

BAPTISM—RITUAL VS REALITY
A Letter on The Subject of Baptism
By Jack W. Langford

Dear -----,

I want to express again to you my appreciation for your coming to my home to study the Word of God. You did so on behalf of your daughter who has come to meet and fellowship with us. I do hope that you will come again soon. You are welcome anytime and you can bring anyone with you—we have plenty of room so that you could even stay overnight if you wish. Baptism is a beautiful subject and a big one. Sectarianism is a very important subject and any other questions you have I would love to entertain. We do not want to be a sect.

Every Christian must come to a place in his life where he wants to discover for himself the realities of God's will for proper obedience to God. Especially is this true in these last days of religious apostasy. I read carefully the paper you left with me, "*Baptism: The Demonstration of Devotion.*" You indicated that your minister gives this to all new converts at your church. I want to share with you some thoughts I had as I read through that paper.

"The Demonstration of Devotion"

It is a common misunderstanding to think that a ritual performance of some kind is a proper demonstration of devotion to God. That is why all religions have ritual acts for their adherents to perform. They think this shows a proper devotion to God. Nothing could be further from the truth!

The fact is, the only time a ritual performance shows a proper devotion to God is when God specifically orders the performance. Even then the ritual itself demonstrates nothing for the performer unless the heart attitude of the performer is right with God—otherwise it proves absolutely nothing but devotion to a ritual performance. Biblical Christianity is not devotion to a ritual, but rather the reality of new life in Christ lived out every day.

Nine hundred million Roman Catholics, hundreds of million Greek Orthodox and Russian Orthodox, hundreds of million Protestants, and millions of miscellaneous other "Christian" sects perform the water baptism ritual to "demonstrate their devotion" to God. But what does it all prove??? Absolutely nothing—except "**devotion to a ritual.**"

A number of years ago Pope Paul the 6th, while entertaining some representatives of the Catholic Charismatic movement, made a public admission that the vast majority of Roman Catholics were just "**baptized pagans**" and did not have "real conversion." This admission made quite a stir in Roman circles and their theologians quickly tried to qualify the Pope's statement. Nevertheless the Pope told the absolute truth.

Sad to say, we who are real Christians know for sure that the vast majority, who submit to water baptism in some form or another, are just showing their "devotion to a ritual," and nothing more. Nowhere in the Epistles of Paul does he teach that the performance of a ritual demonstrates our devotion to God. It is quite emphatic in Paul's letters that what demonstrates one's devotion to God is a "new life in Christ." Furthermore, the whole conflict between Christ and the religious rulers was expressed in the realm of their devotion to rituals when in reality their hearts were far from God. Christ stated the principle when He said, "By their fruits you

shall know them" (Matt. 7:16). The proof that individuals were real Christians was demonstrated in their new lives of good works and their willingness to suffer for Christ.

I am quite sure that this idea of **ritual baptism** being a "demonstration of devotion" is based upon a faulty reading of the New Testament. Christ told the woman at the well (John 4:23), "The true worshipers shall worship the Father in Spirit and in truth..." Paul likewise said, "We worship God in the Spirit and have no confidence in the flesh" (Philip. 3:3). We shall demonstrate this error and prove the truth in the following pages.

"Crucial Exception"

Your paper further says, "as far as we know, every single convert in the New Testament was baptized...The thief on the cross, however, is a *crucial exception*." Of course you are thinking in terms of ritual baptism in water and we all know that the thief on the cross didn't get that after his conversion. However, a careful reading of the New Testament will demonstrate that Christ saved people all the time without any reference to a water baptism ritual. Note the following examples:

1.) Luke 7:48-50. The Harlot woman at a feast—"And He said unto her, thy sins are forgiven, ...thy faith hath saved thee; go in peace."

There was no water baptism or ceremonial ritual required. Her repentance was demonstrated by her tears. She left the room with joy in her heart.

2.) Mark 2:5. The man let down through the roof—"When Jesus saw their faith, He said to the sick of the palsy, Son, thy sins be forgiven thee..."

No rituals required—just like the thief on the cross.

3.) Luke 19:9,10. Zacchaeus the tax collector—"This day is salvation come to this house...for the Son of Man is come to seek and to save that which was lost."

Where is the water baptism ritual? Not there!

4.) John 8:11. The woman caught in the act of adultery—"And Jesus said unto her, 'Neither do I condemn thee: Go and sin no more.'"

No ritual baptism anywhere!

