate conversation. It is during the conversation that real witnessing occurs.

Of course, I have found some of these questions to be more difficult than others for the Oneness person to adequately answer. In fact, two of them no Oneness Person has adequately answered at all. Which are they? Try them out.

1. Is Jesus His own Father?
2. If Jesus' will and the Father's will were identical, then why did Jesus express the desire to escape the cup but resigns Himself not to His own will, but the will of the Father? See my [article](#) on this.
3. Was Jesus praying to Himself in the Garden of Gethsemane?
4. If Jesus was praying to the divine side of Himself, then isn't He still praying to Himself?
5. Why was Jesus not saying, "Not **My** will, but **MY** will be done?" if there is only one person and one will involved when He was praying in [Luke 22:42](#) & [Matt. 26:39](#).
6. If baptism is essential for salvation, then what happens to someone who repents of sin, accepts Jesus as Savior, walks across the street to get baptized but is killed by a car. Does he go to heaven or hell?
 1. If he goes to heaven, then baptism isn't a requirement is it?
 2. If he goes to hell, then faith in Christ isn't sufficient to save him is it?
7. Since the Bible teaches us that Jesus is in bodily form now ([Col. 2:9](#)), then how does the Oneness Pentecostal person maintain that God is in the form of the Holy Spirit? Also, when Jesus returns, will He return in His body? Will God's form then revert to the form of the Son at a later date?
8. If God is only one person, why did Jesus say in [John 14:23](#), "*If a man love me, he will keep my words: and my Father will love him, and **we** will come unto him, and make our abode with him.*" If God is only one person, why does Jesus say, "we"?
9. Oneness theology teaches that God was in the mode of the Father in the Old Testament. God was seen in the OT (not as a vision or a dream or an angel in the following verses: [Exo. 6:2-3](#); [Gen. 19:24](#); Num. 12:6-8). But, Jesus said no one has seen the Father ([John 6:46](#)). If they were seeing God Almighty ([Exo. 6:2-3](#)) but it wasn't the Father, then who was it?

Answers and response to Questions to ask Oneness Pentecostal believers.

Via email, I received answers to the questions in the paper, [Questions to ask Oneness Pentecostal believers](#). I have reproduced the answers given and responded to them accordingly. The original questions are in bold. His responses are underlined. My responses follow his.

1. **Is Jesus His own Father?**

- A. The response given was "Yes, Jesus is his own Father." Of course, this is an illogical position to hold. I am my Father's son, therefore, I cannot be my own Father. But, seeing the illogic of this position, the following comment was offered after several scriptures were quoted.
- B. "Therefore Jesus is the Father (in relation to His deity), and the Son of the deity (in relation to deity working through Humanity)." The problem with his statement found in rightly understanding what the Bible teaches concerning the Son. Jesus as a single person has two natures. This is called the [hypostatic union](#); that is, in the one person of Christ are two natures: divine and human. The oneness position effectively divides the one person of Christ into two persons, the Father and the Son, by splitting Jesus into two separate, not unified, parts. Jesus is either divine or He is not. He is either the God-man in one person, or He is not. We cannot have Jesus be his own Father in respect to his deity and the son in respect to his humanity. For a son to be his own father is illogical and the oneness position must backpeddle and erringly divide the natures of Christ into two persons, not one.
2. **If Jesus' will and the Father's will were identical, then why did Jesus express the desire to escape the cup but resigns Himself not to His own will, but the will of the Father? See my [article](#) on this.**
- A. "If you are posing this argument to try to make two wills within the godhead (which in this case are contrary to one another) then you are promoting outright polytheism." This statement reveals a lack of understanding not only of the Trinity, but also of logic. The [Trinity](#) is the doctrine that there is one God in three persons. Each person has a will. This does not necessitate the existence of three gods and this issue has been thoroughly discussed throughout Christian history. Nevertheless, we see in scripture that only one God is proclaimed and yet the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit each have wills and are each called God. A will denotes identity and self awareness. The Father has a will and the Son has a will. Are the two wills really one will? Of course not. In addition, it is the mistake of the oneness to accuse the Trinitarians of being polytheists, an unfortunate and erring attack that only demonstrates the ignorance of the doctrine of the Trinity, the thing they are attacking.
3. **Was Jesus praying to Himself in the Garden of Gethsemane?**
- A. "Since Jesus is God, is He the SAME God He was praying to or was He praying to a different God?" The person said he had adequately answered this question in his previous comments to question number two. Of course, he hadn't answered it adequately at all. He then poses the above question. Again, this kind of question further demonstrates a lack of understanding of the doctrine of the Trinity. The answer is simple. The person of the Son was praying to the person of the Father. It was not one god praying to another god.
- B. I would hope that if someone wished to attack the doctrine of the Trinity that he would at least accurately represent it in his attacks. To misrepresent it is to attack a straw man.
4. **If Jesus was praying to the divine side of Himself, then isn't He still praying to Himself?**
- A. "As I have answered above, even if we say "Yes" that is not a Biblical problem." But this is precisely the problem. It would be like saying that the person of the human side of Jesus was praying to His divine

side. If that were the case, then we have two beings in the person of Christ which would be ludicrous.

