COGMA

Church of God Mission Academy

STUDY GUIDE 79

Ordinances Fulfilled in Jesus Christ

STUDY GUIDE 12 OF 12:

Baptised Into Jesus Christ

The One Spiritual Baptism

An overview of the spiritual baptism that brings us into Christ.



Receiving His life and entering His one spiritual body

1 Corinthians 12:13

INSTRUCTIONS FOR THE STUDENT

My Study Plan

Preparing a Study Plan before starting this Study Guide will assist you in completing it within a designated timeframe. It also helps in developing the discipline required for studying God's Word effectively.

Proverbs 16:3:

> *Commit thy works unto the LORD, and thy thoughts shall be established.*

My Study Guide Journal

Keep a record as you progress through your Study Guide, including the Personal Responses for each section, for future reference and goal setting.

Content

PREFACE

INTRODUCTION: NOT INTO WATER, BUT INTO JESUS CHRIST

ROMANS 6:1-3 - BAPTISED INTO CHRIST AND INTO HIS DEATH

ROMANS 6:4-11 - BURIED WITH HIM AND RAISED IN NEWNESS OF LIFE

IN CHRIST, IN THE SPIRIT, INTO ONE BODY - UNDERSTANDING EN AND EIS

COLOSSIANS 2:6-15 - THE OPERATION OF GOD AND COMPLETENESS IN CHRIST

ACTS 2 - REPENTANCE, REMISSION AND THE GIFT OF THE HOLY GHOST

ACTS 8 AND 19 - HISTORICAL BAPTISMS AND THE NEW COVENANT REALITY

ACTS 10-11 - PETER, CORNELIUS AND THE BAPTISM JESUS PROMISED

ACTS 15 AND GALATIANS 2 - THE GOSPEL FREE FROM FORMER ORDINANCES

1 PETER 3 - BAPTISM AND THE ANSWER OF A GOOD CONSCIENCE

CHRIST SENT ME NOT TO BAPTIZE - PAUL'S GOSPEL COMMISSION

CONCLUSION - THE BAPTISM THAT BRINGS US INTO CHRIST

MODULE CONCLUSION - ORDINANCES FULFILLED IN JESUS CHRIST

Important Points

- COGMA does not claim to be infallible or the authority.
- Infallibility and authority belong only to God and His Word.

COGMA therefore strongly advises that you prayerfully study the content of each Study Guide with the heart of a Berean (**Acts 17:10–12**).

Contact and Links

Website: cogma.com.au

Email: admin@cogma.org.au

Radio COGMA: radiocogma.com

YouTube: youtube.com/@COGMAChannel

Facebook: facebook.com/profile.php?id=61585399471540

SEARCH THIS STUDY GUIDE

Windows: Ctrl + F | Mac: Cmd + F | Phone or tablet: use Search in your PDF reader.

PREFACE

BACK TO CONTENTS

The Scriptures reveal that the baptism belonging to the New Covenant is a spiritual work accomplished by Jesus Christ. Through this baptism, the believer is brought into His death, resurrection and newness of life. This spiritual work cannot be accomplished through natural water or produced by any outward religious ceremony.

Paul wrote in **Romans 6:3-4**:

> *"Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death? Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life."*

Notice that Paul speaks of being baptised into Jesus Christ, not into physical water. He describes a spiritual death, burial and resurrection through which the believer enters newness of life. This is the transforming work of Jesus Christ, accomplished at the new birth rather than through an outward ceremony.

Paul further explained in **Colossians 2:12**:

> *"Buried with him in baptism, wherein also ye are risen with him through the faith of the operation of God, who hath raised him from the dead."*

Paul identifies this baptism with *"the operation of God."* Human hands cannot produce spiritual death to sin, impart the life of Jesus Christ or bring a person into His spiritual body. These are spiritual realities accomplished by Jesus Christ Himself, the one true God, through the new birth, not through the administration of natural water.

The New Covenant establishes something far greater than outward religious identification. The born-again believer is in Christ, walks in the Spirit and possesses the indwelling life of Jesus Christ. Salvation is complete at the new birth because the believer has received Christ Himself. No second spiritual experience or additional water ceremony is required to complete what God has already accomplished.

This Study Guide examines Romans 6, Colossians 2, the one spiritual baptism and the difficult historical accounts in Acts, particularly Samaria, Ephesus and Cornelius. Throughout, the question is whether an outward practice establishes a continuing ordinance after its spiritual fulfilment has come in Jesus Christ.

There is one baptism that brings the believer into Jesus Christ, His death, His resurrection and newness of life. It is the operation of God, not an outward representation performed by human hands. The believer possesses the Person, and the Person is greater than the ordinance.

Personal Response

Key Truth

Why must baptism into Christ be distinguished from an outward representation performed by human hands?

Personal Reflection

What does God's work of bringing a believer into Christ help you understand about salvation? What does this reveal about an assumption you have held?

Action Step

What does the one spiritual baptism mean for your own trust in Christ rather than in a ceremony? Identify any trust you have placed in outward water or a later experience. What will you rely on instead?

INTRODUCTION: NOT INTO WATER, BUT INTO JESUS CHRIST

BACK TO CONTENTS

Water baptism is often understood as a physical immersion representing burial and resurrection. Yet Paul's teaching in Romans 6 describes the believer being brought into Jesus Christ, dying to sin and walking in newness of life. We must therefore establish from Scripture whether he is teaching a ceremony or the saving work of Christ.

Paul wrote in **Romans 6:5-6**:

> *"For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection: Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin."*

Notice the purpose of this baptism. The old man is crucified with Christ, the body of sin is destroyed, and the believer is delivered from serving sin. Paul is describing the saving work of Jesus Christ, not a physical representation of that work. The Scriptures also establish the spiritual relationship into which the believer is brought through this baptism.

Paul wrote in **Galatians 3:27**:

> *"For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ."*

The words *"into Christ"* are essential. Salvation brings the believer into a living relationship with Jesus Christ Himself. The born-again believer is not simply accompanied by Christ externally, but possesses His indwelling life. This is the spiritual reality accomplished through the new birth, not through the administration of natural water.

Paul further explained in **1 Corinthians 12:13**:

> *"For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit."*

This baptism brings every believer into the one spiritual body of Jesus Christ. It occurs at the new birth, not through a later spiritual experience or an additional outward ordinance. The Spirit of Christ brings the believer into His body, accomplishing what physical water and human ceremonies cannot produce.

Acts also records the developing understanding of the early Church. We must acknowledge its historical baptisms without treating every recorded action as a continuing New Covenant command. The completed work of Jesus Christ provides the standard for interpreting those events.

Personal Response

Key Truth

Why does the completed work of Christ govern our reading of historical baptisms in Acts?

Personal Reflection

What has helped you distinguish a recorded action from a continuing command? Which part of your own understanding does it challenge?

Action Step

How could that distinction guide your own beliefs about water baptism and receiving Christ? State what you personally need to accept or correct about Christ's saving work and the new birth.

ROMANS 6:1-3 - BAPTISED INTO CHRIST AND INTO HIS DEATH

BACK TO CONTENTS

Paul begins with a searching question about grace and sin. His answer rests upon the spiritual baptism through which Jesus Christ delivers the believer from sin's former dominion, rather than upon any outward ceremony.

Grace Does Not Permit Continuing in Sin

Paul concluded Romans chapter 5 by declaring the abundance of God's grace.

He wrote in **Romans 5:20-21**:

> *"Moreover the law entered, that the offence might abound. But where sin abounded, grace did much more abound: That as sin hath reigned unto death, even so might grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord."*

Paul answered in **Romans 6:1-3**:

> *"What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound? God forbid. How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein? Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death?"*

Notice how strongly Paul rejected the suggestion that grace permits continuing in sin. His answer was *"God forbid."* Grace does not provide permission to remain under the dominion of sin, because salvation brings a genuine spiritual change through Jesus Christ. The abundance of God's grace is not an excuse for continuing in the former sinful life.

Dead to Sin, Not Free to Continue in Sin

The expression *"dead to sin"* identifies a change in the believer's relationship to sin. Before salvation, sin governed the person's life, but through the new birth Jesus Christ delivers the believer from that former dominion. His indwelling life becomes the source of the believer's strength to walk in righteousness.

This does not mean that a born-again believer has become incapable of making a wrong choice. It means that sin no longer has the rightful place of mastery over the new life received in Jesus Christ. Continuing deliberately in sin contradicts the spiritual reality Paul was explaining, because the believer has been delivered from the former life through Christ's saving work.

Baptised Into Jesus Christ and Into His Death

Paul then explained the foundation of this death to sin. He said, *"Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death?"* His words identify the spiritual relationship established through baptism and the saving work upon which that relationship rests.

Notice carefully where Paul said the believer was baptised. He did not say into water, but *"into Jesus Christ."* The Person into whom the believer is brought is the foundation of Paul's explanation. His concern was the spiritual reality accomplished through Jesus Christ, not the performance of an outward ceremony.

The Greek preposition translated *"into"* is EIS. In **Romans 6:3**, it identifies Jesus Christ and His death as the objects of the baptism Paul describes. His argument concerns the believer's spiritual participation in Christ and His death, rather than the physical location or method of a water ceremony.

He wrote in **1 Corinthians 12:13**:

> *"For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit."*

Paul identifies the one Spirit in whom believers are baptised into one body. That Spirit is the Spirit of Jesus Christ Himself. Jesus Christ baptises believers in His own Spirit, bringing them into His life and His Church. This baptism is common to all who are genuinely born again, regardless of their natural nationality or social position.

Natural water cannot place a person into Jesus Christ. Someone may administer an outward baptism, but no human action can produce the spiritual union described by Paul. Only the saving work of Jesus Christ through His Spirit brings a sinner into the New Covenant reality. The baptism that brings a person into Christ is the work of God, not a ceremony performed by human hands.

This also establishes that baptism in the Holy Ghost is not an additional experience that must be received after salvation. Every genuinely born-again believer has already received the Spirit of Christ and been brought into His one spiritual body. There is no later baptism required to complete the salvation already received through the new birth.

Jesus Christ genuinely died upon the cross, offering His sinless human life for the redemption of humanity. His death accomplished what no human work or outward ordinance could achieve. Through His sacrifice, salvation became available to those who believe, and the foundation was established for their deliverance from sin.

Being baptised into His death does not mean that the believer physically repeats the crucifixion or performs a ceremony that reproduces it. It describes the spiritual work through which the saving power of Christ's death is applied to the person who is born again. The believer is brought into the reality accomplished through His sacrifice, not into a physical representation of that sacrifice.

A New Creature Through the Saving Work of Christ

Paul explained the reality of this spiritual transformation in **2 Corinthians 5:17**:

> *"Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new."*

The Gospel does not improve the old sinful life by adding religious ceremonies. Jesus Christ gives a new life, and His indwelling Spirit becomes the source of righteousness, holiness and obedience. The believer is not attempting to produce the life of Christ through independent human effort, but learning to walk according to the life already received.

This is why Paul could speak of being dead to sin. Salvation is not simply a declaration that past sins have been forgiven while the person remains under sin's former dominion. The believer has received Jesus Christ Himself and is now called to walk according to His indwelling life. Christian conduct is the expression of this new spiritual reality, not a means of obtaining or completing salvation.

At no point in these opening verses did Paul instruct anyone to enter physical water. He did not describe anyone performing an immersion or explain how an outward ceremony should be administered. His concern was the spiritual deliverance already accomplished in believers through Jesus Christ, by which they were brought out of their former life under sin.

Romans 6:1-3 is not an instruction concerning water baptism. It explains the believer's death to sin through baptism into Jesus Christ and His death. The baptism Paul describes is the saving work of Jesus Christ, bringing the believer out of the former life of sin and into the life of the risen Lord.

Personal Response

Key Truth

How does baptism into Christ's death explain why grace does not permit continuing in sin?

Personal Reflection

What does being dead to sin help you consider about your own understanding of grace?

