

Baptism "In The Name Of Jesus"

by Bill Crews

"The scriptural mode of baptism is immersion, and is only for those who have fully repented, having turned from their sins and a love of the world. It should be administered by a duly authorized minister of the Gospel, in obedience to the word of God, and in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, according to the Acts of the Apostles 2:38: 8: 16: 10:48: 19:5: thus obeying and fulfilling Matthew 28: 19." From the Manual of the United Pentecostal Church, "Articles of Faith," "Water Baptism," p. 18.

While I believe that something should have been said in the above quotation about having faith in Christ and confessing that faith, I will comment only upon the parts of the quotation which I have underlined. First, let me point out that the United Pentecostal denomination believes that the New Testament teaches that there is a **formula** of specific words which includes the word "Jesus," and that this formula must be uttered by the one doing the baptizing, and that without this "baptismal formula" being recited there can be no scriptural baptism. For this reason they are called "the Jesus only people." They also do not believe that there are three beings in the godhead, but rather that there is one God who is only one being and who manifested Himself as the Father, as the Son, and as the Holy Ghost (they do not like to say "Holy Spirit"). When the Word became flesh (Jn. 1:14), they think that the only divine being, God as the Father, took up residence in a fleshly body, which body was the Son. And the Holy Spirit? Not a divine being at all, but a divine force or influence or manifestation. "Person" to them can only mean a human being, so they laugh at the idea of "God in three persons" and maintain that the godhead was in the one person of Jesus Christ.

Now my comments on the underlined parts of the quotation: (1) The New Testament places no significance at all upon the identity of the one doing the baptizing. "A duly authorized minister of the Gospel," whatever that is, is not required. What is important is what the person baptized has been taught, what he believes, and what he is doing when he is baptized. When I asked a young United Pentecostal preacher for New Testament authority for his "License to Preach," which was framed and hanging on his wall, he replied, "The New Testament teaches that Paul was given a license to preach." When I asked, "Where?," he replied, "In Acts 21:40." According to the KJV (the only translation they will accept; not the 1611 edition, but one of the late 18th century revisions) the Roman chief captain, Claudius Lysias, gave Paul "licence" or "permission" to speak to the mob after Paul, having been taken prisoner, asked for it. No, this pagan soldier did not give Paul any "license to preach" (or ordination papers either) some twenty years after he had started preaching in the name of, or by the authority of, Jesus Christ back at Damascus (Acts 9:20-22).

And now for (2): What they are saying is that the passages in Acts all give a baptismal formula (the same baptismal formula) of words that were spoken at the time various ones were baptized, and that that formula always included the name "Jesus." They challenge: "Where in Acts did anyone utter the words of Matt. 28:19 as a baptismal formula?" The truth of the matter is that the New Testament nowhere gives a baptismal formula for one who baptizes to utter at the time he baptizes anyone. Every one of the passages, Matthew 28:19 included, deals with things that were to be taught and things that were to be done, but neither they nor any other New Testament passages tell us what words, if any, were spoken at the precise time that any person was being baptized. They were to be sure of what they had taught and been taught and of what they were doing.

These people ignore the various definitions that are given in New Testament Greek lexicons of the word "name" and of the phrase "in the name of," insist that "name" must always refer to a proper noun or a

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