

“IN THE NAME OF JESUS”

**Oneness Pentecostalism
&
Jesus Only Baptism**

**By
Larry DeBruyn**

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DEDICATION

This booklet is dedicated to all my Pentecostal brothers and sisters in the “most holy faith” (Jude 20), friends amongst whom I have ministered to and fellowshipped with in the United States, Australia and New Zealand. For the unfeigned kindnesses shown to me and my family, I am most thankful. You have taught me much about myself, the faith, and above all else, our Lord Jesus Christ whom together we serve in “in the Spirit” (Galatians 5:25) for the sake “the everlasting Gospel” (Revelation 14:6).

PREFACE

While teaching at Crossroads Bible College in Indianapolis, Indiana, during the 1990s, students presented me with a variety of biblical and theological questions. One of those questions concerned the subject of baptism in the name of Jesus only. The student related to me that in her reading of the New Testament, the issue was not clear and she desired to know what I thought about “Jesus Only” baptism. At that time, I confessed to her that I really did not know what to think about, or even how to respond to, the question. Then, another faculty member confirmed to me that the subject of Jesus only baptism was important in light of the sway that “Jesus Only” baptism held in the metropolitan area. In his view, the issue needed to be addressed for reason of the many Oneness Pentecostal congregations in Indianapolis.

Interestingly, my study indicated that after being birthed in the early part of the previous century in California, Oneness teaching found a home in this metropolitan area when a gifted and well known African-American pastor and gifted song writer named G.T. Haywood (1880-1931) embraced it. Upon becoming acquainted with the “new issue,” Elder Haywood received rebaptism in Jesus’ name, and his congregation readily followed his lead. Haywood, an influential leader within the Pentecostal Assemblies of the World (PAW), held to the Oneness teaching until the end of his life. The issue of Jesus Only baptism has influenced many pastors and churches in the metropolitan area where I still reside. This history, no doubt, provides some background for my former student’s question, and tardily, this booklet represents my response to the question she originally asked me.

Its contents are the result of many hours of study and refection upon the biblical texts in question. Believing in the authority of Scripture as I do, my method is to try to discern what the Bible says, specifically in the four Acts passages that variously portray baptism “in the name of Jesus Christ.” As

advocated by Oneness Pentecostals, do these passages contain the formula for “Jesus Only” baptism?

In its insistence upon baptism in Jesus’ name only, Oneness Pentecostalism has also brought challenges to the orthodox doctrine of the Trinity. This booklet will not deal with that departure from theological orthodoxy. Perhaps that will come later. Rather, the attempt has been to try to understand what the Scriptures say in the root texts concerning the subject and present those findings in this writing. Oneness teaching bases its belief in a non-Trinitarian baptismal formula upon four Acts verses where people were baptized in Jesus’ name “only”. This book will deal with these verses to discover whether or not they endorse such a non-Trinitarian baptismal formula.

Admittedly, the issue addressed involves some arguments and textual details that may not interest some readers. If that is the case with you dear reader, then may I suggest that you first give attention to Appendix I (pages 53-61) before engaging the rest of the study material presented in this booklet.

So if the question that a former student posed to me concerns you, then please read on.

Larry DeBruyn
August, 2012

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Subject	Page
DEDICATION	iii
PREFACE	v
INTRODUCTION	1
Jesus' Last Words	
Baptism: Waters that Divide	
Baptism: A Command	
The Great Commission	
"IN THE NAME OF JESUS"	7
A New Issue	
Replacement Baptism	
The Purpose of the Booklet	
The Four Texts	
Selective Literalism	
Jesus' Ultimate Authority	
His Authority Delegated	
The Apostles and the Name	
THE TEXTS OF ACTS EXAMINED.	19
Text # 1: Acts 2:38	19
Pentecost Comes to the Desperate	
<i>The Jews at Jerusalem</i>	
Text # 2: Acts 8:16	29
Pentecost Comes to the Despised	
<i>Half-breeds at Samaria</i>	
Text # 3: Acts 10:48	35
Pentecost Comes to the Discriminated	
<i>Gentiles at Caesarea</i>	
Text # 4: Acts 19:5	41
Pentecost Comes to the Deficient	
<i>Disciples at Ephesus</i>	

CONCLUSION	49
APPENDIX I	53
A Reader's Digest Version		
<i>A Concise Statement of the Argument</i>		
APPENDIX II	63
Dealing with Discrepancies		
<i>Attempt to Reconcile the Different Formulae</i>		

THE GREAT COMMISSION

Authority Delegated to the Disciples

“And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, *even* unto the end of the world. Amen.”