Action Step

How could the truth of new life in Christ guide your own response when sin is excused by an appeal to grace? Name an area where you have relied on religious performance. What change will you make in your trust and response?

ROMANS 6:4-11 - BURIED WITH HIM AND RAISED IN NEWNESS OF LIFE

BACK TO CONTENTS

Paul now moves from death to sin into burial and resurrection with Christ. These verses explain the inward work received at the new birth and the changed walk that expresses the life of Christ within.

Buried With Christ and Raised in Newness of Life

Paul wrote in **Romans 6:4-5**:

> *"Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection:"*

The burial he describes follows the spiritual death to sin established in the preceding verses. When a person is born again, the former sinful life comes to an end, and the believer receives an entirely new life in Jesus Christ. This is the spiritual reality Paul was explaining when he spoke of being buried with Christ through baptism into His death.

Paul explained the purpose of this spiritual burial with the words *"even so we also should walk in newness of life."* This is the result of being baptised into Jesus Christ and His death. The believer is not left in spiritual death, but is brought into the life of the risen Lord. The new life received through salvation is now to be expressed through the believer's daily conduct.

The resurrection of Jesus Christ was a genuine historical event. His body was raised from the dead, and through His death and resurrection He accomplished the redemption of humanity. The believer's participation in His death and resurrection is the spiritual transformation received through the new birth. Paul was therefore explaining the saving reality accomplished through Christ rather than describing a physical ceremony.

The Old Man Crucified and Christ's Victory Over Death

Paul continued in **Romans 6:6-7**:

> *"Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin. For he that is dead is freed from sin."*

These verses identify what the spiritual baptism accomplishes. The old man is crucified with Christ, the body of sin is destroyed, and the believer is delivered from serving sin. This is far greater than an outward representation of death and burial, because Paul is describing the spiritual work through which the former sinful condition is brought to an end.

This is why Paul declared, *"For he that is dead is freed from sin."* The freedom described is not accomplished by entering natural water or performing an outward representation of burial. It is the spiritual deliverance that comes through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. His completed work provides the foundation for the believer's freedom from sin's former dominion.

Personal Response

Key Truth

How does being buried and raised with Christ explain freedom from sin's former dominion?

Personal Reflection

What has the distinction between spiritual deliverance and outward burial in water clarified for you? Is there a familiar expectation of yours that now needs reconsidering?

Action Step

What does Christ's victory mean for your own trust when considering freedom from sin? Identify one personal response you will make, trusting in Jesus Christ rather than your own religious effort.

Christ's Victory Over Death

Paul wrote in **Romans 6:8-10**:

> *"Now if we be dead with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with him: Knowing that Christ being raised from the dead dieth no more; death hath no more dominion over him. For in that he died, he died unto sin once: but in that he liveth, he liveth unto God."*

Paul now directs attention towards the victory of Jesus Christ. His death was accomplished once, and His resurrection established His victory over death. Death has no more dominion over Him, and the salvation He provides rests upon that completed work rather than upon a ceremony performed by human hands.

When Paul wrote that Jesus *"died unto sin once,"* he was not suggesting that Jesus had personally lived in sin. Jesus Christ was without sin, and His death was the sacrifice through which He dealt with humanity's sin. His sacrifice was complete, and the redemption He accomplished does not depend upon repeated outward actions to become effective.

The believer is brought into the saving reality of that death and resurrection. Through the new birth, the person who was once spiritually dead receives the life of Jesus Christ and is enabled to walk according to that life. This spiritual relationship is established through Christ's saving work, not through a physical representation of His burial and resurrection.

Alive Unto God and Free From Sin's Dominion

He wrote in **Romans 6:11**:

> *"Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord."*

The word *"reckon"* concerns recognising and regarding something as true. Paul was not telling believers to imagine that they were dead to sin while remaining spiritually unchanged. He was instructing them to recognise the spiritual reality already established through salvation and to understand their position in Jesus Christ.

Let Not Sin Reign in the Mortal Body

Paul continued in **Romans 6:12-14**:

> *"Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof. Neither yield ye your members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin: but yield yourselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God. For sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under the law, but under grace."*

The Christian life is not an attempt to reproduce the righteousness of Jesus Christ through independent human effort. His life already dwells within the born-again believer, and that life is to govern the person's choices, conduct and relationships. The believer learns to yield to God and walk according to the life of Christ within.

Paul declared, *"For sin shall not have dominion over you."* This is not permission to continue in sin under grace. It is the declaration that God's grace brings deliverance through the life and power of Jesus Christ. The believer is no longer under sin's former dominion and is therefore called to express the righteousness of the life already received.

Natural water cannot crucify the old man, destroy the body of sin or impart the life of the risen Lord. These are the works of God, accomplished through the baptism that brings the believer into Jesus Christ. An outward representation cannot produce the spiritual reality, nor can it add anything to the salvation already completed at the new birth.

Romans 6:4-11 establishes the spiritual death, burial and resurrection experienced through the new birth. It does not establish water baptism as a continuing New Covenant ordinance.

The believer has been made alive unto God through Jesus Christ. His indwelling life is now to be expressed through a walk of righteousness and holiness.

Personal Response

Key Truth

Why does being alive unto God call for sin not to reign in the mortal body?

Personal Reflection

What does the connection between new life and a walk of righteousness mean to you? What does this reveal about an assumption you have held?

Action Step

How could you respond to a choice in your own life in the light of being alive unto God through Christ? Identify one conviction or attitude that this teaching challenges. What specific response will you make?

IN CHRIST, IN THE SPIRIT, INTO ONE BODY - UNDERSTANDING EN AND EIS

BACK TO CONTENTS

Two Greek prepositions, EN and EIS, help us understand the language the apostles used concerning this spiritual reality. Their meanings must be considered in context, particularly where Scripture speaks of baptism in the Holy Ghost, baptism into Christ and walking in the

Spirit. These expressions direct our attention towards the believer's spiritual relationship with Jesus Christ and the life received through the new birth.

Baptised in the Holy Ghost: EN

Jesus declared in **Acts 1:5**:

> *"For John truly baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost not many days hence."*

The Literal Version (LITV) renders **Acts 1:5**:

> *"for John indeed baptized in water, but you will be baptized in the Holy Spirit not many days after."*

In **Acts 1:5**, the Greek preposition EN appears in connection with the Holy Ghost, while water is expressed without that separate preposition. However, in **Matthew 3:11**, EN appears with both water and the Holy Ghost. Although the KJV translates these expressions using *"with"*, the word *"in"* brings out the distinction between John's baptism in natural water and the spiritual baptism Jesus Christ promised.

The KJV rendering *"with the Holy Ghost"* must therefore be understood according to the spiritual work being described. It does not mean that a person simply receives the Holy Spirit as an external companion while remaining spiritually outside Jesus Christ. The baptism Jesus promised brings the believer into a living spiritual relationship with Himself, through which His indwelling life is received.

By One Spirit Into One Body: EN and EIS

He wrote in **1 Corinthians 12:13**:

> *"For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit."*

Two Greek prepositions are particularly important here. EN appears in the expression translated *"by one Spirit,"* while EIS appears in the expression *"into one body."* EN can convey the sense of in, while EIS commonly expresses movement or entrance into. Paul connects baptism in the one Spirit with entrance into the one spiritual body of Jesus Christ.

That body is the Church, and Jesus Christ is its Head. No person can place another into that body through natural water, because spiritual membership is established through the new birth. Jesus Christ Himself baptises the believer in the one Spirit, His own Spirit, and brings that person into His body, accomplishing what no outward ceremony can produce.

Personal Response

Key Truth

How do 'in the Holy Ghost' and 'into one body' describe the one baptism?

Personal Reflection

What has the distinction between EN and EIS helped you understand about spiritual membership? Which part of your own understanding does it challenge?

Action Step

What does receiving Christ's Spirit mean for your own understanding of belonging to His Church? Name a real relationship in which this truth should change your attitude or conduct. What response will you make?

Baptised Into Jesus Christ: EIS

Paul wrote in **Romans 6:3-4**:

> *"Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death? Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life."*

The Greek preposition EIS is used in the expressions concerning baptism into Jesus Christ and into His death. Paul identifies the spiritual reality into which the believer is brought, rather than a physical location where a baptismal ceremony must be performed. His teaching concerns the believer's participation in the saving work accomplished through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Paul confirmed this in **Galatians 3:26-27**:

> *"For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ."*

The believer is baptised into Christ, not into a religious institution or an outward association with Christianity. The Greek preposition EIS again directs attention towards the Person into whom the believer is brought. This spiritual relationship is established through the saving work of God and belongs to everyone genuinely born again.

In Christ: A New Creature

Paul wrote in **2 Corinthians 5:17**:

> *"Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new."*

Notice the words *"in Christ."* The Greek preposition is EN, describing the believer's position in Jesus Christ. Paul identifies this person as a new creature because the new birth has brought a genuine spiritual transformation. The believer is no longer in the former spiritual condition, but has received new life in Jesus Christ.

Being in Christ does not mean that the believer becomes Jesus Christ or loses personal identity. It means that the believer has received His indwelling life and now belongs to Him.

This is a living spiritual relationship established by God, not an outward religious identification produced through human action.

Walking in the Spirit

Paul wrote in **Galatians 5:16**:

> *"This I say then, Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh."*

Although the KJV uses the expression *"in the Spirit,"* the Greek construction here uses the word for Spirit in the dative case without the separate preposition EN. This distinction is important when examining the Greek wording. Nevertheless, Paul's instruction agrees with the New Covenant reality that the believer's walk is governed by the indwelling Spirit of Jesus Christ.

The Christian life is not an effort to follow Jesus Christ externally through independent human imitation. His Spirit already dwells within everyone genuinely born again, and His life is the source of the believer's new walk. Walking in the Spirit means allowing the life of Christ within to govern our thoughts, choices and conduct.

Paul explained this relationship in **Romans 8:9**:

> *"But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his."*

The expressions *"in the Spirit"* and *"the Spirit of God dwell in you"* belong together. The believer is in the Spirit because the Spirit of Christ dwells within. Paul identifies the Spirit of God and the Spirit of Christ in the same declaration, establishing that those who belong to Jesus Christ possess His Spirit.

This is not a spiritual experience reserved for certain believers or received through a necessary second baptism. Every person genuinely born again possesses the Spirit of Christ. Those who do not possess His Spirit do not belong to Him, regardless of outward religious membership or participation in a ceremony.

Translated Into Christ's Kingdom

The Scriptures also describe salvation as bringing the believer into the kingdom of Jesus Christ. This is another expression of the spiritual change accomplished through the new birth, not a separate experience required after salvation.

Paul wrote in **Colossians 1:13**:

> *"Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son:"*

The Greek preposition translated *"into"* is EIS. Paul describes the believer's deliverance from the power of darkness and entrance into the kingdom of Jesus Christ. This translation is spiritual, not a physical relocation from one earthly place to another.

The Greek prepositions EN and EIS help us understand these relationships, but their meaning must always be established through the surrounding Scriptures. The doctrine rests upon the full testimony of God's Word, not upon an isolated grammatical expression. The saving baptism accomplishes what natural water and human ceremonies cannot produce.

The New Covenant does not leave the believer spiritually outside Jesus Christ, attempting to reproduce His life through outward imitation. The believer receives Christ Himself and is complete in Him.

Personal Response

Key Truth

How do being in Christ, becoming a new creature and walking in His Spirit belong together?

Personal Reflection

What has helped you distinguish receiving His life from trying to imitate Him outwardly? What difference should this make to your own response?

Action Step

How could Christ's indwelling life guide a choice you are personally considering? Name an area where you have relied on religious performance. What change will you make in your trust and response?

COLOSSIANS 2:6-15 - THE OPERATION OF GOD AND COMPLETENESS IN CHRIST

BACK TO CONTENTS

Colossians brings together the completeness of Jesus Christ, spiritual circumcision, burial with Him and forgiveness. These are works of God received through the new birth, not benefits supplied by human ceremonies.

