

Trinitarian Baptism and Matthew 28:19

Many have been baptized into a Trinitarian formula, basing their actions on Matthew 28:19. Now learn the facts about this verse and the proper prescription for immersion.

What Must We Do?

A profound feeling of guilt swept over the Apostle Peter's audience. Those gathered learned that it was their breaking of Yahweh's law (their sin, 1 John 3:4) that caused the Savior's death! A feeling of despair overwhelmed them and they earnestly and urgently asked Peter, "What must we do?"

"Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the Name of Yahshua the Messiah for the remission of sins, and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit." (Acts 2:38)

Baptism is the initial, compelling act one considers after learning of one's own sinful record.

Baptism is a willing, voluntary step assumed by a contrite heart, seeking spiritual restoration and the grace and forgiveness freely promised us by the Heavenly Father through His Son.

Israelites were brought into the covenant through involuntary circumcision at infancy. Today, the New Covenant is entered into on one's own volition.

Sadly, not everyone who is called to be grafted into the Abrahamic promise willingly responds. Some may turn their backs upon Yahweh's invitation and though called, are not chosen.

"So the last shall be first, and the first last: for many are called, but few chosen." (Matt. 20:16)

To the dutiful, seeking Bible student, the question is often raised, "Unto what are we to be baptized?" This very question was foremost among many of the early seekers of truth when learning that baptism means complete immersion into water, representing a voluntary submerging of one's self into the character of Yahshua the Messiah. It signifies a burying of our wills to be in harmony with His.

Baptized into a Name or Titles?

The popular practice is to baptize into the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Where did the Trinitarian formula for baptism come from, anyway?

The only verse found in the Bible, dealing with baptism, that even hints at a Trinitarian formula is found in Matthew 28:19:

"Go you therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit."

Being baptized into the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit" is not being baptized into a name at all! Father and Son are mere titles. Unlike names, no power or promise exists in titles.

The Holy Spirit is not a name, but a descriptive noun for the dynamic Power that flows from the Father and

is shared by the Son. Many men are fathers and have sons. All sons have fathers.

“Father” and “son” are common nouns, not names.

Notice in Matthew 28:19 that the noun “name” is in the singular. It is not “into the names,” plural, but the expression is “baptized into THE NAME.” This is considered the savior’s parting command to His beloved Disciples. Henceforth they would be apostles (meaning those “sent with a mission”) and no longer disciples (“learners”).

Known as the “Great Commission,” this verse appears in the revered King James Version and is often quoted in an attempt to prove the trinity doctrine.

The validity of these departing words has been questioned since the time of Coneybeare. That the Savior actually spoke these exact words that allude to a Trinity is questioned by many reputable scholars.

Bible experts down through history have questioned Matthew 28:19, pointing out that this verse is contrary to both the plain teachings in the Book of Acts and Paul’s writings as well. It is not in harmony with other Scriptural teachings, nor do ANY of the narratives on baptism follow this Trinitarian practice.

The following fact, brought out in the New International Biblical Commentary, shows why Matthew 28:19 is so questionable: “This is the only occurrence of the formula from the first century... Elsewhere baptism is said to be ‘in the name of [Yahshua] (Acts 8:16, 19:5),” p. 268.

Other Examples Curiously Absent

Why is Matthew 28:19 the ONLY passage where the bible seemingly presents a Trinitarian formula or concept for baptism?

In the numerous instances of immersion extant in the New Testament, why don’t we find the Apostles baptizing converts into the Trinitarian formula using the phrase, “In the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit”? Why is not this formula followed anywhere in the entire Book of Acts?

Why does not Paul or Peter specify baptism into the Trinitarian formula rather than only into “Yahshua’s Name”?

The doctrine of the Trinity says that the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit are “three persons in one, and all three are equal.”

But the Savior never said He was equal to the Father. He said His Father was GREATER than He (John 14:28). Paul said the head of the Messiah is Yahweh (1 Corinthians 11:3), and in fact is “above all” (Ephesians 4:6).