Matthew 28:18-20, KJV¹

Jesus' Last Words

More often than not, peoples' last words are their most important, and these words of Jesus Christ stand not only as some of His most significant, but also, especially as regards baptism, some of His most controversial. At face value, Jesus' command to His disciples was plainly stated—the disciples were to make disciples by going, baptizing and teaching (Matthew 28:18-20).

This booklet primarily concerns the baptizing aspect of the Lord's disciple making command and the departure of Oneness Pentecostalism from Jesus' order to baptize “in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost” to performing baptism in “the name of Jesus” only. Christians should not cavalierly dismiss the controversy over baptism as so much squabbling over an unessential of the Christian faith for two reasons.

First, Oneness adherents claim to find precedent for their baptismal formula in the Bible. If we take the Word of God seriously, as they do, then we will treat their claim seriously. *Second*, some Oneness advocates believe that if a person is not baptized in the name of “Jesus only,” they are not saved. In that baptism can be considered a “work,” a mechanism unto salvation, this

¹ Unless otherwise noted, Scripture quotations are taken from the King James Version of the Bible.

represents a serious departure from salvation *by grace alone through faith alone* (Ephesians 2:8-9; etc.). Adding baptism in the name of “Jesus only” to be a constituent requirement for salvation represents a “bewitching” of Christians unto a different Gospel (Galatians 1:6-9; 3:1-3).

Oneness Pentecostals claim they derive “Jesus only” baptism from the manner in which the rite was performed in the Acts of the Apostles. Thus this writing will investigate whether or not the narratives regarding baptism in Acts give reason to jettison Jesus’ command to baptize in the name of the Trinity.

But before doing so, the baptismal aspect of the Great Commission and some the controversy surrounding it—Oneness Pentecostals are not the only Protestants who divide over how Jesus’ command to baptize is to be applied—should be attended to so as to provide a backdrop against which the early church’s practice of it, as narrated in the Acts of the Apostles, can be understood.

Baptism: Waters that Divide

Regarding the baptizing aspect of the disciple making process, there exists no consensus between and among various denominations and associations of churches within Christendom—*whether* the application of baptism by immersion should be limited to believers (Baptist, Pentecostal, etc.); *whether* babies and infants should be baptized without their awareness (Reformed, Episcopal, Methodist, Lutheran, Roman Catholic, Eastern Orthodox, etc.); *whether* the recipient of baptism is “born again” (regenerated by the Holy Spirit) at the moment they undergo the baptismal rite (some Lutherans); *whether* baptism completes the justification of believers at the time of their immersion (Independent Christian Churches); *whether* the recipients of baptism should be immersed, poured upon, or sprinkled; *whether* a person ought to be immersed, or poured upon, three times—once in the name of the Father, again in the name of the Son, and again in the name of the Holy Spirit (Fellowship of Grace Brethren Churches); *whether* Christians should even be baptized at all (Quakers, Salvation Army, and the hyper-dispensational Grace Gospel Fellowship of Churches); or *whether*,

with the advent of Oneness Pentecostalism at the beginning of the previous century, baptism should be administered “in the name of Jesus only,” as opposed to the traditional Trinitarian formula, “in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit” (United Pentecostal Church International, United Apostolic Church, Pentecostal Assemblies of the World, etc.). Indeed, as viewed in the context of the differences and divisions between various associations and denominations of churches, the waters of baptism appear muddied at best, polluted at worst.

But before investigating the particular baptismal belief of Oneness Pentecostalism, it is appropriate to attend to some simple facts about Jesus’ straightforward command to make disciples of the nations by going to, then baptizing and teaching them.