5.) Luke 18:13,14. The publican in the Temple—"And the publican standing afar off, would not so much as lift up so much as his eyes unto heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying, 'God be merciful to me a sinner.' I tell you, this man went down to his house justified..."

No ceremonial rituals!—no water baptism required!

6.) John 4:39-42. Many of the Samaritans—"Many of the Samaritans of that city believed on Him...and many more believed because of His own word; and said unto the woman, now we believe, not because of thy saying: for we have heard Him ourselves, and know that this is the Savior of the world."

Where are the rituals?? No water baptism there!!

7.) Now this can be repeated other times but these should suffice to show the trend. Interestingly enough, I cannot find anyone getting saved under Christ's ministry being told he needed water baptism. I don't doubt that may have happened. There were plenty of streams, ponds, springs and water baptisteries around. And they were practicing it. But strangely enough, Christ never mixed the *ritual* with the *reality* in talking about demonstrating salvation.

8.) So, in the four Gospels the thief on the cross was not an exception—he was a part of the rule. *Christ never mixed the ritual with the reality when He saved people!* Having proved that one can be saved without the ritual the author then puts forth verses that presumably teach the necessity of practicing a ritual baptism by members of the Church today.

“I Peter 3:21”

Your author presumes that Peter is talking about a ritual water baptism that Christians are to perform and then says—“Baptism separates the tire kickers from the car buyers.” However, just the opposite is true if Peter is talking about water baptism. According to the admission of the Pope himself, there are hundreds of millions of baptized “tire kickers” and a few, rare “car buyers,” *who must be distinguished some other way!* Yes, I Peter 3:21 is “a helpful verse to understand baptism.” That is, if you read it literally and do not translate it to fit some modern traditional idea about a ritual baptism in water.

The passage begins in verse 18, and to understand it we must begin there also.

“Because, indeed, Christ suffered once for sins-” It is highly important to remember that Christ called His suffering and death for sins a **“BAPTISM”** (see Luke 12:50; Mark 10:38 and Matthew 20:22). If one ignores this, the passage will be meaningless. In other words Christ was “baptized” for our sins. He was baptized by the wrath of a holy God in our place. As our substitute He bore the judgment of God against our sins. All who trust in Christ are thereby saved from the wrath of God by the baptism of Jesus Christ for our sins. Christ’s substitutionary baptism is credited to the believer. Peter explains this further by saying—

“The just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God;” And how exactly does Christ's suffering and death baptism “bring us to God”?? Peter explains that we are saved from God's wrath and brought to God by the resurrection of Christ from the dead—**“having been put to death in the flesh, but MADE ALIVE by the Spirit.”** By being united with Christ, not only in His death, but also in His resurrection (Rom. 6:4), we are thus brought to God.

Peter will now illustrate this salvation scenario by the inspired story of Noah and his family being saved through the baptism of God's holy wrath against the wicked world of his day—**“...while the ARK was being prepared, into which few, that is eight souls, were saved by (or through) water.”** Now this picture is very vivid and unmistakable in clarity. Noah and his family (and all the animals as well) were saved *physically* through this baptism of wrath by going *into the ARK*, and allowing the ARK to take the billows of water crashing against its sides. The water then lifted up the Ark. Noah and his family did not personally get a drop of water on them. Their substitute, the ARK, took it all. In addition, the Ark raised them up to a mountain top—or resurrection ground, if you please!

Peter indicates that this story as a picture is a beautiful type of how we are spiritually saved. He therefore says, **“which also, as an antitype** (Greek—*antitupos*, meaning *the reality*) **baptism** (Christ's baptism on the cross, verse 18, of course) **now saves us.”** In Noah's day the whole world was judged in a baptism of watery wrath because of its wickedness. This baptism is a type (*tupos*—Greek) of another time when God judges the whole world in wrath. Christ's death on the cross was the antitype baptism wherein all the sins of all the world were judged. Christ, Himself, in looking to the cross said, “Now is the judgment of this world” (John 12:31). Therefore, Christ's death baptism, which is the preface of this context, is the antitype baptism that saves us. This baptism is obviously the *real* thing!

To make sure that no one misunderstands what kind of "baptism" saves, Peter says that he is not talking about the Jewish water baptisms that merely cleanse the flesh—"**Not the putting away the filth of the flesh.**" This is exactly what water baptism does according to the Law of Moses—please read Hebrews 9:10 and 13. In the Bible the only thing water baptism could do was to "purify the flesh." And remember that Peter is writing to the same Hebrew believers that are addressed in the book of Hebrews—I Pet. 1:1 says, "To the sojourners of the dispersion (Greek—*Diaspora*—the same as James 1:1, "To the twelve tribes of the Diaspora.").