A number of observations from Bible-based sources reveal that the Trinitarian formula is an erroneous teaching of the Church, a doctrine that eventually crept into the evangel of Matthew.

This fraudulent verse was taken from liturgy and soon attached to the end of Matthew’s text. The Trinity doctrine is not found in the Old Testament, and is only a forced interpretation of a few New Testament verses. A multitude of references show that the Trinity concept stems from paganism. (Write for our booklet, The Truth about the Trinity).

Matthew 28:19 Examined

Under “Baptismal Formula,” the Encyclopedia Britannica, 1911 edition, states:

“The Trinitarian formula and trine immersion were not uniformly used from the beginning, nor did they always go together. The Teaching of the Apostles, indeed, prescribes baptism in the name of Father, Son and Holy Ghost, but on the next page speaks of those who have been baptized into the name of [Yahshua] -- the normal formula of the New Testament. In the 3rd century baptism in the name of [Messiah] was so widespread that Pope Stephen, in opposition to Cyprian of Carthage, declared it to be valid. From Pope Zachariah (Ep.x.) we learn that the Celtic missionaries in baptizing omitted one or more persons of the Trinity, and this was one of the reasons why the Church of Rome anathematized them; Pope Nicholas, however (858- 867)...allowed baptism to be valid tantum in nomine Christi, as in Acts. Basil, in his work On the Holy Spirit just mentioned, condemns “baptism into the L-rd alone” as insufficient. Baptism into the death of [Messiah]” is often specified by the Armenian fathers as that which alone was essential.

“Ursinus, an African monk...also asserted that baptism into the name of [Messiah] alone was valid... “Trine immersion, then, as to the origin of which Basil confesses his ignorance, must be older than either of the rival explanations. These are clearly...invented to explain an existing custom, which the church had adopted from its pagan medium. For pagan lustrations were normally threefold. Ovid...Persius...and Horace...similarly speak of trine lustrations; and on the last mentioned passage the scholiast Acro remarks, ‘He uses the words thrice purely, because people in expiating their sins plunge themselves in thrice.’ Such examples of the ancient usage encounters us everywhere in Greek and Latin antiquity” (pp. 365-366).

These are rather strong words, but as the Britannica says, the Trinitarian formula for baptism was invented to explain an existing custom that the church had adopted strictly from paganism!

Notice that the pagan converts, upon being baptized for forgiveness of sins, voluntarily dip themselves three times as a carryover from the Trinitarian influence of their previous heathen beliefs.

Religious Sources on Matt. 28:19

The following are comments selected from time-honored, scholarly sources skeptical of the phrase, “baptizing them in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit,” as found in Matthew 28:19:

The Jerusalem Bible, a scholarly, well-respected Catholic work, admits: “It may be that this formula, so far as the fullness of its expression is concerned, is a reflection of the liturgical usage established later in the primitive community. It will be remembered that Acts speaks of baptizing ‘in the name of J-sus,’ cf. Acts 1:5.”

The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia, vol. 4, p. 2637, under “Baptism,” says, “Matthew 28:19 in particular only canonizes a later ecclesiastical situation, that its universalism is contrary to the facts of early Christian history, and its Trinitarian formula “foreign to the mouth of [Yahshua].”

New Revised Standard Version notes on Matthew 28:19: “Modern critics claim this formula is falsely ascribed to [Yahshua] and that it represents later church tradition, for nowhere in the book of Acts is baptism performed with the name of the Trinity...”

The Expositor’s Greek New Testament by Nicoll, p. 340, hedges in explaining the dubious Matthew 28 formula: “into the name as confessing the name which embodies the essence of the Christian creed...it is the name not of one but of three, forming a baptismal Trinity -- Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. It is not said into the

names of, etc., nor into the name of the Father, and the name of the son, and the name of the Holy Ghost -- Hence might be deduced the idea of a Trinity constituting at the same time a Divine Unity. But this would probably be reading more into the words than was intended.”