Baptism: A Command

The fact that baptism is almost a universal practice amongst Christians can be accounted for reason that Jesus Christ ordered it. With a few exceptions previously noted, churches do not debate whether they should baptize, but rather differ over *the subjects* of it (Should the ordinance be restricted to adult believers, or should it be administered to unbelieving infants?), *the substance* of it (Does the ordinance in any way communicate salvation?), and *the sign* of it (Should the subjects be immersed in water, be sprinkled with water, or have water poured upon them?). Though they do it variously, churches administer the ordinance of baptism because the Lord commanded it.

The Commission

Upon surveying the various views of Christendom about baptism, it becomes amazing that in order to justify the subjects and meaning of baptism, Jesus Christ’s plain words have induced such complex, and in some instances convoluted, arguments about the rite. In this light, we should note some foundational issues regarding His commission.

Jesus Christ’s order consists of the imperative, “make disciples of all nations.” In Matthew’s record, His command is modified by three participles in the original Greek language—

going, baptizing, and teaching. The major versions (KJV, NASB, NIV, RSV, etc.) unanimously translate the first participle by an English imperative, “Go . . . !”² The second two participles can be taken as adverbial of means.³ The disciple-apostles were to go and make disciples via baptizing and teaching them. As in a relay race, the disciples were to pass the baton of faith to new disciples. Baptizing and teaching prescribe two coordinate means of the disciple making process. The command is as simple as one, two, three and four: Go, make disciples, baptize them, and teach them.

Again, the main order of the Lord to His disciples was to go and reproduce disciples amongst all nations. To be a disciple means to be a “learner” (from the Greek verb, μαθητεύω). In that the verb connotes a meaning comparable to the English word “math,” it indicates that coordinate with baptizing, the disciple making process includes thoughtful teaching and learning. And therein lays the problem from which practitioners of infant baptism (i.e., paedobaptists, from the Greek word *pais* meaning “infant”) must extricate themselves. How can it be fairly reasoned that at the time of their baptism, babies are receiving instruction to become “little learner-disciples”?

Psychologists have studied child development. Stages emerge during which children develop their cognitive ability. These are: the Sensormotor stage (Infant-Crawler) during which cognitive ability is absent; the Preoperational stage (Toddler-Kindergarten) during which thinking is largely intuitive and egocentric; and the Concrete Operational stage (Grade-school) when the child can think logically about concrete objects and situations. The point is that sometime around the ages of 5-7, a child develops the mental ability to process and acquire information foundational for

² Daniel B. Wallace classifies this participle to be attendant circumstance. As such, it takes on the mood of the imperative that follows, which is, “make disciples.” Wallace remarks that if the participle is taken to be adverbial (i.e., “going, make disciples,” Greek πορευθέντες) the Great Commission turns “into the Great Suggestion!” See *Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1996): 645.

³ Ibid.

becoming a disciple. Why then do paedobaptists baptize little ones before they possess the capacity to learn? Lest any think this to be a “psychologizing” of an important theological issue, note that God justified sparing Nineveh for reason that the city possessed a population of 120,000 infants “that cannot discern between their right hand and their left hand” (Jonah 4:11).

I remember all my grandparents but one. On my father’s side, I remember my grandmother Susie, though she died when I was about five years old. I remember my grandfather Orié, who died when I was twenty-six. On my mother’s side, I remember my grandmother Dena, who died when I was about thirteen years old. However, I do not remember my grandfather Nicolas Hertel who died when I was about one year old. My mother told me that as an infant, I saw him and he held me. But I do not remember him. Why do I not remember Him? It’s because I was at an underdeveloped and non-cognitive age where I could not yet tell my right hand from my left, something that given my mildly dyslexic condition, I still have trouble with!