What Peter is telling the Jewish believers in his epistle is that the water baptisms of the Law are not what saves us, but rather that baptism of Christ's suffering and death saves us—through His glorious resurrection. This is the only baptism that can satisfy the demand for a *clean conscience* as is also stated in the book of Hebrews (9:14).

Therefore Peter continues—"**but** (the baptism that satisfies) **the demand of a good conscience toward God, by the resurrection of Jesus Christ.**" Just as Noah's ark lifted up the people to the top of the mountain for a new beginning, so it is that we are "raised up to walk in newness of life" in our antitypical Ark—Jesus Christ. This is an incredibly beautiful doctrine, but ritualistic Christendom, by the inspiration of the Devil, has tried to convert it into a cheap ritual performance. It is very interesting that this paper "Baptism: The Demonstration of Devotion" very pointedly answers the question of whether or not baptism in water saves on page 9. I would like to quote it—

"The answer to this is a resounding 'NO!' Scripture is abundantly clear that only Jesus saves. The work of salvation is a finished work by Christ on the cross. Baptism (meaning in water) has no redemptive powers of its own. There is nothing special about the water. Nothing holy about the river or pond or baptistry."

Now, if this is true (and it is) then the "baptism" of I Peter 3:21 could not possibly be water baptism, because the baptism in I Peter 3:21 "**SAVES**" exactly as stated! Since Peter is not talking about a ritual that *does not save*, but rather about the real baptism that *does save*, he could not possibly be talking about water baptism as a saving baptism.

“Matthew 28:19”

Whenever the word "baptism" is seen the natural man automatically thinks "splash!" Once again, this is farthest from the truth. One must always look at the context to determine what kind of baptism is in view. There are definite reasons why this passage is not talking about a ritual water baptism.

No. 1) No one in the history of the early Church, as recorded in the New Testament, was ever water baptized "in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit." Traditional Christendom has interpreted these words to mean a *formula to be pronounced* over the one being water baptized. But everyone also admits that there is no record of this ever being done in the New Testament (not in the four Gospels, nor the book of Acts, nor in any epistle). The Apostles, most certainly, never did it!

No. 2) This is clearly not a formula of words to be pronounced over one being baptized in water. Alford in his critical Greek New Testament and Exegetical Commentary says, "It is unfortunate that our English Bible does not, here, give us the force of (the Greek word) '*eis*.' It should have been (translated) '*into*' as in Galatians 3:27." The correct translation is—"baptizing

them *into* (Greek, *'eis'*) the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit."

Most all interpreters recognize that Matthew is writing his Gospel for the Hebrew people. In the Hebrew Scriptures when the "Name" of Jehovah went with Israel through the wilderness, it meant God's *presence* went with them—see Exo. 34:5,6. Where God placed His "Name" it meant God's *dwelling place*—see Deut. 12:5. Therefore, God's "Name" meant God's personal presence. This presence was visibly marked by the Shekinah Glory that appeared over the mercy seat and arose in the form of a cloud to cover the whole camp of the children of Israel. The same is true here in Matthew 28:19. "Into the name of..." literally means into the presence or Person of the Divine Godhead. For the believer today the presence of God is in the person of the Holy Spirit indwelling us.

In John 14, verses 15 through 26, it is plainly stated by Christ that when the promised Holy Spirit would come upon believers the three persons of the Godhead would reside in them— "...the Comforter (or) the Spirit...will abide with you, and I (Christ) will come to you...and My Father will love him, and We will come unto you..." Christ called this "the promise of My Father" (Luke 24:49; John 14:16 & 26).

In Acts 1:4 & 5, Christ reminds the Apostles of the "promise of the Father" and qualifies this by saying they, "*shall be baptized by the Holy Spirit.*" This makes it conclusive that the Divine Trinity will indwell the believer through *the baptism of the Holy Spirit.*

The baptism "into Christ" (Gal. 3:27, 28) and "into one body" (I Cor. 12:13) are simultaneous and identical in consequence. This is a spiritual baptism that specifically encapsulates the believer into Christ and into His church—i.e., the "baptism of the Holy Spirit."

"For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ.
There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all ONE in Christ Jesus...
For by one Spirit we were all baptized into ONE body—whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free—and have all been made to drink into one Spirit."