Word Pictures in the New Testament, p. 245, explains, “Trine immersion is not taught as the Greek Church holds and practices, baptism in the name of the Father, then of the Son, then of the Holy Spirit. The use of name (onoma) here is a common one in the Septuagint and the papyri for power or authority.”

The New American Bible, by Catholic Bible Publishers, states concerning Matthew 28:19:

“Go, therefore, and make...some regard these words as an interpretation of [Yahshua’s] final instruction in the light of the church’s early change from a mission to the Jews to one in behalf of the Gentiles...The baptismal formula reflects the church’s gradual understanding of G-d as three Persons...”

The Hasting’s Encyclopedia of Religion (vol. 2, pp. 377-389) asserts about the change in formula: “The Christian baptism was administered using the Name of [Yahshua]. The Trinitarian formula of any sort was not suggested in the early Church history. Baptism was always in the Name of the [Master Yahshua], until the time of Justin Martyr, when the Trinity formula was used.”

New Testament Theology by Donald Guthrie points out inconsistencies with Matthew 28:19:

“The dispute over the authenticity of the triune formula revolves around the comparison with the simpler formula used in Acts (cf. 2:38; 8:16; 10:48; 19:5). The question arises whether the triune formula requires a late date.” A footnote states, “...and concludes against the words being the ipsissima verba [exact words] of [Yahshua], mainly on the grounds of historical probability,” p. 719.

Another footnote explains that the Triune formula was used for the Gentiles, whereas in Acts those baptized were Jews or those fearing Yahweh. In other words, Jews were immersed into Yahshua’s Name, and Gentiles into the Trinitarian formula, as a trinity was familiar to pagans, p. 719.

Adam Clarke’s Commentary corroborates the practice: “The Jews baptized proselytes into the name of the Father, that is, into the profession g-d, whom they called by the name of Father. The apostles baptized the Jews into the name of [Yahshua] the Son, and the Gentiles into the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,” vol.3, p. 285.

Expositors’ Bible Commentary says only one formula was ever correctly used, a single-name prescription: “Many deny the authenticity of this Trinitarian formula, however, not on the basis of doubtful reconstructions of the development of doctrine, but on the basis of the fact that the only evidence we have of actual Christian baptism indicates a consistent monadic formula -- baptism in [Yahshua’s] name...” vol. 8, p. 598.

The Interpreter’s Bible agrees: “Probably this baptismal formula was simpler in the very first days of the church -- ‘in the name of the [Master Yahshua].’ The formula of verse 19 was probably a later development,” vol. 7, p. 624.

The Anchor Bible, a Catholic reference Bible, says on Matthew, “The neophyte baptized into the name of the Messiah thus not only pledges allegiance to [Yahshua] as the Messiah and Sovereign, but is also incorporated into fellowship with Him. Hence the expression used in this verse describes an entrance into fellowship with the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit...It seems plain from the early material in Acts that baptism was performed “in the name of” and also “into the name of” [Yahshua] as Sovereign and Messiah. The mistake of

so many writers on the New Testament lies in treating this as a liturgical formula (which it later became), and not as a description what baptism accomplished,” pp. 107-108.

Parrinder’s World Religions raises the question of a later addition of the verse: “This verse may well be a later interpolation into the original gospel of Matthew, but it certainly reflects what the early Church did, in fact, does,” p. 425.

Interpreter’s Dictionary of the Bible says, “...Matthew 28:19 has also been disputed on textual grounds, but in the opinion of many scholars the words may still be regarded as part of the true text of Matthew. There is, however, grave doubt whether they may be regarded as ipsissima verba of [Yahshua]. The evidence of Acts 2:38; 10:48; 8:16; 19:5 supported by Galatians 3:27; Romans 6:3 “suggests...Yahshua only, p. 351.

Word Pictures in New Testament by A. T. Robertson: “The name of [Yahshua] is the essential part of it as is shown in Acts. Trine immersion is not taught as the Greek Church holds and practices, baptism in the name of the Father, then of the Son, then of the Holy Spirit. The use of name (onoma) here is a common one in the Septuagint and the papyri for power or authority,” vol. 1, p. 245.