As Ye Have Received Christ Jesus, So Walk Ye in Him

Paul wrote in **Colossians 2:6-8**:

> *"As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in him: Rooted and built up in him, and stablished in the faith, as ye have been taught, abounding therein with thanksgiving. Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ."*

Notice that Paul first identifies what believers have already received: Jesus Christ Himself. He then instructs them to walk in Him, establishing that the Christian life proceeds from the spiritual relationship already created through the new birth. The believer does not walk in obedience to obtain Christ, but because His indwelling life has already been received.

All the Fulness of the Godhead Dwells in Jesus Christ

Paul continued in **Colossians 2:9-10**:

> *"For in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily. And ye are complete in him, which is the head of all principality and power:"*

Notice the word *"Godhead"* in **Colossians 2:9**. The Greek word is THEOTĒS (θεότης), appearing here as THEOTĒTOS (θεότητος). It means deity or the state of being God, which may be expressed as *"Godhood."*

Paul is declaring that all the fulness of the one true God dwells bodily in Jesus Christ. The word does not teach three separate divine Persons. Jesus Christ is the one true God revealed through genuine humanity.

Jesus Christ is not one part of the divine fulness, nor does another divine person provide something missing from Him. He is the full manifestation of the one true God in genuine humanity. All the fulness of the Godhead dwells bodily in Him, and the believer receives the indwelling Spirit of Christ at the new birth.

Notice Paul's declaration: *"And ye are complete in him."* Spiritual completeness is not obtained progressively through ceremonies, additional religious experiences or later receptions of the Spirit. The believer receives Jesus Christ at the new birth and possesses His indwelling life. No outward baptism can add to the salvation already received in Him.

Personal Response

Key Truth

How does the fulness of the Godhead in Christ explain the believer's completeness?

Personal Reflection

What does being complete at the new birth help you reconsider about later religious ceremonies or experiences? Is there a familiar expectation of yours that now needs reconsidering?

Action Step

What does receiving Christ Himself mean for your own sense of spiritual need or belonging? Explain one practical response in your own life that should express Christ's indwelling life.

Circumcision Made Without Hands

He wrote in **Colossians 2:11**:

> *"In whom also ye are circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, in putting off the body of the sins of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ:"*

Under the former covenant, circumcision was an outward act performed upon the physical body. It identified those who belonged to the covenant people of natural Israel, but the physical operation itself could not produce spiritual regeneration. The outward sign could identify a person's covenant relationship with natural Israel, but it could not impart the life of Jesus Christ.

Paul now describes a circumcision *"made without hands."* This is not a physical operation administered by another person, but the inward work of Jesus Christ through which the believer is delivered from the former sinful life. The contrast is between an outward action performed upon the body and the spiritual transformation accomplished by God.

Notice the expression *"putting off the body of the sins of the flesh."* Paul is describing a genuine spiritual change, not simply the removal of something physical from the body. The believer's relationship with sin is changed through the saving work of Christ. This spiritual circumcision belongs to the new birth and cannot be produced through a ceremony performed by human hands.

Buried With Him Through the Operation of God

Paul continued in **Colossians 2:12**:

> *"Buried with him in baptism, wherein also ye are risen with him through the faith of the operation of God, who hath raised him from the dead."*

Notice carefully the words *"through the faith of the operation of God."* The baptism Paul describes is connected with God's operation, not with the administration of physical water by human hands. Just as spiritual circumcision is made without hands, the burial and resurrection with Christ are spiritual realities that God alone can accomplish.

The baptism described in Colossians 2 is the operation of God. It is not an outward ceremony that produces salvation, but the spiritual work through which the believer is brought into the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Quickened Together With Christ

Paul wrote in **Colossians 2:13**:

> *"And you, being dead in your sins and the uncircumcision of your flesh, hath he quickened together with him, having forgiven you all trespasses;"*

The word *"quickened"* means made alive. Paul identifies the former spiritual condition as death in sins and then declares that God has made the believer alive together with Christ. This is the new life received through the saving work of Jesus Christ.

This is why spiritual baptism cannot be separated from salvation as though it were a later experience. The baptism into Christ is the work through which the believer is brought from spiritual death into spiritual life. There is no additional spiritual baptism required to complete what God has already accomplished at the new birth.

The Handwriting of Ordinances Taken Out of the Way

Paul continued in **Colossians 2:14-15**:

> *"Blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross; And having spoiled principalities and powers, he made a shew of them openly, triumphing over them in it."*

Paul declares that Jesus Christ took away the handwriting of ordinances that stood against us. The word translated *"ordinances"* is connected with decrees and regulations belonging to the former covenant order. These outward requirements cannot be treated as continuing means of obtaining spiritual acceptance before God, because Jesus Christ has accomplished the work of redemption.

However, we must interpret these verses carefully. Paul does not specifically name John's water baptism in this declaration, and we must not make his words say more than they establish. The appointed purpose of John's baptism must be understood through its own Scriptural setting, particularly John's declaration that he baptised in water while Jesus Christ would baptise in the Holy Ghost.

The wider principle remains essential. The New Covenant does not require believers to return to outward representations as though they could produce the spiritual reality already accomplished through Jesus Christ. The believer possesses the saving reality through the new birth, and no religious ceremony can add to the completeness received in Him.

The Shadow and the Reality

Paul explained in **Colossians 2:16-17**:

> *"Let no man therefore judge you in meat, or in drink, or in respect of an holyday, or of the new moon, or of the sabbath days: Which are a shadow of things to come; but the body is of Christ."*

The former outward requirements pointed towards the greater reality found in Jesus Christ. Their appointed purpose was not to provide an everlasting substitute for His presence, but to prepare God's people for what He would accomplish. Once the reality has come, the shadow cannot be treated as though it possesses the power of the Person to whom it pointed.

The same principle directs our understanding of spiritual baptism. The believer does not become dead to sin because someone has lowered the body into natural water. The believer dies to sin and receives newness of life through the saving work of Jesus Christ. A physical representation cannot accomplish the death, burial and resurrection that Paul describes.

Colossians 2 establishes that the believer is complete in Jesus Christ, spiritually circumcised without hands, buried with Him in baptism, raised through the operation of God, forgiven and made spiritually alive. These are the works of God, accomplished through Jesus Christ and received at the new birth.

Personal Response

Key Truth

How do circumcision without hands, burial and resurrection reveal the operation of God?

Personal Reflection

What does forgiveness and being made alive with Christ clarify for you about outward ordinances? What does this reveal about an assumption you have held?

Action Step

How might trusting God's work rather than a ceremony guide your own response to Christ? Identify one practice or belief you will test against the Bible, and explain what you are prepared to change.

ACTS 2 - REPENTANCE, REMISSION AND THE GIFT OF THE HOLY GHOST

BACK TO CONTENTS

The second chapter of Acts records the fulfilment of Jesus Christ's promise to return as the Holy Spirit at Pentecost in A.D. 31. The disciples received the promised Spirit, and Peter proclaimed the Gospel to the people gathered in Jerusalem. His message centred upon Jesus Christ, His death and resurrection, and the salvation now available through His name.

Jesus Christ Fulfilled His Promise

Peter explained what had occurred at Pentecost.

Luke recorded his declaration in **Acts 2:32-33**:

> *"This Jesus hath God raised up, whereof we all are witnesses. Therefore being by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost, he hath shed forth this, which ye now see and hear."*

Peter identified Jesus Christ as the One who had fulfilled the promise. The Holy Ghost had come, and the disciples were now experiencing the indwelling presence and power Jesus had promised them. What they were witnessing was the fulfilment of His own promise concerning the coming of the Holy Ghost.

What Shall We Do?

When the people heard Peter's preaching, they were convicted concerning their responsibility for rejecting and crucifying Jesus Christ. Peter had declared that the One they crucified was both Lord and Christ, and his words brought them to ask what they should do.

Luke recorded in **Acts 2:36-39**:

> *"Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ. Now when they heard this, they were pricked in their heart, and said unto Peter and to the rest of the apostles, Men and brethren, what shall we do? 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. For the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call."*

Notice that Peter did not explicitly identify water in this instruction. The word baptized must therefore be examined in the light of the baptism Jesus had promised and the wider teaching concerning salvation. We must establish what spiritual work brings a repentant sinner into Jesus Christ, rather than assume that an outward ceremony possesses saving power.

The Baptism Associated With Remission

Peter instructed the people to repent and be baptised in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins. His words direct attention towards the authority and saving work of Jesus Christ, through whom forgiveness and spiritual life are received. The remission of sins rests upon His completed sacrifice, not upon the independent power of another person or an outward religious action.

Paul wrote in **1 Corinthians 12:13**:

> *"For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit."*

The believer enters Christ's spiritual body through the one Spirit. This is the saving work of Jesus Christ, not something accomplished by someone administering physical water. Every

person genuinely born again has received the Spirit of Christ and belongs to His one spiritual body.

Personal Response

Key Truth

How do repentance, remission and the gift of the Holy Ghost belong together in Acts 2?

Personal Reflection

What does Christ bringing believers into His body help you understand about salvation? Which part of your own understanding does it challenge?

Action Step

What response do you want to make to the Gospel's call to repentance and faith in Christ? State what you personally need to accept or correct about Christ's saving work and the new birth.

Ye Shall Receive the Gift of the Holy Ghost

Peter also declared, *"and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost."* This promise must not be understood as though a person could be genuinely born again, belong to Jesus Christ and yet remain without His Spirit until a later experience. The gift of the Holy Ghost belongs to the complete salvation received through the new birth.

Paul wrote in **Romans 8:9**:

> *"But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his."*

Paul makes no provision for a genuinely saved person who lacks the Spirit of Christ. The believer receives His indwelling Spirit at the new birth, because possessing the Spirit of Christ is what distinguishes those who belong to Him. The Spirit of God and the Spirit of Christ are the one Spirit received by every born-again believer.

The Washing of Regeneration

Paul explained how salvation is accomplished in **Titus 3:5**:

> *"Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost;"*

This is the spiritual cleansing that natural water cannot produce. Paul identifies salvation as the work of God's mercy rather than the result of human works or outward religious observances. The sinner is born again through the saving power of God, receiving new life through the Spirit of Jesus Christ.

The Lord Added to the Church

Luke continued in **Acts 2:40-41**:

> *"And with many other words did he testify and exhort, saying, Save yourselves from this untoward generation. Then they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls."*

The record identifies those who gladly received the Word and were baptised. It does not describe the physical method of baptism in these verses, and we must not insert details that

Luke did not record. The emphasis is upon the people's response to the Gospel Peter proclaimed and the number added that day.

We must distinguish the actions recorded during the morning-time Church from the spiritual baptism that brings a person into Christ's body. The presence of water baptism in Acts shows that believers continued this outward practice during the transition; it does not give the Church a command to perpetuate it. Jesus Christ had already brought the one saving baptism in the Holy Ghost.

Luke subsequently recorded in **Acts 2:47**:

> *"Praising God, and having favour with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved."*

Notice who added the saved to the Church. The Lord added them. Spiritual membership was established through the saving work of Jesus Christ, not through human authority or the administration of an outward ceremony.

The Church Jesus Christ built consists of those who have been born again and possess His indwelling Spirit. No individual or congregation can create that spiritual membership through natural water. The Lord Himself brings believers into His one body through the baptism in the Holy Ghost.

Repentance, Remission and Spiritual Life

Peter's preaching at Pentecost centred upon Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour. Those who heard were called to repent, receive the Word and enter the salvation accomplished through His death and resurrection. The Gospel directed them towards Jesus Christ, whose completed sacrifice provided remission of sins and whose Spirit brings spiritual life.

The baptism associated with genuine salvation is the one Jesus Christ performs in the Holy Spirit. Through that baptism, the believer receives His indwelling life and becomes a member of His spiritual body. This work is accomplished at the new birth and does not depend upon a subsequent spiritual experience or an additional outward ceremony.

Those who share the Gospel proclaim Jesus Christ, the sinner responds in repentance and faith, and Jesus Christ performs the saving work that brings the believer into His one spiritual body. The believer possesses the Person, and the Person is greater than the outward representation.