How then, can any church justify the practice of paedobaptism in the light of the fact that Jesus’ command to make disciples includes coordinate aspects of both baptizing *and* teaching? Every doctrinal statement about baptism in the New Testament presupposes that it will be administered to those who, individually, were consciously taught about the Lord Jesus Christ and believed on Him. Charles Spurgeon once remarked that he considered “the ‘baptism’ of an unconscious infant to be as foolish as the ‘baptism’ of a ship or bell, for there is as much Scripture for the one as for the other.” As Geoffrey Bromiley noted, “The chief difficulty in relation to the New Testament is that it does not give us the plain and direct evidence for or against infant baptism which most people desire and which many think they find in it.”⁴

Due to Jesus’ linking of baptism to discipleship and learning in His Great Commission, the command to baptize is not insignificant. However, to baptize babies (those who can’t

⁴ Geoffrey W. Bromiley, *Children of Promise* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1979): 29.

distinguish their right from their left hands) is, from the perspective of the Great Commission, premature. Persons should possess cognitive ability to believe before they are baptized. As Bromiley summarized, “It needs a good deal of speculative inference then, and a certain blindness to the general trend of biblical teaching, to derive this extreme understanding from the scriptures.”⁵

In fairness to Oneness Pentecostals, the baptism they administer demands a certain consciousness on the part of the one being baptized—that baptism is being performed “in the name of Jesus Christ.”

⁵ Ibid.

IN THE NAME OF JESUS

The Rise of “Jesus Only” Baptism & Oneness Pentecostalism

The Trinitarian formula, “in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit,” is customarily repeated over Christian converts when they are baptized. This recital derives from the mandate given by Jesus Christ to make disciples of all nations (See Matthew 28:19). Against this formula, some Pentecostal associations of churches advocate baptism only in “the name of Jesus Christ” or “the Lord Jesus.” About this offshoot of Pentecostalism, Vinson Synan says, “According to oneness teaching, the only valid baptism is in ‘Jesus’ name’ and not ‘in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost.’”⁶ Oneness Pentecostalism advocates that “in the name of Jesus” be liturgically pronounced over each person who is baptized. Early Oneness Pentecostal G.T. Haywood (1880-1931) wrote:

The Blood and the Name of Jesus are inseparable. To be *saved* by water baptism, it must be administered in the name of Jesus. . . . The life of the Blood of Christ is connected with baptism when it is administered in His Name.⁷

In some instances, those within the movement even teach that, if they were not baptized according to this exact formula, Christians are not really saved.⁸ Therefore, Oneness Pentecostalism insists

⁶ Vinson Synan, “The ‘Finished Work’ Pentecostal Churches,” *The Century of the Holy Spirit: 100 Years of Pentecostal and Charismatic Renewal*, Vinson Synan, Editor (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 2001): 141.

⁷ Elder G.T. Haywood, *The Birth of the Spirit in the Days of the Apostles* (Indianapolis, IN: Christ Temple Bookstore, n. d.): 24.

⁸ But as Reed points out, not all Oneness Pentecostals share this view of salvation. See D.A. Reed, “Oneness Pentecostalism,” *The New*

that professing Christians who have been previously baptized according to the Trinitarian formula be re-baptized in the name of “Jesus only”.

The New Issue

Oneness Pentecostalism arose out of the Assemblies of God denomination in the early 1900s. In seeking revival, David Reed observed that early Pentecostals “expended their energies in an intensive study of one book in the New Testament above all others, the Acts of the Apostles.”⁹ In pursuit of a more dynamic spirituality, Pentecostals held camp meetings where pastors first sought revival for themselves, and then upon finding it, purposed to bring that revival back to their local churches. In many instances, what they brought back to their local congregations served to fertilize a spirituality that had already been planted and was growing.

At one such camp meeting in Los Angeles, in April of 1913, a Canadian evangelist by the name of R. E. McAlister preached that the Apostles did not employ the triune formula in water baptism. Rather, he claimed that the Apostles administered baptism “only” in the name of Jesus (Acts 2:38; 8:16; 10:48; 19:5). Of that sermon, Frank J. Ewart, an early Oneness adherent, reportedly remarked, “The gun was fired from that platform which was destined to resound throughout all Christendom.”¹⁰ McAlister’s sermon provoked many to seek God’s will about what formula should be repeated in administering the rite of Christian baptism.

International Dictionary of Pentecostal Charismatic Movements, Stanley M. Burgess, Editor (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2002): 943-944.