Thus we have solid confirmation that the baptism of Matthew 28:19 is a supernatural baptism that is vital and real and involves the promised baptism of the Holy Spirit.

No. 3) This passage could never be understood unless one observes the *perspective* from which Christ now speaks these commanding words. Please take note of the fact that Christ is no longer standing by the waters of Jordan, nor is He situated near the springs of Aenon, where He first authorized his disciples to practice water baptismal purification. That early "purification" announced His arrival to the nation of Israel and separated disciples to Himself in a ritual manner only—see John 1:31; 3:22-26 & 4:1-3. This baptism was Judaic and found its antecedents in the multiplicity of water purifications that had long been practiced under the Mosaic Law Covenant—see Hebrews 9:10, etc.

It is very significant that, in giving this command, Christ has traversed from the lowly plains of Jordan up to an appointed "mountain" in Galilee (Matthew 28:16,17). Unless we also traverse in our thinking up to that mountain top with Christ, we will never see the spiritual power and reality of this commission and baptism.

The word "therefore," in verse 19, points backward to the great "authority" (verse 18) which has now been given to Christ because of His glorious accomplishments. Christ has ascended from the lowest hell with the very "keys of death and hell" (Rev. 1:18). He is about to

ascend into heaven to be seated at the Father's right hand in great coronation. He has sealed with His own blood the accomplishments of His substitutionary death, burial and resurrection (Heb. 9:11-14). He defeated the Devil and now assumes dominion over all spiritual forces in heaven and on earth. The "authority" that Christ has received reflects the drastic change from His lowly humiliation as a "suffering Servant" on earth to His glorious exaltation as Lord of all and "Head over all things to the Church which is His body," (Eph. 1:21,22; Col. 2:10,15 & I Pet. 3:22.)

The majestic power and position of the risen Savior is now the basis upon which the disciples will be able to march into all the world, discipling people of every nation—baptizing them "into" the Triune Godhead.

To mentally assume that Christ is speaking in this commission of a carnal baptism in water all over again is to regress in the natural mind back into the baptism of Christ's humiliation. In some respects I hesitate to say what I am going to say next—for I know the temperament of most who will instantly shut their minds to any criticism of their watery idol. Nevertheless, I believe that like Palestine's winding Jordan river which eventually flows into the vast Dead Sea and is characteristically absent of life—so it is, Christendom has created, at the end of its watery ritual doctrine, a vast stagnant pond which is void of life and stinks of putrid self-righteousness.

All the water baptisms of the Jordan and its tributaries eventually lead to that lowest spot on the face of the earth—the Dead Sea. All man's efforts to save himself and parade his religion are but "dead works" (Heb. 9:14). Whereas, the baptism of the "Great Commission" stands only in contrast—for it was authorized from the "mountain top" in Galilee, and it plainly is based upon the spiritual authority, reality and victory of Christ's sin-conquering death and resurrection. For this present Age this baptism will be the spontaneous result of the preaching of the dynamite of God—the gospel of Christ.

No. 4) The commission tells the disciples to do **one** thing only—"preach the Gospel" or "making disciples." Christ did not say, "Make disciples **A-N-D** water baptize." "Baptizing them into..." is an adverbial clause. It modifies "make disciples." Christ did not tell them to do two things—just one—"make disciples." The baptism comes as the automatic result of their preaching the gospel. The Apostle Paul would say, "I have given birth to you through the gospel" (I Cor. 4:15). The Apostle Peter would preach to the first congregation of Gentiles (of another Nation). "While Peter yet spoke these words (the Gospel), the Holy Spirit fell on all them which heard the word" (Acts 10:44). In other words Peter and Paul preached the Gospel—"baptizing them into the Divine Godhead."

No. 5) The "Great Commission" must have a "Great Baptism." Most all denominations of Christendom have thoughtfully called this passage of Scripture "The Great Commission"—and rightfully so! Yet, the very same denominations totally overlook the obvious fact that all four Gospels and the book of Acts very plainly say emphatically that the one and only "greater baptism" to come was "**Holy Spirit Baptism.**" See Matt. 3:11; Mark 1:8; Luke 3:16; John 1:26-33; Acts 1:5 & Acts 11:16.

In all these passages two baptisms are contrasted. Holy Spirit baptism is plainly indicated as the greater, subsequent baptism to come. Neither John nor Christ ever prophesied that there would be a greater water baptism to come. If it is proper to call Matthew 28:19 "The Great Commission," then indeed, such a commission must have as its complement the "Greater Baptism"—otherwise, you have insurmountable incongruities.