5. **Why was Jesus not saying, "Not My will, but My will be done?" if there is only one person and one will involved when He was praying in [Luke 22:42](#) & [Matt. 26:39](#).**
 - A. "Once again, Jesus was speaking in His humanity...In His deity His will was one and the same with God, because He is God. In His humanity He had a human will, that He submitted to God." This seems to be only a confusing answer at best and does not answer the question. Who is "God" in his answer if God, to the oneness people is at that time, Jesus? We either have Jesus praying to Himself or we have Jesus the Son, praying to the person of the Father. The oneness position makes no sense.
6. **If baptism is essential for salvation, then what happens to someone who repents of sin, accepts Jesus as Savior, walks across the street to get baptized but is killed by a car. Does he go to heaven or hell?**
 - . There really wasn't much of an answer given. He simply tried to state that baptism is necessary in order to be saved. He also wrote about infants who die and verbal acknowledgement of God when becoming a Christian. But, he did get around to saying that baptism is not an option and then ended with saying that the hypothetical position I proposed would never happen. In other words, he didn't answer it.
 - A. It seems quite obvious to me that he sees the problem that I posed in the original question: **If he goes to heaven, then baptism isn't a requirement is it? If he goes to hell, then faith in Christ isn't sufficient to save him is it?** To this, he did not respond and I believe it was because it demonstrates the error of his position and there is no way to answer it except to say that it wouldn't happen.
7. **Since the Bible teaches us that Jesus is in bodily form now ([Col. 2:9](#)), then how does the Oneness Pentecostal person maintain that God is in the form of the Holy Spirit? Also, when Jesus returns, will He return in His body? Will God's form then revert to the form of the Son at a later date?**
 - . "This is a prime example of how you have not only a misunderstanding of the oneness position, but also your own theology of Trinitarianism." The individual did not really answer the question. Instead, he made statements like "God is still Spirit and He is operating through a human body. Scripture confirms that Jesus operates in more than just a human body form, and "Jesus making it explicitly clear that He is the Holy Spirit in the form of a human body (dwelling with them)." Nevertheless, this person went on to say that Jesus would return in His body. But, to be perfectly honest, I really did not understand what this person was getting at. When speaking with oneness people about this, I've often ended the conversation feeling rather confused. It could simply be my lack of ability to understand that particular position, but it could also be that their position just doesn't make sense.
8. **If God is only one person, why did Jesus say in [John 14:23](#), "*If a man love me, he will keep my words: and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him.*" If God is only one person, why does Jesus say, "we"?**
 - . "If you are trying to use Jesus' use of "We" to imply literally more than one, then you are promoting two Spirits (three counting the Holy Spirit). The Bible says there is only ONE Spirit (Ephesians 4:4,5) Not two not three. ONE." and "He was simply speaking in simple language easier for the listener to understand." Again, this person erringly inserts into the discussion

something not held by Trinitarians; namely, that God is three spirits. This is something that repeatedly arises in discussions with oneness people. They continually misrepresent the doctrine of the Trinity. Furthermore, to say that Jesus was simply using language they could understand really ignores what Jesus was actually saying.

A. Also, notice that this person did not answer the question.

9. **Oneness theology teaches that God was in the mode of the Father in the Old Testament. God was seen in the OT (not as a vision or a dream or an angel in the following verses: [Exo. 6:2-3](#); [Gen. 19:24](#); [Num. 12:6-8](#)). But, Jesus said no one has seen the Father ([John 6:46](#)). If they were seeing God Almighty ([Exo. 6:2-3](#)) but it wasn't the Father, then who was it?**

"Once again, you are demonstrating your lack of understanding of Oneness theology, and your own theology." I certainly may not be understanding oneness theology completely, but I do understand my own far better than this gentleman as I have asserted earlier in this paper. Typically, oneness people misrepresent the Trinity doctrine and when I correct them, they tell me I am wrong. This is because it is easier for them to attack a strawman argument rather than the real thing.

He then states "In fact let me go ahead and turn the argument around on you. The Bible actually states that no one has seen GOD at any time...Your own theology teaches that Jesus is God. If Jesus is God, then why does the Bible say that no one has seen God?" Of course, I've already answered this objection in the [Plurality Study](#) which, ironically, supports the doctrine of the Trinity.

Finally, the question I posed in no. 9 above is the result of attending a United Pentecostal Convention (A oneness Oneness group) and speaking to five UPC pastors who acknowledged the modal view that the Father became the Son who became the Holy Spirit. Since then, I have heard differing views from Oneness people on the modes of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit through biblical history. It is certainly possible that this gentleman retains a different view than the UPC or a similar one. Either way, I used the [Plurality Study](#) as a means of refuting their position to which all five UPC pastors admitted they had no answer.