Personal Response

Key Truth

How do regeneration and the Lord adding the saved to His Church explain the result of the Gospel?

Personal Reflection

What does the difference between proclaiming Christ and performing His saving work mean to you? What difference should this make to your own response?

Action Step

How could this truth guide your own trust or your care when sharing the Gospel with another person? Name an area where you have relied on religious performance. What change will you make in your trust and response?

ACTS 8 AND 19 - HISTORICAL BAPTISMS AND THE NEW COVENANT REALITY

BACK TO CONTENTS

The book of Acts truthfully records believers practising baptism while the Gospel moved beyond its Jewish setting. Some accounts are difficult if we assume every outward baptism was a saving act or a permanent command for the Church. We must acknowledge what happened without allowing transitional human conduct to govern the New Covenant reality already established by Jesus Christ.

The Samaritans Responded to Philip — Acts 8

Philip travelled to Samaria and preached Jesus Christ. Many people believed his preaching and were baptised in water. When the apostles in Jerusalem heard what had happened, they sent Peter and John to Samaria.

Luke recorded in **Acts 8:12–17**:

> *"But when they believed Philip preaching the things concerning the kingdom of God, and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women. Then Simon himself believed also: and when he was baptized, he continued with Philip, and wondered, beholding the miracles and signs which were done. Now when the apostles which were at Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the word of God, they sent unto them Peter and John: Who, when they were come down, prayed for them, that they might receive the Holy Ghost: (For as yet he was fallen upon none of them: only they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus.) Then laid they their hands on them, and they received the Holy Ghost."*

The order of events presents an important question. Luke records that the Samaritans believed Philip's preaching and were baptised, yet he also declares that the Holy Ghost had fallen upon none of them. If these people had already been genuinely born again, how could they have remained without the Spirit of Christ?

We must distinguish between believing that a message is true and believing from the heart unto salvation. Before Philip arrived, the people of Samaria had been greatly influenced by Simon, who practised sorcery and had persuaded the people that he possessed extraordinary

power. They had been accustomed to following someone because of the remarkable things they witnessed.

When Philip preached Jesus Christ, the people heard the Gospel and witnessed genuine miracles. His preaching was true, and the miracles were the work of God. However, being impressed by someone preaching and the signs accompanying his ministry is not necessarily the same as experiencing repentance and the new birth.

Could these people have changed their allegiance from Simon to Philip because of what they had seen, without yet receiving the saving life of Jesus Christ?

The Samaritans' former fascination with Simon's sorcery helps explain why their response to Philip requires careful examination. They may have been impressed by the genuine miracles they witnessed, but Scripture does not disclose every person's private motive. What Luke does expressly record is that they had not yet received the Holy Ghost. Since the Spirit of Christ is inseparable from the New Covenant new birth, their outward response and water baptism cannot be treated as proof that regeneration had already occurred.

Paul wrote in **Romans 10:9**:

> *"That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved."*

Notice the words *"believe in thine heart."* Saving faith is not simply being persuaded by signs, accepting religious information or following a religious speaker. It is the response of the heart to Jesus Christ, through whom the sinner receives the new birth.

Paul also wrote in **Romans 8:9**:

> *"But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his."*

This statement settles the doctrinal question. A person cannot be genuinely born again and remain without the Spirit of Christ. New Covenant salvation is not divided into an experience of regeneration followed by another necessary experience in which the Holy Ghost is finally received.

Peter and John came to Samaria, prayed for the people and laid their hands upon them. Luke then records that they received the Holy Ghost. Peter and John laid their hands on the people, but only Jesus Christ could impart spiritual life.

This was not a second spiritual work being added to people who had already received the indwelling life of Christ. It was the reception of the Spirit of Christ, without whom no person belongs to Him.

Philip preached the true Gospel, but an outward response to the truth could not establish the condition of every heart. The visible signs and the water baptism had to be distinguished from repentance and faith from the heart. Jesus Christ alone gives the new birth, and receiving His Spirit is inseparable from belonging to Him.

Simon — Water Baptism Without a Right Heart

The same chapter provides an important warning through Simon. He also believed Philip's preaching and was baptised in water. However, his later conduct revealed a serious problem within his heart.

Peter said to Simon in **Acts 8:21–23**:

> *"Thou hast neither part nor lot in this matter: for thy heart is not right in the sight of God. Repent therefore of this thy wickedness, and pray God, if perhaps the thought of thine heart may be forgiven thee. For I perceive that thou art in the gall of bitterness, and in the bond of iniquity."*

Simon had believed and been baptised in water, yet Peter exposed the serious condition of his heart. His case warns everyone who shares the Gospel not to confuse a response to visible spiritual power with the new birth. The point is not that a water ceremony should be improved or repeated, but that no outward ordinance can replace the life of Jesus Christ within.

The Ethiopian Eunuch — Acts 8

Later in the same chapter, Philip encountered an Ethiopian eunuch who was reading the prophet Isaiah. Philip explained the Scripture and preached Jesus Christ to him.

Luke recorded in **Acts 8:35–39**:

> *"Then Philip opened his mouth, and began at the same scripture, and preached unto him Jesus. And as they went on their way, they came unto a certain water: and the eunuch said, See, here is water; what doth hinder me to be baptized? And Philip said, If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest. And he answered and said, I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God. And he commanded the chariot to stand still: and they went down both into the water, both Philip and the eunuch; and he baptized him. And when they were come up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord caught away Philip, that the eunuch saw him no more: and he went on his way rejoicing."*

Notice what Philip preached. Luke specifically states that he *"preached unto him Jesus."* The Ethiopian's confession concerned Jesus Christ, not the saving power of water.

The account plainly records that Philip baptised the Ethiopian in water. This historical fact must be acknowledged. However, Luke does not declare that the water produced the new birth, conferred the Holy Ghost, or made the Ethiopian a member of Christ's Church.

The historical account tells us what Philip did, but it does not command future believers to repeat his outward action. If water could not impart Christ's life then, its continued use cannot become a necessary or authorised New Covenant ordinance simply because Luke recorded it. We must allow the completed spiritual reality to interpret the transitional practice, not the other way round.

The Disciples at Ephesus — Acts 19

At Ephesus, Paul met approximately twelve disciples whose understanding was still connected with John's baptism. The account must be read carefully because it is often taken to mean that people were saved first and later received the Holy Ghost. The decisive question is whether these men had already experienced the New Covenant new birth before Paul preached Christ to them.

Luke recorded in **Acts 19:1–7**:

> *"And it came to pass, that, while Apollos was at Corinth, Paul having passed through the upper coasts came to Ephesus: and finding certain disciples, He said unto them, Have ye received the Holy Ghost since ye believed? And they said unto him, We have not so much as heard whether there be any Holy Ghost. And he said unto them, Unto what then were ye baptized? And they said, Unto John's baptism. Then said Paul, John verily baptized with the baptism of repentance, saying unto the people, that they should believe on him which should come after him, that is, on Christ Jesus. When they heard this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. And when Paul had laid his hands upon them, the Holy Ghost came on them; and they spake with tongues, and prophesied. And all the men were about twelve."*

These men knew John's preparatory baptism but needed to hear about the One to whom John had pointed. Paul did not direct them to remain in that preparation. He proclaimed Jesus Christ, in whom the promise and its spiritual fulfilment had already come.

The KJV of **Acts 19:2** asks whether the Holy Ghost was received *"since ye believed."* To some readers, this wording may suggest that Paul assumed the men had already been born again and was asking about a subsequent reception of the Spirit. Yet his words must be read with their Greek construction and the men's replies, not treated as proof of a second spiritual work.

Understanding "Since Ye Believed" in Acts 19:2

Young's Literal Translation (YLT) renders the complete verse, **Acts 19:2**:

> *"he said unto them, 'The Holy Spirit did ye receive -- having believed?' and they said unto him, 'But we did not even hear whether there is any Holy Spirit;'"*

The Greek question contains five important words, given below in their original order:

Greek word	Pronunciation	English meaning
Εἰ	EI	If or whether
Πνεῦμα	PNEUMA	Spirit
Ἅγιον	HAGION	Holy
ἐλάβετε	ELABETE	Did you receive
πιστεύσαντες	PISTEUSANTES	Having believed

The word PISTEUSANTES means *"having believed."* The construction can be expressed naturally as *"Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?"* It connects receiving the

Spirit with believing; it does not, by itself, establish an interval in which a person was already born again but remained without the Spirit of Christ.

The context is decisive. These men identified their previous baptism as John's baptism, which pointed forwards to Jesus Christ. Paul explained the One whom John had proclaimed. This is not a command for saved people to seek a later baptism, because **Romans 8:9** establishes that anyone without the Spirit of Christ does not belong to Him. New Covenant faith, the new birth and receiving the Spirit of Christ belong to one complete saving work.

Luke records that these men were baptised in the name of the Lord Jesus. Although **Acts 19:5** does not expressly identify natural water, we must acknowledge the possibility that an outward water baptism was performed. Our conclusion does not depend upon denying that historical action. It rests upon the distinction between what the disciples practised during the transition and the one spiritual baptism Jesus Christ Himself performs at the new birth.

The account does not establish a two-stage New Covenant salvation or institute water baptism as a continuing ordinance.

Neither does speaking with tongues make tongues the universal evidence of salvation. These men received the promised Spirit of Christ as they came into the fulfilment John had announced. Jesus Christ performs the spiritual baptism; no ceremony and no second work completes a person who has already been born again.

One Spiritual Baptism Into Christ

The teaching of Paul establishes the spiritual reality that governs these accounts.

Paul wrote in **1 Corinthians 12:13**:

> *"For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit."*

Paul declares that all believers are baptised in one Spirit into one body. This is Christ's own baptism at the new birth, not an outward act that represents another stage of salvation. John's water baptism pointed forwards; the baptism of Jesus Christ gives the believer His indwelling life and membership in His Church.

Acts 8 and 19 record what occurred as the Gospel spread and understanding developed. The Scriptures do not require us to defend every outward action as a permanent practice. Instead, we must ask whether the action belonged to the historical transition or to the inward baptism through which Jesus Christ creates His Church.

Water baptism did not make the Samaritans or the disciples at Ephesus born again, and the laying on of hands did not give anyone independent power to impart the Spirit. The New Covenant new birth and reception of the Spirit of Christ belong together in one saving work. There is no saved person who must wait for another spiritual baptism to become complete.

These accounts are not an excuse for continuing a water ceremony after fulfilment. They reveal the movement from an outward practice towards the reality already established by Jesus Christ. The one baptism that remains is the baptism He performs in the Holy Ghost.

Personal Response

Key Truth

What do the events in Samaria and Ephesus show about outward baptism and receiving spiritual life?

Personal Reflection

What does Simon's baptism without a right heart help you reconsider about religious performance? Is there a familiar expectation of yours that now needs reconsidering?

Action Step

How could these accounts guide your own attention to an honest response to Christ rather than an outward act? What will you change in your understanding or practice so that the saving work belongs to Jesus Christ alone?

ACTS 10-11 - PETER, CORNELIUS AND THE BAPTISM JESUS PROMISED

BACK TO CONTENTS

The conversion of Cornelius shows both the completeness of Christ's baptism and the developing understanding of the early Church. Peter witnessed Gentiles receive the Holy Ghost before water baptism had been commanded. When he later explained the event, he recalled Jesus' own distinction between John's water baptism and the baptism in the Holy Ghost.

Peter's Vision and the Removal of Jewish Separation

Cornelius was a Gentile centurion who feared God and prayed continually. God instructed him to send for Peter, who would declare the Gospel to him and his household. However, Peter still carried the Jewish understanding that Gentiles were not to be treated in the same way as the Jewish people.

Before Peter visited Cornelius, God gave him a vision involving a vessel containing animals that Jewish law regarded as unclean. Through this vision, God prepared Peter to understand that the former separation between Jew and Gentile was no longer the basis of acceptance before Him.