Schaff-Herzog Encyclopedia of Religious Knowledge, sums up: “[Yahshua], however, cannot have given His disciples this Trinitarian order of baptism after His resurrection; for the New Testament knows only baptism in the name of [Yahshua] (Acts 2:38; 8:16; 19:5; Gal. 3:27; Rom. 6:3; 1 Cor. 1:13-15), which still occurs even in the second and third centuries, while the Trinitarian formula occurs only in Matt. 28:19, and then only again Didache 7:1 and Justin, Apol. 1:61...Finally, the distinctly liturgical character of the formula...is strange; it was not the way of [Yahshua] to make such formulas...the formal authenticity of Matt. 28:19 must be disputed...” (p. 435).

Examples of Immersion in the King James Version

The Book of Acts shows that baptisms were in the name of the Savior alone. There is no example in the Book of Acts of any Trinitarian formula anywhere. Note the following: “*Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Yahshua the Messiah for the remission of sins, and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.*” (Acts 2:38)

“*For as yet [the Spirit] was fallen upon none of them: only they were baptized in the name of Yahshua the Messiah.*” (Acts 8:16)

“*And he commanded them to be baptized in the name of [Yahshua the Messiah]. Then prayed they him to tarry certain days.*” (Acts 10:48)

“*When they heard [this], they were baptized in the name of the sovereign Yahshua.*” (Acts 19:5)

“*And now why tarriest? arise, and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on [His name -- all texts].*” (Acts 22:16)

In all five of the above references to baptism in the Book of Acts, the baptisms are done in the Name of Yahshua. That we be baptized into Yahshua’s saving Name is a very important consideration, as we will show.

“Salvation in Yahshua the Messiah

Of ourselves, we can do nothing that will redeem us. All our righteousness is as filthy rags in Yahweh’s sight. The only way we can be clothed in clean raiment is by having our robes washed in the blood of the

Lamb. By yielding to Him and acknowledging Him as Sovereign we can enter into the presence of Yahweh. We must repent from our past life and acknowledge Yahshua as the Head of the body. Otherwise we are lost.

“And such were some of you: but you are washed, but you are sanctified, but you are justified in the name of the [Sovereign] Yahshua and by the Spirit of our Elohim.” (1 Cor. 6:11)

Through baptism into the Messiah, we publicly acknowledge that we have turned from our past life that was without hope, ending only in death. Now we follow in the footsteps of our beloved Savior. We bury our past life in the baptismal waters and are brought forth to walk in newness of life.

“Know you not, that so many of us as were baptized into Yahshua Messiah were baptized into His death?”
“Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Messiah was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.” (Rom. 6:3-4)

Notice, our burial is with Yahshua, not with a Trinity! Paul makes the point that we are immersed into Yahshua’s Name, putting the old carnal nature to death and arising from the baptismal waters to walk as the Savior walks, in complete obedience to Yahweh. The Apostle Peter agrees with Paul, there is only one Name by which we can attain salvation. That is in the Name, Yahshua, the Name the Savior was given directly from the heavens. Note Peter’s bold words: *“Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved.”* (Acts 4:12)

Laying On Hands Of The Presbytery

We are given the Holy Spirit at baptism by the laying on of hands of the Presbytery (the Elders).

Receiving the Holy Spirit empowers us to overcome the pulls and temptations of the world, our flesh, and the Adversary.

Then laid they [their] hands on them, and they received the Holy Spirit.”

“And when Simon saw that through laying on of the apostles’ hands the Holy Spirit was given, he offered them money.” (Acts 8:17-18)

Baptisms in the Bible were always done by the ministers. Following the immersion, the Apostles laid hands on the baptized brethren, asking for Yahweh’s blessings and for the Holy Spirit to indwell them. (This practice we continue to follow in Yahweh’s Assembly In Yahshua).