No. 6) A most significant prerequisite for the execution of this commission is the fact that the Apostles were forbidden to carry it out until they had been "baptized by the Holy Spirit." I repeat, Christ instructed the Apostles to wait in Jerusalem until they had been baptized by the Holy Spirit before they could take one single step in embarking on their mission—Luke 24:47-49 and Acts 1:4-8.

This important prerequisite actually spells out very clearly what kind of baptism they are going to effect by their ministry. Nobody needs to be baptized by the Holy Spirit in order to water baptize a person. The fact is, the Apostles had long before been water baptizing people (see John 4:1,2). The only prerequisite for the Apostles water baptizing others was that they, themselves, had first submitted to John's water baptism. In fact that was where some of them first met Christ. It was a Law that ritually impure persons could never purify another (see Num. 19:17,18 as an example). Shortly after submitting to John's purification baptism, Christ instructed the Apostles to baptize others (John 3:22-26; 4:1,2).

In the case of the Great Commission, the qualification for them effecting the "baptism" is that, they, themselves, must first have received the "baptism of the Holy Spirit." Thus, that very baptism that prepares them for the commission is, in fact, the very baptism effected through their proclamation of the gospel. That means the baptism of the Holy Spirit, in the broadest sense, is the baptism of the commission. In the simplest terms, the Apostles could not do it ("baptizing") until they, themselves, had it ("Holy Spirit baptism").

The Apostles baptize indirectly through their preaching the gospel. This is the same way they can "remit sins" (John 20:21-23), give spiritual "birth" (I Cor. 4:15), "save" people (I Cor. 7:16; 9:22), and "convert" individuals (James 5:19,20). Obviously, we know that Jesus Christ directly does these things whereas, the Apostles do it indirectly through their ministry.

No. 7) If this commission is a water baptism that the preachers are to directly perform, then they are to directly baptize people "into" the Godhead. No human being could ever directly "baptize" another person "into" the Divine Godhead. All the passages that make salvation the effect of this baptism make it a baptism for salvation. Realizing the problem, many "Church of Christ" preachers will say, "we just baptize them into the water and God does the rest." Of course that is not what any of the various texts say. Either water baptism saves—or it is not the baptism in view in these passages.

No. 8) The Apostle to the Nations (Gentiles), Paul, was not sent to baptize in water—but to preach the gospel—I Corinthians 1:17. Again, many have tried to explain away the face value of Paul's very strong statement. You can rest assured that Paul was never too busy to obey any of Christ's commands to the Apostles. If the baptism of the commission was a water baptism, then Paul stands in direct opposition to it—even expresses a contempt for it, "I thank God I only (water) baptized a few of you!—for Christ sent me not to baptize (in water), but to preach the gospel."

Therefore, we conclude that the baptism of the commission is the greater spiritual baptism of salvation and of the Holy Spirit. It has nothing whatsoever to do with water. It is true that John's water baptism continued to be practiced, along with all the rest of the Mosaic Law system, right on through the book of Acts (Acts 18:25; 19:3; 21:20). However, the ritual system was not to be imposed on Gentile converts (Acts 15) and was finally terminated with the writing of the book of Hebrews to the Jewish believers.

Before I leave this passage may I quote from what is reputed to be the greatest work ever done on the singular subject of "baptism" in the English language? James W. Dale wrote 1800 pages, in 5 volumes, of Hebrew, Greek and Latin syntax. He was a contemporary of, and his works were endorsed by, Thayer (Thayer's Greek Lexicon), Strong (Strong's Exhaustive Concordance to the Bible and Dictionary of Hebrew and Greek Words), and Schaff (famed History of the Christian Church & Nicene Fathers). It is appropriate to quote from Dale at this time because some would think that our interpretation is novel and unscholarly. Dale makes a very strong statement of summery after his treatment of Matthew 28:19—

"The language of inspiration announces a real baptism as distinctly as can be done by the use of words; there is absolutely no evidence of a ritual baptism in connection with these words, either in this passage or elsewhere in the Scripture...

This wonderful baptism into the Trinity (depending upon the baptism into the incarnate, atoning, and mediating Son) has no direct or designed relation to a ritual baptism. It was, however, very soon after the time of the Apostles, connected with the administration of the Christian rite, and continued to be used in common with the formula into the name of the Lord Jesus (and later into the name of the Father, Son and Holy Ghost)...It is admitted, both by ancient and modern expositors, that the practice of the CHURCH is **not** the practice of the APOSTLES. The only question, therefore, on the merits of the case, is this: have the Apostles, or has the Church, since the third century, more correctly interpreted the Commission?...