Peter explained in **Acts 10:28**:

> *"And he said unto them, Ye know how that it is an unlawful thing for a man that is a Jew to keep company, or come unto one of another nation; but God hath shewed me that I should not call any man common or unclean."*

Peter recognised that God was correcting his understanding. The Gospel was not restricted to the Jewish nation, and Gentiles were not required to become Jews before receiving salvation. Jesus Christ had removed the former separation and established one New Covenant people.

When Peter began preaching to those gathered in Cornelius's house, he acknowledged this truth.

Luke recorded in **Acts 10:34–35**:

> *"Then Peter opened his mouth, and said, Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons: But in every nation he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with him."*

The significance was that God's acceptance was not determined by natural descent or Jewish ceremonial requirements. The Gospel of Jesus Christ was available to people of every nation. Both Jew and Gentile were to receive the same salvation through faith in Him.

The Holy Ghost Fell Before Water Baptism

Peter continued preaching Jesus Christ, declaring His death, resurrection and the remission of sins available through His name. While he was still speaking, something remarkable happened.

Luke recorded in **Acts 10:43–48**:

> *"To him give all the prophets witness, that through his name whosoever believeth in him shall receive remission of sins. While Peter yet spake these words, the Holy Ghost fell on all them which heard the word. And 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. For they heard them speak with tongues, and magnify God. Then answered Peter, Can any man forbid water, that these should not be baptized, which have received the Holy Ghost as well as we? And he commanded them to be baptized in the name of the Lord. Then prayed they him to tarry certain days."*

Notice the order carefully. Peter was still preaching when the Holy Ghost fell upon those hearing the Word. They had not yet been baptised in water, and Peter had not laid hands upon them. God had already acted before any outward baptism was performed.

The Jewish believers who accompanied Peter were astonished because the Gentiles had received the same Holy Ghost. Their astonishment arose from the former Jewish separation, which had caused them to regard Gentiles as outside the covenant privileges of Israel.

The speaking in tongues accompanied this event and demonstrated to those present that God had accepted the Gentiles. However, this historical occurrence does not establish tongues as the necessary evidence of receiving the Holy Ghost for every believer.

Personal Response

Key Truth

What does the Holy Ghost falling on Cornelius' household before water baptism show about God's acceptance of Gentiles?

Personal Reflection

What has the purpose of tongues in that event clarified for you? What does this reveal about an assumption you have held?

Action Step

How could this account guide your own response to someone who makes a ceremony or tongues a condition of belonging to Christ? Identify any trust you have placed in outward water or a later experience. What will you rely on instead?

Peter Commanded Water — But Which Baptism Had Already Occurred?

After Cornelius and his household received the Holy Ghost, Peter asked whether anyone could forbid them water. He then commanded them to be baptised. Scripture records Peter's command, but it does not say that Peter personally administered the baptism, and it does not record Jesus commanding Peter to establish a continuing water ordinance.

We must not conceal this difficult account. Peter commanded a water baptism after Jesus Christ had already accomplished the saving baptism in His Spirit. The question is therefore not whether water baptism happened, but whether that action can be given permanent authority over the Church when the greater baptism had already come.

The Person had already come to dwell within them. The water could neither produce nor improve that reality; and once the shadow has been fulfilled, the Church has no reason to repeat it as an ordinance.

Peter Remembered the Baptism Jesus Promised

When Peter returned to Jerusalem, Jewish believers questioned him about entering the house of uncircumcised men. He explained the events concerning Cornelius and identified the promise of Jesus that had been fulfilled.

There is another important detail in Peter's account. Cornelius had been a devout man who feared God and prayed continually, but he still needed to hear the Gospel through which salvation would come.

Peter reported the words recorded in **Acts 11:14**:

> *"Who shall tell thee words, whereby thou and all thy house shall be saved."*

These words explain why Peter had been sent. Cornelius and his household needed to hear the saving Gospel of Jesus Christ. While Peter was declaring that Gospel, they received the Holy Ghost, before water baptism had been administered.

Peter continued in **Acts 11:15–18**:

> *"And as I began to speak, the Holy Ghost fell on them, as on us at the beginning. Then remembered I the word of the Lord, how that he said, John indeed baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost. Forasmuch then as God gave them the like gift as he did unto us, who believed on the Lord Jesus Christ; what was I, that I could withstand God? When they heard these things, they held their peace, and glorified God, saying, Then hath God also to the Gentiles granted repentance unto life."*

"Then remembered I the word of the Lord." Those words are the centre of Peter's explanation. He did not identify the water he commanded as the decisive baptism; he recalled what Jesus had promised about baptism in the Holy Ghost.

Jesus Christ had spoken those words before Pentecost. He had distinguished John's baptism in natural water from the greater baptism in the Holy Ghost that He Himself would bring. Peter had heard that promise and had personally experienced its fulfilment when Jesus Christ returned as the Holy Spirit at Pentecost in A.D. 31.

Although Scripture does not specify the interval, some years passed between Pentecost and Peter's visit to Cornelius. When the Gentiles received the Holy Ghost, Peter remembered the words Jesus had spoken before Pentecost. The event brought Christ's promised baptism clearly into focus.

What did Peter remember? Not a command to continue water baptism, but the promise of the greater baptism Jesus Himself would bring in the Holy Ghost.

Peter had witnessed the Holy Ghost being received by Gentiles who had not first entered the former Jewish covenant order. They had not been circumcised according to the Law of Moses, and they had not yet been baptised in water. Nevertheless, Jesus Christ had performed the spiritual work that brought them into His life and His Church.

The significance of this event was unmistakable. The same Jesus Christ who had come as the Holy Spirit at Pentecost was now bringing Gentile believers into His one spiritual body. The baptism that accomplished this was Christ's baptism in the Holy Ghost, not the water baptism administered afterwards.

Acts 10:48 is the last recorded occasion on which Peter commanded water baptism. Scripture does not record him personally performing or commanding another water baptism afterwards. This is a statement about the biblical record, not a claim that we know every action of Peter's subsequent life.

What Scripture positively establishes is even more important. Peter remembered the distinction Jesus Christ had made between John's baptism and His own greater baptism. He recognised that Gentiles had received the same Spirit as the Jewish believers, and he later declared that God had purified their hearts by faith.

The baptism of Christ had already occurred. The command to use water followed it and could not add anything to that completed spiritual work. The fulfilled reality, not a familiar outward practice, determines the Church's New Covenant position.

Peter's experience with Cornelius therefore provides more than an argument that water cannot save. It shows the developing understanding of a man whom Jesus Christ had personally commissioned and who was learning the full significance of the baptism his Lord had promised.

Peter's recollection connects the promise spoken by Jesus in **Acts 1:5** with the salvation of Gentiles in Acts 10 and 11. He recognised the Spirit's reception as the promised baptism of Christ. That saving baptism belongs to every believer at the new birth; the transitional water practice is not a continuing ordinance of the Church.

God Purified Their Hearts by Faith

Peter later referred to the conversion of Cornelius when the apostles and elders considered whether Gentile believers should be required to observe the Law of Moses. His testimony again centred upon what God had accomplished inwardly.

Peter declared in **Acts 15:8–9**:

> *"And God, which knoweth the hearts, bare them witness, giving them the Holy Ghost, even as he did unto us; And put no difference between us and them, purifying their hearts by faith."*

These words establish the spiritual meaning of the event. God knew their hearts, gave them the Holy Ghost and purified their hearts by faith. Peter did not identify an outward ceremony as the means of purification.

The words *"put no difference between us and them"* also establish that Jewish and Gentile believers receive the same New Covenant salvation. There is one Gospel, one Saviour and one Spirit. The Church consists of those who have been born again and brought into Jesus Christ.

Paul expressed this truth in **1 Corinthians 12:13**:

> *"For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit."*

Cornelius and his household were received into Christ's one body through His Spirit. Peter remembered this as the fulfilment of Jesus' promise. The Church must follow the fulfilled baptism of Christ, not perpetuate the outward practice that the inspired history records after it.

Personal Response

Key Truth

Why did Peter remember Jesus' promise when explaining what happened to Cornelius' household?

Personal Reflection

What does God purifying hearts by faith help you understand about acceptance with Him? Which part of your own understanding does it challenge?

Action Step

What does this truth mean for your own welcome of believers whom God has received through Christ? Name one choice in your own life that should change because of this truth, and explain why.

ACTS 15 AND GALATIANS 2 - THE GOSPEL FREE FROM FORMER ORDINANCES

BACK TO CONTENTS

The dispute over circumcision and Peter's conduct at Antioch show why recorded practice must be examined through revealed truth. Jew and Gentile had been made one in Jesus Christ, even while former covenant assumptions continued to influence some believers.

Acts 15: Must Gentiles Keep the Law of Moses?

As the Gospel spread, some Jewish believers began teaching that Gentile converts must be circumcised according to the Law of Moses. They were attempting to make an outward covenant requirement necessary for salvation. Their teaching raised a serious question

concerning whether faith in Jesus Christ was sufficient or whether Gentiles also needed to observe the former covenant requirements.

Luke recorded in **Acts 15:1-2**:

> *"And certain men which came down from Judaea taught the brethren, and said, Except ye be circumcised after the manner of Moses, ye cannot be saved. When therefore Paul and Barnabas had no small dissension and disputation with them, they determined that Paul and Barnabas, and certain other of them, should go up to Jerusalem unto the apostles and elders about this question."*

Luke continued in **Acts 15:5-6**:

> *"But there rose up certain of the sect of the Pharisees which believed, saying, That it was needful to circumcise them, and to command them to keep the law of Moses. And the apostles and elders came together for to consider of this matter."*

Notice that these Pharisees were described as believers. Nevertheless, they continued to regard circumcision and observance of the Law of Moses as requirements for Gentile converts. Their understanding had not fully moved from the outward requirements of the former covenant to the spiritual reality established in Jesus Christ. This demonstrates how deeply former religious practices could influence those who had heard and believed the Gospel.

Peter Declared That God Purified Hearts by Faith

Luke recorded Peter's words in **Acts 15:7-11**:

> *"And when there had been much disputing, Peter rose up, and said unto them, Men and brethren, ye know how that a good while ago God made choice among us, that the Gentiles by my mouth should hear the word of the gospel, and believe. And God, which knoweth the hearts, bare them witness, giving them the Holy Ghost, even as he did unto us; And put no difference between us and them, purifying their hearts by faith. Now therefore why tempt ye God, to put a yoke upon the neck of the disciples, which neither our fathers nor we were able to bear? But we believe that through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ we shall be saved, even as they."*

Peter's testimony established that God had made no distinction between Jewish and Gentile believers. Both received the same Holy Ghost, and both were accepted through faith in Jesus Christ. Their hearts were purified by faith, not by circumcision or obedience to outward ceremonial requirements. God had already demonstrated this truth when He gave the Holy Ghost to Cornelius and his household.

Peter also described the attempt to impose the Law of Moses upon Gentile believers as placing a yoke upon their necks. This was a burden that neither the Jewish fathers nor those living in Peter's time had been able to bear. His conclusion was that salvation came through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, not through the performance of outward covenant requirements.

Personal Response

Key Truth

How does Peter's witness in Acts 15 answer the demand that Gentiles keep the Law of Moses?

Personal Reflection

What does salvation through Christ's grace help you consider about adding outward requirements? What difference should this make to your own response?

Action Step

How could His grace guide what you personally trust for salvation rather than religious performance? What assumption will you examine, and how will your response change if it does not agree with the Bible?

The Decision at Jerusalem

James then addressed the gathering and gave his judgement concerning the Gentile believers. His instruction was that they should not be troubled by being required to take upon themselves the Law of Moses. The decision recognised that Gentiles who turned to God were not required to become Jews in order to receive salvation.