⁹ David Reed, “Aspects of the Origins of Oneness Pentecostalism,” *Aspects of Pentecostal-Charismatic Origins*, Vinson Synan, Editor (Plainfield, NJ: Logos International, 1975): 158.

¹⁰ Quoted by Kenneth Gill, “Dividing Over Oneness,” *Christian History Magazine: The Rise of Pentecostalism*, Issue 58, 1998 (<http://www.christianhistorymagazine.org/index.php/past-pages/58oneness/>).

After devoting himself to Bible study and prayer into the night, one attendee, a German pastor by the name of John G. Scheppe, reportedly saw the light. In the wee hours of the morning he “ran through the camp, shouting that the Lord had shown him the truth on baptism in the name of Jesus Christ.”¹¹ Reed concludes of the incident, “Many listened, and not long hence, many believed.”¹²

Replacement Baptism

The “New Issue,” as it was called, spread like a wildfire in the Assemblies of God in the early 1900s. Significant numbers of pastors became convinced that baptism needed to be administered “in the name of Jesus Christ,” thereby invalidating the Trinitarian formula historically believed by and practiced within the Assemblies of God. Pastors enthusiastically submitted to rebaptism in Jesus’ name, and took the issue back to their local churches where they also re-baptized members of their congregations according to the same formula. To the present day, replacement baptism continues as a major issue for Oneness Pentecostals.

But rebaptism according to the “new formula” also spawned contingent and serious theological issues regarding God’s person and nature. Representative of the movement, a pastor-theologian writes, “Baptism ‘in the name’ of the Lord Jesus Christ endures as the premiere issue for Oneness Pentecostalism—a corollary doctrine with the Oneness of God.”¹³ To Oneness Pentecostals, the one name employed in baptism provides a theological insight into God’s ontological being. According to David Reed, the discovery of Jesus only baptism, “sowed the seeds of a radical Christocentric alternative that reasoned that, if there is only one name (Jesus) to be used in baptism, that name must be given by God in biblical revelation, and it must reflect the radical

¹¹ Ibid. 145-146.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Talmage L. French, *Our God Is One* (Indianapolis, IN: Voice & Vision Publications, 1999): 209.

unity of God's being."¹⁴ Such inference from the baptismal formula has caused Oneness Pentecostals to deny the Trinity and believe in a Unitarian-type of God.¹⁵ This view of God believes the Father became fully incarnate in Jesus, the logical consequence being that when Jesus died, the Father died.

Noted American televangelist T.D. Jakes, born and raised in Oneness Pentecostalism, now reportedly, in the interest of developing Christian unity, seeks to affirm both Oneness modalism *and* traditional Trinitarianism. Recently, the pastor of the Potter's House in Dallas, Texas, met with noted pastors James MacDonald of Harvest Bible Chapel of Rolling Meadows, Illinois, and Mark Driscoll of Mars Hill Church in Seattle, Washington, to discuss Jake's Oneness teachings, and to develop an understanding of and rapprochement between Jakes and other contemporary evangelicals. Of that conversation, and of Jakes' Oneness convictions, an observer made this assessment:

T.D. Jakes wants to have both Trinitarians and Oneness Pentecostals, who are Unitarian Modalists, classified as brothers in Christ at the same time. But you cannot affirm both are in the realm of truth without removing the Trinity as a fundamental basis of the Christian faith. You cannot have both beliefs at the same time: either God is both three and one (as Trinitarians believe and Unitarians deny) or God is only one (as Unitarians like Oneness Pentecostals believe and Trinitarians deny). There is no bridging

¹⁴ Reed, "Oneness Pentecostalism," *New International Dictionary*, 937.

¹⁵ The heresy is called modalism. "Modalism denies the distinction of persons within the Godhead, claiming that Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are just ways in which [the one] God expresses Himself." See R. C. Sproul, *Essential Truths of the Christian Faith* (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, Inc., 1992): 35.

this divide without losing the Trinity itself, for He is the God we worship.¹⁶

All of which is to say, the issues raised and ideas embraced by Unitarian Pentecostalism have not retreated. They are alive and permeate Christianity around the world, especially in many developing third world countries where Oneness Pentecostalism is on the rise.