Paul told Timothy the Holy Spirit was given him by the laying on of hands of the ordained Elders of the Assembly:

“Neglect not the gift that is in you, which was given you by prophecy, with the laying on of the hands of the presbytery.” (1 Tim 4:14)

Paul was not ashamed to claim that the spiritual gift passed on to young Timothy was through the placing of his own hands on the young evangelist.

“Wherefore, I put you in remembrance that you stir up the gift of Yahweh, which is in you by the putting on of my hands.” (2 Tim. 1:6)

The Body Of Messiah, The Assembly

The only way we are to be given the promises is through Yahshua; for He is the only One Who has kept all the law perfectly!

“For as many of you as have been baptized into Messiah have put on Messiah. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for you are all one in Messiah Yahshua.” (Gal. 3:27-28)

Through being baptized into the Name of Yahshua we show our complete faith in Yahshua and are made children of Yahweh.

“And if you be Messiah’s, then are you Abraham’s seed, and heirs according to the promise” (Gal. 3:29). By becoming the Messiah’s through baptism into His Name, we are partakers of promises to Abraham made back in Genesis 12 and 15 and carried on through the Old Testament and amplified so gloriously in the New Testament.

By being immersed into Yahshua’s saving Name we act out the Savior’s death and resurrection, burying our sins in the waters of baptism. Now the power of Yahweh gives us a willing heart as we overcome and endure day by day, looking for the resurrection day as shown by the Apostle Peter:

“The like figure whereunto even baptism does also now save us (not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward Yahweh), by the resurrection of Yahshua Messiah.” (1 Peter 3:21)

The Bible teaches there is but one proper baptism. Unless one has been fully dipped under water, into the Name of Yahshua, it is not a proper baptism. Baptisms done in the Trinity formula of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are improper, based on an added liturgical formula in Matthew 28:19.

Neither is baptism in Ha Ruach Chodesh (the Holy Spirit) proper, for the Spirit is the power or active force, the vitality that flows from the Father and shared by the Son.

Being baptized into Yahshua’s Name is the only proper formula for baptism. The preposition, “into,” is the Greek, “eis,” and means, “motion toward.” We persist in following Him. We continually strive to be like the Messiah and grow spiritually in Him so that we are like Him, for there is but “One Master, one faith, one baptism.” (Eph. 4:5)

When immersed into Yahshua’s saving Name, we take hold of the New Covenant, and we become a part of His body of believers, and we should then do all we can to edify the body, His Assembly. As already noted, we individually are given a special gift to be used in building and strengthening His body, which we are to use in our role as a member of Messiah’s Body. To ensure growth within the Assembly: *“Yahweh has set some in the assembly, first apostles, secondarily prophets, thirdly teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, governments, diversities of tongues.”* (1 Cor. 12:28)

Being properly baptized into the only Name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved, Yahshua puts us into the Body of true believers. It is up to you to answer Yahweh’s call to become a part of that Body through acknowledging the Head of that Body. His Name is Yahshua the Messiah.

“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.” (1 Cor. 12:13)

Baptism of John Was of Repentance

Unless one has been immersed into Yahshua, “*the only name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved,*” it is not a baptism unto salvation. Being immersed in “J-sus Name,” or in the “Father, Son, and Holy Ghost/Spirit,” is improper.

According to Acts 19:1-5, such baptisms are but a baptism of repentance. That is, the candidate was obedient and did what he understood at the time. He was repentant, seeking Yahweh and Yahshua. But he did not fulfill the correct prescription for immersion unto salvation through the saving Name.

Now that you have seen the Bible example of proper baptism, if you have not been immersed into Yahshua’s saving Name with the laying on of hands, determine now to do so. You should not hang back or put off this most important act. Send for our baptismal counseling guide and learn more about your personal obligation so that you, too, can enter into the New Covenant.

Yahweh’s Assembly in Yahshua
2963 County Road 233, Kingdom City, Missouri 65262
View us online at: www.YAIY.org
Call Toll Free: (877) 642-4101
Main Line: (573) 642-4100