Luke recorded in **Acts 15:19-20**:

> *"Wherefore my sentence is, that we trouble not them, which from among the Gentiles are turned to God: But that we write unto them, that they abstain from pollutions of idols, and from fornication, and from things strangled, and from blood."*

The apostles and elders subsequently sent a letter communicating their decision to the Gentile believers. Rather than imposing the entire Law of Moses, they identified specific matters concerning idolatry, fornication, blood and things strangled. Their decision rejected the claim that Gentiles must be circumcised and keep the Law of Moses in order to be saved.

Acts 15 does not directly settle every question concerning water baptism. Its immediate subject is circumcision and the Law of Moses, and we must not make the account say more than it establishes. Nevertheless, it reveals an essential principle concerning the transition into the New Covenant: salvation through Jesus Christ cannot be made dependent upon the outward requirements of the former covenant.

Galatians 2: Peter Was Still Influenced by Jewish Separation

The influence of Jewish customs was not confined to believers who had formerly belonged to the Pharisees. Even Peter, who had witnessed the conversion of Cornelius and defended the Gentiles' acceptance before God, struggled in his conduct concerning fellowship with Gentile believers. His experience demonstrates that understanding a spiritual truth and consistently expressing that truth in daily conduct are not always the same.

While Peter was at Antioch, he freely ate with the Gentiles. However, when certain men came from James, Peter withdrew from them because he feared those associated with circumcision. His actions restored a form of separation that the Gospel had already overcome through Jesus Christ.

Paul recorded in **Galatians 2:11-14**:

> *"But when Peter was come to Antioch, I withstood him to the face, because he was to be blamed. For before that certain came from James, he did eat with the Gentiles: but when they were come, he withdrew and separated himself, fearing them which were of the circumcision. And the other Jews dissembled likewise with him; insomuch that Barnabas also was carried away with their dissimulation. But when I saw that they walked not uprightly according to the truth of the gospel, I said unto Peter before them all, If thou, being a Jew, livest after the manner of Gentiles, and not as do the Jews, why compellest thou the Gentiles to live as do the Jews?"*

Paul openly rebuked Peter because his conduct contradicted the truth of the Gospel. Peter knew that God had accepted the Gentiles, yet he allowed the fear of Jewish opinion to influence his behaviour. His withdrawal suggested that Gentile believers did not possess the same standing as Jewish believers, even though God had already made both one through Jesus Christ.

The conduct of Peter also affected others, including Barnabas. This reveals why the truth of the Gospel must govern both what believers teach and how they treat one another. The life of Jesus Christ within His people is to be expressed through genuine fellowship, without restoring divisions that His completed work has removed.

Paul then identified the foundation of acceptance before God.

Paul wrote in **Galatians 2:16**:

> *"Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by the faith of Christ, and not by the works of the law: for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified."*

The conclusion is direct. No person is justified through the works of the Law of Moses, because those outward requirements cannot produce the spiritual righteousness that belongs to salvation. Justification is found through Jesus Christ, not through observing the ceremonies and regulations of the former covenant.

One New Covenant People in Jesus Christ

The controversy concerning circumcision and the conduct of Peter both demonstrate that God was bringing Jewish and Gentile believers into one spiritual body. The distinction that had separated natural Israel from the Gentiles could no longer determine fellowship or standing before God. Jesus Christ had fulfilled the former covenant and established one New Covenant people through His completed work.

Paul explained this truth in **Ephesians 2:14-16**:

> *"For he is our peace, who hath made both one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition between us; Having abolished in his flesh the enmity, even the law of commandments contained in ordinances; for to make in himself of twain one new man, so making peace; And that he might reconcile both unto God in one body by the cross, having slain the enmity thereby:"*

Jesus Christ had already broken down the former separation. His purpose was not to establish one covenant arrangement for Jewish believers and another for Gentile believers. He made both one in Himself, reconciling them into one spiritual body through His completed sacrifice.

The spiritual baptism of the New Covenant accomplishes what outward ordinances cannot produce. Through the new birth, the believer receives the Spirit of Christ and is brought into His one body. This is the same spiritual reality for every person, regardless of nationality, natural ancestry or former religious background.

The Church is therefore not established through circumcision, outward covenant identification or membership in a human organisation. It consists of those who have genuinely been born again and possess the indwelling Spirit of Jesus Christ. Jewish and Gentile believers belong to the same spiritual body because they have received the same Lord and the same Spirit.

These accounts also help us understand why outward practices continued to appear during the early years of the Church. The fact that believers retained certain customs does not mean that those practices were necessary to produce or complete salvation. Every historical action must be examined through the completed work of Jesus Christ and the spiritual reality established by the New Covenant.

The New Covenant does not establish righteousness through ceremonies, circumcision or human observance. Jesus Christ Himself is our righteousness, and every born-again believer is complete in Him.

The Christian life is therefore not maintained by returning to outward religious requirements. It is the life of Jesus Christ dwelling within His people and being expressed through their faith, obedience and fellowship. What the former ordinances represented has found its fulfilment in Him, and no outward ceremony can add to the salvation already received through the new birth.

The outward separating practices of the former covenant cannot govern the one spiritual body Christ has made. This includes any attempt to treat water baptism as a permanent ceremonial entrance into the Church. Christ's indwelling life creates and unites His people; repeating the fulfilled shadow cannot do so and should not be practised as an ordinance.

Personal Response

Key Truth

How does Paul's correction of Peter in Galatians 2 uphold one people in Christ?

Personal Reflection

What does Peter's continued separation help you understand about the need to judge conduct by the Gospel? Is there a familiar expectation of yours that now needs reconsidering?

Action Step

How could you respond if a familiar religious boundary leads you to separate from a believer Christ has received? Explain one boundary you will stop using to judge spiritual belonging, and what you will do differently.

1 PETER 3 - BAPTISM AND THE ANSWER OF A GOOD CONSCIENCE

BACK TO CONTENTS

One of the Scriptures frequently used to support water baptism as a continuing New Covenant ordinance is found in 1 Peter chapter 3. Peter declares that baptism now saves us, and this has led many to conclude that literal water baptism is necessary for salvation or is an essential act of Christian obedience. However, the meaning of his statement must be established through his own explanation.

Noah, the Ark and the Flood

Peter begins by referring to the days of Noah, when God patiently waited while the ark was being prepared. Only eight people entered the ark and were preserved through the flood that brought judgement upon the world. Peter uses this historical event to explain an important spiritual truth concerning salvation.

Peter wrote in **1 Peter 3:20-22**:

> *"Which sometime were disobedient, when once the longsuffering of God waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was a preparing, wherein few, that is, eight souls were saved by water. The like figure whereunto even baptism doth also now save us (not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God,) by the resurrection of Jesus Christ: Who is gone into heaven, and is on the right hand of God; angels and authorities and powers being made subject unto him."*

Peter states that eight souls were *"saved by water."* These words must be understood according to what happened during the flood. The waters brought judgement upon the ungodly world, while Noah and his family were preserved within the ark as it was carried upon those same waters.

The writer of Hebrews explains the importance of Noah's faith.

The writer of Hebrews wrote in **Hebrews 11:7**:

> *"By faith Noah, being warned of God of things not seen as yet, moved with fear, prepared an ark to the saving of his house; by the which he condemned the world, and became heir of the righteousness which is by faith."*

Noah acted because he believed the Word of God. His preparation of the ark expressed his faith in what God had spoken, and his household was preserved through the means God had appointed. The building of the ark did not earn righteousness, but demonstrated Noah's response to God's warning.

The Like Figure: What Does Baptism Represent?

After describing Noah's deliverance, Peter introduces the words *"The like figure whereunto even baptism doth also now save us."* The expression *"like figure"* identifies a correspondence between what happened in Noah's day and the baptism associated with salvation in Jesus Christ. Peter is drawing upon the historical event to explain a greater spiritual truth.

The Greek word translated *"like figure"* is ANTITUPON. It describes something corresponding to another thing as a figure or representation. Peter is therefore connecting the historical deliverance of Noah with the greater reality of salvation now accomplished through Jesus Christ.

Peter writes, *"not the putting away of the filth of the flesh."* This statement is essential because it excludes the outward washing of bodily uncleanness as the saving reality. Physical water can wash the body, but it cannot remove sin, regenerate the heart or produce the indwelling life of Jesus Christ.

Personal Response

Key Truth

Why does Peter distinguish baptism's saving reality from washing dirt from the body?

Personal Reflection

What does Noah's deliverance help you understand about the difference between a figure and its fulfilment? What does this reveal about an assumption you have held?

Action Step

What does this distinction mean for your own confidence in physical washing as an answer to sin? Identify any trust you have placed in outward water or a later experience. What will you rely on instead?

The Answer of a Good Conscience Toward God

Peter then identifies the inward aspect of the baptism that saves. Having excluded the outward washing of the body, he speaks of *"the answer of a good conscience toward God."* His words direct attention towards the person's spiritual relationship with God rather than towards a physical ceremony.

An outward ceremony cannot create this relationship with God. A person may enter water and emerge physically clean while remaining unchanged inwardly. The new birth, however, is the saving work of Jesus Christ Himself, the one true God, who delivers the believer from spiritual death and gives His own indwelling life.

Paul explains how this inward washing takes place.

Paul wrote in **Titus 3:4-7**:

> *"But after that the kindness and love of God our Saviour toward man appeared, Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost; Which he shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Saviour; That being justified by his grace, we should be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life."*

Notice that Paul describes salvation as *"the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost."* This washing is not the removal of bodily uncleanness through physical water. It is the inward work of God through which a person is born again and receives spiritual life.

By the Resurrection of Jesus Christ

Peter completes his explanation with the words *"by the resurrection of Jesus Christ."* These words identify the foundation of the baptism that saves. The saving work rests upon Jesus Christ and what He accomplished through His death and resurrection.

Paul expresses this union with Christ when speaking of baptism.

Paul wrote in **Romans 6:3-4**:

> *"Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death? Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life."*

The relationship between Peter's teaching and Paul's teaching is therefore important. Peter identifies the baptism that saves with the answer of a good conscience toward God through Christ's resurrection. Paul identifies baptism with being brought into Jesus Christ, sharing in His death and walking in the newness of life made possible through Him.

The One Baptism of the New Covenant

The spiritual baptism fulfilled in Jesus Christ must also be understood alongside Paul's declaration that there is only one baptism belonging to the one body of Christ. His teaching establishes the unity of believers through the one Spirit received at the new birth.

Paul wrote in **Ephesians 4:4-6**:

> *"There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling; One Lord, one faith, one baptism, One God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all."*

Paul does not describe separate spiritual baptisms for different groups of believers. There is one body, one Spirit and one baptism, just as there is one Lord and one faith. These truths belong together because they describe the spiritual unity established through Jesus Christ.

This baptism is not a later experience added to salvation. It is part of the complete saving work of God through which the believer becomes a new creature in Jesus Christ. No second baptism is required to give an already saved person the Spirit of Christ or to complete the salvation received at the new birth.

The Church already possesses one Lord, one Spirit, one body and one baptism. The spiritual baptism Jesus Christ performs is the reality; water baptism is not an additional New Covenant ceremony appointed to stand beside it. The believer is complete at the new birth, and the fulfilled figure must not be continued as though the reality were still absent.

The Figure Has Given Way to the Reality

Peter's reference to Noah does not establish physical water as the source of salvation. He uses a historical event involving water to explain a greater spiritual reality, while expressly distinguishing the baptism that saves from the outward washing of the body. His explanation must be understood through the distinction he himself established.

Peter's concluding words direct attention towards the resurrection of Jesus Christ. The foundation of salvation is not the physical element used in an ordinance, but the Person whose death and resurrection accomplished redemption. His saving work provides the spiritual reality that outward representations cannot produce.

This agrees with the distinction between the shadow and the reality throughout the New Covenant. The outward figure may represent a spiritual truth, but it cannot create the reality that it represents. Jesus Christ Himself is the fulfilment, and the believer receives His indwelling life through the new birth.

The baptism that saves is the spiritual baptism through which the believer is brought into Jesus Christ, receives His indwelling Spirit and enters the one body of Christ. This salvation rests upon His completed death and resurrection, not upon the saving power of natural water.