Again, these words cannot be converted into a ritual formula, because thereby the transcendent truth which they teach is destroyed. A rite is but a shadow. This baptism as it stands in the Commission is a reality."
(Vol. 4, Christic Baptism, Pages 455, 458 & 461.)

What about Romans 6:1-6

I Corinthians 6:11

I Corinthians 12:13

Galatians 3:27

Colossians 2:11,12

Ephesians 4:1-5??????

I have personally challenged preachers for years to produce one drop of water in any of these important passages. Of course, no one has—it is not there. These passages are all talking about the real baptism of Christianity that is spiritual. Some of them very specifically say it is spiritual or "by the Holy Spirit" and yet Christendom will turn away from that truth to a ritual. One can analyze each one of these passages and note the absolute spirituality of each one in each step. Thereby we can conclude that the baptism in view is spiritual and not the ritual performance of the flesh in some kind of a water baptistry.

When Christ Baptizes He Never Makes A Mistake

When Jesus Christ does the baptizing through the Holy Spirit, He never makes a mistake, or does it the wrong way, or baptizes the wrong person. Therefore, we do not need to even be worried about all the complications, confusion and uncertainties that come with the water ritual doctrine and practice. The head of the Church is perfect every time!

The only water baptisms performed in the book of Acts are **specifically stated**. 1.) the Ethiopian Jew who had just come from worshipping in Jerusalem (Acts 8:36-38). 2.) The Roman Centurion and his household saved under Peter's ministry (Acts 10:44-48; see also Luke 3:12-14). These were merely the continuation of John's baptism. It was practiced until all the Jewish Law "baptisms" were "ready to vanish away," (Hebrews 8:13 & 9:10).

What about the "Water" in Ephesians 5:26??

"That He might sanctify and cleanse her with the washing of the water by the word."

"Eureka!" the ritualist shouts—"We have finely found 'water'!"

The literal translation of this beautiful passage is—"In order that He (Christ) might sanctify and cleanse her (the Church) by the laver (Greek, *loutron*, the laver-bath as was in the Temple) of the water in (Greek, *en*, meaning 'in') **the word** (the Word of God is a purifying agency)." Having gotten the proper literal translation let us get the proper interpretation—

1.) Unfortunately for the ritualist this is not the salvation of unsaved, unregenerate sinners. It actually has nothing whatsoever to do with obtaining salvation. Rather, it is the final purification of the Church itself. The Church is composed of people who are already saved, but need cleansing through the Word of God.

2.) This sanctification is accomplished by the metaphor of a bath in the laver (basin or font) of the water IN the Word of God. In other words, the cleansing water in the Word of God is the "cleansing" agent. "Loutron, used metaphorically of the *Word of God*, as the instrument of spiritual cleansing, Eph. 5:26" (W.E.Vine, Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words, Vol IV, page 200).

3.) The very same principle is stated in other passages—"Now you are clean through the Word which I have spoken unto you" (John 15:3). "Sanctify them through Thy truth: Thy Word is truth" (John 17:17).

What about Paul himself getting baptized??

If you remember the first chapter of the book of Acts you won't go wrong in interpreting Paul's baptism!

"For John truly baptized with water; but you shall be **baptized** with the Holy Spirit not many days hence." Acts 1:5

"And they were all **filled with the Holy Spirit**..." Acts 2:4.

Paul has the same

"...Brother Saul, the Lord, even Jesus, that appeared unto thee in the way as you came, has sent me, that you may receive your sight (Number 1), and be **filled with the Holy Spirit**." (Number 2)—

"And immediately there fell from his eyes as it had been scales: and he received sight (Number 1), and arose and was **baptized**." (Number 2)

See also—Acts 22:16, "And now why do you wait? Arise (Number 1), and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on the name of the Lord (Number 2)."

Since sins are not dirt on the body, but rather defilement of the soul—

The Baptism that washes away sins of necessity must be Spiritual!

So much for our journey so far. I am sure there are many more questions about baptism. Let us keep the lines of communication open. It is a very beautiful subject.

Just remember, there is only "ONE BAPTISM" for the Church today (Ephesians 4:1-5). Since we know that the Jewish water baptisms were terminated by the time the book of Hebrews was read, that only leaves ONE BAPTISM left—not two or more—and that ONE which is left is the real spiritual baptism of Biblical Christianity.

Love in Christ
Jack W. Langford