The Purpose of the Booklet

Historically then, Oneness Pentecostalism premises itself upon Acts narratives which presumably authorize performing the baptismal rite in the name of Jesus only, thus omitting the names of the Father and the Holy Spirit. Do these Acts passages mandate using a formula different from the one Jesus ordered in the Great Commission? (Matthew 28:19). If that is the case, should Christians, who were originally baptized “in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit,” be re-baptized using Jesus’ name only? One Pentecostal theologian states that, “there is no simple solution to the problem.”¹⁷ It will therefore be the purpose of this booklet to look into the scriptural basis upon which Oneness Pentecostals base their case for baptizing in Jesus’ name only, and the attendant question of whether the traditional Trinitarian formula of baptism ought therefore to be abandoned.

The Four Texts

Early in the previous century, some Pentecostals observed verses in the book of Acts which, at face value, they thought taught the administration of baptism accompanied by the recitative formula, “in the name of Jesus.”

¹⁶ Michael Foust, “T.D. Jakes Embraces Doctrine of the Trinity, Moves Away from ‘Oneness’ View,” *Christianity Today Blog*, January 27, 2012 . (http://blog.christianitytoday.com/ctliveblog/archives/2012/01/td_jakes_embrac.html).

¹⁷ J. Rodman Williams, *Renewal Theology*, Volume II (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1996): 286.

To determine whether the New Testament warrants deviation from the Trinitarian tradition, these texts should be observed, verses which, at first glance, seemingly support the Oneness contention of baptizing in Jesus' name.¹⁸ Specifically, these passages mention baptism "in the name of Jesus Christ" (Acts 2:38); "in the name of the Lord Jesus" (Acts 8:16; 19:5); or "in the name of the Lord" (Acts 10:48). In the King James Version of the Bible, these verses read as follows:

1. "in the name of Jesus Christ" (Acts 2:38).
2. "in the name of the Lord Jesus" (Acts 8:16).
3. "in the name of the Lord" (Acts 10:48).
4. "in the name of the Lord Jesus" (Acts 19:5).

Upon investigating the context of these verses and the Greek grammar and syntax they contain, it becomes evident that the language of Acts does not provide a basis to overturn the Trinitarian baptismal recitation Jesus commanded (Matthew 28:18-20). The exegetical details of the Acts passages do not support the view that "in the name of Jesus Christ" was repeated over each person being baptized in the early church. In fact, as will be shown, the Acts verses communicate *no baptismal formula*.

The premise upon which Oneness Pentecostalism originally based its case is wrong (i.e., that the Apostles invariably baptized "in the name of Jesus Christ"). And if that premise is wrong, then so are Oneness Pentecostalism's unbiblical and unorthodox inferences regarding the nature of God and the way of salvation. The problem with Oneness Pentecostalism is systemic, the "weed" of it being rooted in Acts passages employed as pretexts to teach baptism in Jesus' name only. To kill the weed, one must kill the root. This exegetical booklet will attempt to deal with the root of Oneness Pentecostalism; that root being the assumption that the Acts narrative provides both examples of and

¹⁸ Talmage French, a contemporary Oneness Pentecostal, also cites the Acts passages upon which the baptismal formula is to be based: Acts 2:38; 8:16; 10:48; and 19:5. See French, *God Is One*, 238.

precedent for Christian churches to baptize in Jesus' name only. So to kill the root, the exegetical details in the Acts narrative need to be attended to and understood, and this what this booklet will strive to do.

Selective Literalism

Attention will be focus upon the four texts in Acts where variations of the phrase “in the name of Jesus” are associated with baptism. Attention will be given to exegetical details of each passage. Oneness Pentecostal Talmage French dismisses such attention as unimportant. He writes: “The use of varying prepositions (ἐν, εἰς, ἐπι), and the lack of precise wording accompanying the name of ‘Jesus,’ can hardly be said to mitigate against the formula which the text appears to be intentionally establishing.”¹⁹

His remark stimulates questions. Do the Acts passages *intentionally* establish a precise formula for baptism, or do they only *appear* to do so? Church practices should not be premised upon appearances. Ecclesiastical practices ought to find their basis in and their authority from what Holy Scripture clearly states.