Jesus Christ, not the water of an ordinance, gives the believer newness of life. Peter’s teaching concerns the saving reality accomplished through Christ’s resurrection and His Spirit. The fact that a ceremony cannot save is only part of the argument: a shadow whose purpose is fulfilled should not be maintained as a continuing Gospel ordinance.

The figure has given way to the reality. The believer possesses the Person, and the Person is greater than the outward representation.

Personal Response

Key Truth

How does Christ's resurrection explain the answer of a good conscience towards God?

Personal Reflection

What has the difference between an outward washing and spiritual life clarified for you? Which part of your own understanding does it challenge?

Action Step

How could this truth guide your own approach to God when considering forgiveness and a good conscience? Name one inherited expectation you will reconsider and explain how Christ's fulfilment changes your response.

CHRIST SENT ME NOT TO BAPTIZE - PAUL'S GOSPEL COMMISSION

BACK TO CONTENTS

Paul acknowledged that he had baptised certain people, yet distinguished those actions from the commission to preach the Gospel. His own words help us understand historical water baptisms without establishing them as continuing ordinances of the New Covenant.

Paul Distinguished Baptism From His Gospel Commission

When Paul wrote to the Corinthians, he addressed divisions that had developed among the believers. Some identified themselves with Paul, others with Apollos, and others with Peter. Paul corrected their thinking by directing attention away from individual messengers and towards Jesus Christ, who alone had accomplished their redemption.

Paul wrote in **1 Corinthians 1:13-17**:

> *"Is Christ divided? was Paul crucified for you? or were ye baptized in the name of Paul? I thank God that I baptized none of you, but Crispus and Gaius; Lest any should say that I had baptized in mine own name. And I baptized also the household of Stephanas: besides, I know not whether I baptized any other. For Christ sent me not to baptize, but to preach the gospel: not with wisdom of words, lest the cross of Christ should be made of none effect."*

Paul acknowledged that he had baptised Crispus, Gaius and the household of Stephanas. These past actions are part of the inspired record; they must not be omitted because the outward practice was still present. Yet recording them does not establish that water baptism should continue after the reality has come.

The immediate context concerns division and the danger of believers identifying themselves with the person who baptised them. Paul did not want anyone claiming a special relationship with him because he had administered their baptism. Their spiritual standing rested upon Jesus Christ, not upon the identity or actions of the person who baptised them.

Why Did Paul Baptise Some Believers?

If Paul baptised people, why did he say that Christ had not sent him to baptise? The question requires an honest recognition of transitional practice, not an attempt to give the water ceremony continuing authority. Paul lived among believers whose understanding and conduct were still influenced by earlier outward customs.

Luke recorded in **Acts 18:8**:

> *"And Crispus, the chief ruler of the synagogue, believed on the Lord with all his house; and many of the Corinthians hearing believed, and were baptized."*

Luke confirms that people in Corinth heard the Gospel, believed and were baptised. Paul also confirms that he personally performed some baptisms. These historical facts must be preserved rather than dismissed because they involve an outward practice.

Paul's historical baptisms do not undo his statement about the commission Christ gave him. He was sent to proclaim the Gospel through which people hear of Jesus Christ and respond in

faith. The baptism that gives spiritual life and creates the one body is performed by Jesus Christ in His Spirit, not by human hands in natural water.

Personal Response

Key Truth

Why does Paul distinguish his Gospel commission from the water baptisms he performed?

Personal Reflection

What has this helped you understand about interpreting an apostle's actions alongside his teaching? What difference should this make to your own response?

Action Step

How could Paul's commission guide your own attention to Christ when hearing or sharing the Gospel? Examine your own confidence before God. What belief or response must change because spiritual life comes from Christ?

Why Some Disciples Practised Water Baptism for a Time

If the baptism Jesus Christ performs in the Holy Ghost is the one New Covenant baptism, why did some disciples continue to practise water baptism after Pentecost? This is a real question, not an objection to be avoided. The book of Acts records their actions, but it also records a period in which their understanding was being brought into agreement with the truth already established in Christ.

During His earthly ministry, the disciples had been familiar with the water baptism associated with John. Some had formerly followed John, and Jesus Himself submitted to John's baptism to fulfil all righteousness. Practices learned within that former setting did not disappear from every disciple's conduct on the day the New Covenant reality came.

Jesus said in **John 16:12–13**:

> *"I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now. Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he will shew you things to come."*

Jesus recognised that His disciples were not yet prepared to understand every consequence of His work. His promised coming as the Spirit of truth did not mean the arrival of another separate God or divine Person; it fulfilled His own promise to dwell within His people. Their understanding had to grow, even though Christ's salvation and the New Covenant had already been established.

The book of Acts shows Jewish believers continuing practices inherited from their former religious setting. Circumcision and Temple observances belonged to the Mosaic covenant order, while John's water baptism had served its own God-appointed preparatory purpose. These practices were not identical, but they shared an important feature: their appointed significance had to be understood in the light of what Jesus Christ had now fulfilled.

That continuation is not an excuse for performing those practices today. The actions of believers during a transition cannot establish a continuing ordinance that the Lord Himself did not appoint for the Gospel Day.

The writer of Hebrews said in **Hebrews 8:13**:

> *"In that he saith, A new covenant, he hath made the first old. Now that which decayeth and waxeth old is ready to vanish away."*

Notice the distinction: the first covenant had already been made old, even while its outward order was ready to vanish away. Its visible practices could remain for a time without possessing continuing New Covenant authority. The transition lay in human understanding and conduct, not in Jesus Christ becoming more complete.

Peter's conduct at Cornelius's house makes the distinction particularly clear. He commanded water after Jesus Christ had baptised the household in the Holy Ghost, and he later remembered his Lord's promise in **Acts 1:5**. The saving baptism was already complete before Peter mentioned water; his later explanation directed attention to the work of Christ, not to the outward practice.

Jesus Himself Did Not Perform Water Baptism

The Gospel of John states that, during Jesus' earthly ministry, His disciples baptised in water but He Himself did not administer that outward baptism. John therefore distinguishes what the disciples did from the greater baptism belonging to Jesus Christ. The contrast must not be reversed after Pentecost by making an outward ceremony the required Gospel ordinance.

John wrote in **John 4:2**:

> *"Though Jesus himself baptized not, but his disciples,"*

John the Baptist had already identified Jesus Christ as the One who would baptise in the Holy Ghost. His greater baptism was not the physical washing His disciples performed, but the spiritual work that would bring believers into His own life. John's preparatory baptism pointed towards Jesus Christ, who alone could accomplish the promised spiritual reality.

The disciples could administer natural water, but only Jesus Christ could give the promised baptism in the Holy Ghost. His Gospel commission must be read in the light of that distinction. The disciples proclaim the Word; Jesus Christ Himself performs the baptism that brings the believer into His one body.

Did Jesus Ever Command Baptism in Natural Water?

This question must be answered from Jesus' own words, not from what we suppose His disciples later intended. No recorded commission of Jesus expressly commands His disciples to perform baptism in natural water. Matthew uses the word *"baptizing,"* and we must not deny that word; but Matthew does not name natural water, prescribe immersion or establish a ceremonial method.

Matthew recorded in **Matthew 28:19**:

> *"Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost:"*

These words do not introduce three gods or three separate divine Persons. The Father is the one eternal Spirit revealed through the genuine humanity of Jesus Christ, and the Holy Ghost

is His own Spirit. The Gospel commission must be understood in the light of the one true God revealed in Jesus Christ, who alone performs the saving baptism.

The commissions recorded in the four Gospels must be read together. Matthew speaks of teaching and baptising, Mark of preaching the Gospel and salvation, Luke of preaching repentance and remission of sins, and John of the disciples being sent with the message of Christ. These accounts must be understood in harmony with Jesus' own distinction between John's baptism in water and His promised baptism in the Holy Ghost. The disciples were responsible for proclaiming the Gospel, but only Jesus Christ could accomplish the spiritual baptism that brings a repentant believer into His one body.

Luke gives the commission in terms of repentance, remission of sins and the promise of power from on high. His account expressly identifies what was to be preached among all nations.

Luke recorded in **Luke 24:46–49**:

> *"And said unto them, Thus it is written, and thus it behoved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day: And that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. And ye are witnesses of these things. And, behold, I send the promise of my Father upon you: but tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem, until ye be endued with power from on high."*

John also records Jesus sending His disciples and speaking of the Holy Ghost and remission of sins. This Scripture likewise does not expressly command a ceremony in natural water.

John recorded in **John 20:21–23**:

> *"Then said Jesus to them again, Peace be unto you: as my Father hath sent me, even so send I you. And when he had said this, he breathed on them, and saith unto them, Receive ye the Holy Ghost: Whose soever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them; and whose soever sins ye retain, they are retained."*

Read together, Matthew, Mark, Luke and John record the Gospel commission from complementary perspectives. Matthew speaks of teaching and baptising; Mark connects believing and baptism with salvation; Luke explicitly commands the proclamation of repentance and remission of sins; and John connects the sending of the disciples with the Holy Ghost and the testimony concerning forgiveness. The disciples were sent to proclaim Christ to the nations. The new birth and the baptism that brings a person into His spiritual body are accomplished by Jesus Christ Himself, not by water administered through human hands.

Jesus Himself had already identified the baptism He would bring. In **Acts 1:5** He contrasted John's baptism in water with the promised baptism in the Holy Ghost. Paul later explained the result in **1 Corinthians 12:13**: every genuinely born-again believer is brought into the one spiritual body through the one Spirit. That saving act cannot be carried out by any person through a water ceremony.

Paul explained the distinction between those who proclaim the Gospel and the One who gives spiritual life in **1 Corinthians 3:5–7**:

> *"Who then is Paul, and who is Apollos, but ministers by whom ye believed, even as the Lord gave to every man? I have planted, Apollos watered; but God gave the increase. So then neither is he that planteth any thing, neither he that watereth; but God that giveth the increase."*

Those who proclaim the Gospel plant and water through the Word, but Jesus Christ Himself gives spiritual life. The disciples were commissioned to take the Gospel to the world; they were not given independent power to regenerate sinners, confer the Holy Ghost or place anyone into Christ's body. Their part is to preach and teach; the baptism that saves belongs to Christ alone.

The Gospel Brings People Into Jesus Christ

The Gospel commission sent the disciples to preach the saving Word to all people. Jesus spoke of believing and being baptised, but **Mark 16:16** does not identify the baptism as natural water. The baptism connected with salvation must be understood through Jesus' promise in **Acts 1:5** and its explanation in **1 Corinthians 12:13**.

Mark recorded in **Mark 16:15-16**:

> *"And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned."*

Notice carefully the order of Jesus' words in **Mark 16:16**. The person believes, is baptised, and shall be saved. We can express the order as belief + baptism = salvation.

But which baptism precedes salvation in this declaration? It cannot be a ceremony administered by human hands, for that cannot bring anyone into Jesus Christ. It is the one spiritual baptism performed by Jesus Christ in the Holy Ghost at the new birth. Belief, baptism into His body and salvation are not three experiences separated by time; they belong to His one complete saving work.

Paul explained the baptism through which believers enter Christ's body.

Paul wrote in **1 Corinthians 12:13**:

> *"For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit."*

Jesus Christ Himself baptises in His own Spirit, bringing believers into His Church. Paul did not describe a ceremony to be performed after salvation, but the divine work that makes the believer a member of Christ's one body. Once that reality is received, the outward representation must not be continued as a second baptismal ordinance.

Jesus Christ Is Greater Than the Ordinance

Paul's declaration concerning his commission must be understood in harmony with everything he taught about salvation. His message consistently directed believers towards Jesus Christ as

their righteousness, sanctification and redemption. The Gospel proclaims the Person who accomplishes salvation, not an outward ceremony through which human hands could produce spiritual life.

Paul wrote in **1 Corinthians 1:30**:

> *"But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption:"*

Jesus Christ Himself is the righteousness of the believer. Neither water baptism nor another outward ordinance can add to what He has accomplished. The believer receives complete salvation at the new birth because the indwelling life of Jesus Christ has already been received.

Paul did not frame **1 Corinthians 1:17** as a separate prohibition of every possible water baptism, but his words do not establish one as an ordinance either. His commission was to preach, and the completed New Covenant gives the believer Christ Himself. The Church has no instruction from Jesus to retain a ceremonial shadow beside its fulfilled reality.

The Gospel does not bring people to an ordinance as the source of spiritual life. It brings people to Jesus Christ, who is Himself the life, righteousness and completeness of everyone who is born again.

The Church is not formed by people receiving water baptism by other people. It is formed through the new birth, when Jesus Christ brings believers into Himself by the one Spirit. This spiritual baptism establishes membership in His body and gives the believer the indwelling life that no outward ceremony can produce.

Jesus Christ sent Paul to proclaim the Gospel, not to make water baptism the centre of Christian practice. The preaching announces salvation; Jesus Christ performs the baptism in His Spirit. The outward figure must not be given a continuing place beside the Person it once represented.

The believer possesses the Person. The Person is greater than the ordinance, and the fulfilled reality leaves no need for the continuing ceremonial shadow.

Why Continue a Shadow After the Reality Has Come?

The final issue is greater than whether water can save. An ordinance has its appointed meaning as an outward representation pointing towards a spiritual reality. When the spiritual reality has come in Jesus Christ, why would His Church continue treating the former representation as an ordinance?

Paul wrote in **Colossians 2:16–17**:

> *“Let no man therefore judge you in meat, or in drink, or in respect of an holyday, or of the new moon, or of the sabbath days: Which are a shadow of things to come; but the body is of Christ.”*

The shadow pointed forwards; Jesus Christ is the substance. At Pentecost in A.D. 31, the promised Person came as the Holy Spirit to dwell within His people. The outward form could never produce His life, and now it is not needed to represent a future fulfilment that has already arrived.

John's baptism in natural water pointed to the greater baptism Jesus Christ would bring in the Holy Ghost. Through that baptism, the believer is born again and brought into Christ's one spiritual body. To continue water baptism as a Church ordinance would preserve a figure alongside its fulfilled reality.

The same principle concerns the Lord's Supper and feet washing. Their outward acts pointed towards spiritual communion and the humility and servant life of Jesus Christ. The born-again believer possesses Him; therefore, fellowship and humble service flow from His indwelling life rather than from continued ritual observance.

This does not forbid ordinary washing, sharing a meal or helping another person. It rejects the continuation of fulfilled religious ceremonies as New Covenant ordinances. Obedience and holiness do not cease; they are expressed through the life of Christ within us, not through the repeated performance of the shadow.

The fact that the disciples performed water baptism for a time in Acts does not supply a new Scriptural command to retain it after fulfilment. The New Covenant Church already possesses the Person to whom the ordinances pointed. The shadows have served their purpose; they are not to be carried forward as continuing Gospel ordinances.

Personal Response

Key Truth

Why do historical baptisms not establish a continuing water ordinance after fulfilment?

Personal Reflection

What does the difference between possessing Christ and continuing a shadow challenge in your own thinking?

Action Step

What response do you want to make to the Gospel in the light of Christ's sufficiency rather than dependence on an outward ordinance? Examine where you have placed your confidence. What will you change to keep that confidence in Jesus Christ?

CONCLUSION - THE BAPTISM THAT BRINGS US INTO CHRIST

BACK TO CONTENTS

The New Covenant baptism is not another form of John's water ceremony. John prepared the way, and Jesus Christ brought the fulfilment in His own Spirit at Pentecost in A.D. 31. The historical continuation of water baptism during the transition cannot be treated as a standing command for Christ's Church.

John Pointed Towards the Greater Baptism

John understood that his ministry was not the final fulfilment of God's purpose. He directed the people beyond the water he administered towards Jesus Christ, who would baptise in the Holy Ghost. His declaration clearly distinguished the preparatory work entrusted to him from the greater spiritual work belonging to Jesus Christ.

Luke also recorded how John's God-appointed ministry reached its appointed purpose. John did not direct the people towards an enduring water ceremony, but towards Jesus Christ, the One who was coming after him.

Luke recorded in **Acts 13:24–25**:

> *"When John had first preached before his coming the baptism of repentance to all the people of Israel. And as John fulfilled his course, he said, Whom think ye that I am? I am not he. But, behold, there cometh one after me, whose shoes of his feet I am not worthy to loose."*

Notice the words *"as John fulfilled his course."* John's preaching and baptism of repentance prepared Israel for Jesus Christ. His work was preparatory and was not intended to stand beside the greater baptism Christ would bring in the Holy Ghost. The appointed course pointed towards the Person, and the fulfilment is found in Him.

Matthew recorded John's words in **Matthew 3:11**:

> *"I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance: but he that cometh after me is mightier than I, whose shoes I am not worthy to bear: he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost, and with fire:"*

John's baptism had its appointed preparatory purpose, and Jesus submitted to it to fulfil all righteousness. But the baptism John foretold was not another water ceremony. It was Christ's baptism in the Holy Ghost, which makes the repentant believer part of His spiritual body.

Jesus Confirmed the Distinction

Before Pentecost, Jesus confirmed that the baptism promised through John's ministry would soon be fulfilled. His words maintained the distinction between baptism in physical water and baptism in the Holy Ghost.

Luke recorded His words in **Acts 1:5**:

> *"For John truly baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost not many days hence."*

Jesus Christ fulfilled His promise at Pentecost in A.D. 31 when He came as the Holy Spirit to dwell within His people. He did not send another separate divine Person to replace Him. The one true God revealed in Jesus Christ is Himself the Spirit who baptises the believer into His body at the new birth.

The One Baptism Brings Us Into Christ

Paul explains the purpose of this spiritual baptism. His teaching identifies both the Spirit through whom the baptism is accomplished and the spiritual body into which believers are brought.

Paul wrote in **1 Corinthians 12:13**:

> *"For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit."*

This baptism brings believers into one body, the Church of God. It is not an outward ceremony performed by human hands, but the inward work of Jesus Christ Himself. Every person who is genuinely born again possesses His Spirit and belongs to His one spiritual body.

Paul also wrote in **Colossians 2:10**:

"And ye are complete in him, which is the head of all principality and power:"

The believer is complete in Jesus Christ at the new birth. Neither an additional Spirit experience nor a ceremonial action can add to Him. The shadow has reached its appointed end; the Church must not continue it as an ordinance when the indwelling Person is already present.

John baptised in natural water, but Jesus Christ baptises in the Holy Ghost. One pointed forward; the other is the spiritual reality. There is no continuing New Covenant water ordinance to perform alongside the one baptism of Christ.

Personal Response

Key Truth

How do John's testimony and Jesus' promise identify the one baptism that remains?

Personal Reflection

Which connection between receiving the Spirit and being brought into Christ has become clearer to you? What does this reveal about an assumption you have held?

Action Step

What does the fulfilment of John's preparatory baptism mean for your own trust in Jesus Christ? Identify any trust you have placed in outward water or a later experience. What will you rely on instead?

MODULE CONCLUSION - ORDINANCES FULFILLED IN JESUS CHRIST

BACK TO CONTENTS

Water baptism, the Lord's Supper and feet washing were outward representations pointing towards realities fulfilled in Jesus Christ. The New Covenant does not require the Church to perform these ceremonies after the Person has come and fulfilled their purpose. Their spiritual meaning is now found in Christ's completed work and His indwelling life.

Water baptism pointed towards the baptism in the Holy Ghost, through which Christ brings believers into His one body. The Lord's Supper pointed towards true communion in Jesus Christ, the living bread. Feet washing illustrated humble service, which now comes from Christ's life within believers rather than from a repeated ceremonial washing.

These fulfilled realities are not obtained or maintained through outward observances. The Church should not continue the ceremonies as ordinances of the Gospel Day. Genuine fellowship, humility, obedience and service continue, not as independent efforts to imitate Christ but as expressions of His life already within the born-again believer.

Paul wrote in **Colossians 2:6**:

"As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in him:"

Having received Christ Jesus the Lord, the believer is to walk in Him. This is not an instruction to return to the ceremonies that pointed forward to Him. His indwelling life is the source of obedience, fellowship and service; the outward ordinance does not sustain that life.

The shadows served God's purpose in their appointed time, but they never possessed the power of the Person to whom they pointed. Jesus Christ fulfilled their meaning, accomplished redemption and came as the Holy Spirit at Pentecost. His presence is the New Covenant reality the Church already possesses.

Why continue performing a shadow when the reality has come? The believer possesses the Person. The Person is greater than the ordinance. Representation is not production, and the fulfilled representation is not a continuing Gospel requirement.

The message of the New Covenant is not a return to ceremonies, but the life of Jesus Christ dwelling within His people. Every born-again believer possesses His Spirit, belongs to His body and is complete in Him. His life is expressed through faith, love, holiness, fellowship and humble service without returning to the ritual shadows.

Jesus Christ is the fulfilment, the substance and the life of His Church. Nothing can be added to the salvation complete in Him, and no fulfilled ceremonial ordinance should be continued alongside His indwelling reality.

Personal Response

Key Truth

How do the fulfilled ordinances point together to Christ as the substance and life of His Church?

Personal Reflection

What does salvation being complete in Him help you reconsider about an outward requirement? Which part of your own understanding does it challenge?

Action Step

What response do you want to make to Christ's indwelling reality, including anything you still want to understand? Identify a belief about your completeness in Christ that needs correcting and the difference it should make to your conduct.

SUBMISSION TO COGMA FOR APPRAISAL

Instructions

Complete this section after you have finished the Study Guide. It must be completed online.

The link is located at the bottom of the online Study Guide — https://cogma.com.au/study-guides/

Your answers should reflect your understanding, your personal response, and how you intend to live by the truth you have studied. Answer honestly and be specific.

1. Main Truth

How does baptism into Jesus Christ and His death explain Paul's rejection of continuing in sin? Explain how **Romans 6:1-3** *relates to burial, resurrection and newness of life in* **Romans 6:4-11**.

2. Understanding

How do EN and EIS help explain being baptised in the Holy Ghost and into Christ's one body? Explain how this relates to the operation of God and completeness in Colossians 2. Why can outward ordinances add nothing to the life already received in Christ?

3. Personal Reflection

What have the Samaritans, Simon and the disciples at Ephesus helped you reconsider about outward baptism and spiritual life? Explain what has become clearer in your own understanding of the historical events in Acts.

4. Response to Truth

What does repentance, remission and the gift of the Holy Ghost in Acts 2 call you to consider about your own response to the Gospel? Explain how the Lord adding people to His Church guides your understanding.

5. Action Step

Consider refusing to use an outward ordinance as a reason to separate from a believer Christ has received. What does the one spiritual body mean for your own attitude or choices? Explain any response you want to make.

6. Early Response

Have you already responded to the truth of Christ's one body by refusing to use an outward ordinance as a reason to separate from another believer? If yes, explain what you did or now understand more clearly. If not, explain what you are still considering or what has made it difficult to respond.

7. Ongoing Practice

How could the truth that you are alive unto God through Jesus Christ guide your response when sin is presented as unavoidable? Explain how newness of life relates to a continuing walk in righteousness.

8. Doctrinal Clarity

How do Cornelius receiving the Holy Ghost before water baptism, Peter's witness in Acts 15 and Paul's correction in Galatians 2 show God's acceptance through faith? Explain why later apostolic actions do not create another condition of salvation.

9. Living the Truth

Someone uses 1 Peter 3 to say that washing in natural water saves. How would you explain the figure of Noah's deliverance, a good conscience and Christ's resurrection? Describe how you would help the person see the difference between the figure and the saving reality.

10. Final Response

How do Paul's Gospel commission and the fulfilment of former ordinances support the truth of one baptism into Christ? Explain what it means to you that His indwelling life is complete, including anything you still want to consider.