Then again, who says precise wording is unimportant? Oneness Pentecostals challenge the precise wording of Matthew’s “Trinity formula” based upon what they view to be a precise wording of the “Jesus-only formula” in Acts. Is it not therefore, arbitrary on the part of Oneness Pentecostals to reject the literalness of Matthew’s record on the one hand, but accept the literalness of the Acts narratives on the other? For both the interpretation and the debate over the texts, such a mindset appears inconsistent at best and self-serving at worst.²⁰ One cannot affirm

¹⁹ Ibid. 216-217.

²⁰ Even those not reading Greek can observe differences in Luke’s four accounts. They read: Acts 2:38, “ἐπὶ τῷ ὀνόματι Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ” (trans. “upon the name of Jesus Christ”); Acts 8:16, “εἰς τὸ ὄνομα τοῦ κυρίου Ἰησοῦ” (trans. “into the name of the Lord Jesus”); Acts 10:48, “ἐν τῷ ὀνόματι Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ” (trans. “in the name of Jesus Christ,” NASB), “ἐν τῷ ὀνόματι τοῦ Κυρίου” (trans. “in the name of the Lord,” KJV Textus Receptus; and Acts 19:5, “εἰς τὸ ὄνομα

the importance of literalism in what is denied (i.e., the Matthew formula), and then turnabout and dismiss the importance of any literalism in what is affirmed (i.e., the actual differences in the Acts passages). Logically, one cannot have it both ways. Had Luke intended to narrate a literal baptismal formula used by the Apostles, one could assume there would have been uniformity in each of his accounts. Yet as we will see, uniformity in the Acts texts is absent.²¹ Matthew recorded Jesus' command to have been precise (See Matthew 28:19.). Why then did the Spirit not lead Luke to be precise? We might suggest that it was because Luke's purpose

τοῦ κυρίου Ἰησοῦ” (trans. “into the name of the Lord Jesus.” One can note that Luke employed three different prepositions (ἐπὶ and εἰς and εἰν), and that twice Jesus is called “Jesus Christ,” twice “the Lord Jesus” in the NASB translation, or simply “Lord” in the KJV reading of Acts 10:48.

A Pentecostal theologian states: “The English preposition ‘in’ is used . . . to translate *epi* (2:38), *Eis* (8:16 and 19:5), and *en* (10:48). *Epi* often means ‘upon’; *eis*, ‘into’; *en*, ‘in.’ However, since there is little likelihood of a difference in meaning in the baptismal passages, ‘in’ seems quite adequate. Moreover there is clearly no difference between ‘the name of Jesus Christ’ and ‘the name of the Lord Jesus.’” See Williams, *Renewal Theology*, Volume III, 222. Williams also states that translating the three different prepositions by “‘in the name’ is the usual English translation.” Then he adds: “This seems proper, since the Greek words do not, I believe, connote a difference.” *Renewal Theology*, Volume II, 279, Footnote 25.

This writer contends that while “in” may be an adequate English translation for three different Greek prepositions, “in” does not communicate the precise nuance of the different prepositions in the instances where Luke employed them to describe baptism.

²¹ Gregory A. Boyd notes that numbers “of Oneness groups . . . have split over, and continue to debate, what is the one true proper baptismal formula.” See *Oneness Pentecostals and the Trinity* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1992): 231.

Thus, we might ask, is the formula “upon,” “in,” or “into” the name of “Jesus Christ,” or “upon,” “in,” or “into” the name of the “Lord Jesus Christ,” or “in the name of the Lord”? To play it safe, assuming that salvation depends upon repeating the exact formula, perhaps every believer ought to be baptized three separate times to accord with the differing formulae recorded in the KJV. But Paul stated that there is but “one baptism”! (See Ephesians 4:5.)

was descriptive, and not prescriptive, was historical, and not doctrinal.

Before matters of grammar and syntax are reviewed, a determinative issue must be addressed regarding this matter; and that is, the concern about the authority of Jesus Christ, and by his extension of it to them, the authority of the Apostles in the church (Ephesians 2:20).

Jesus' Ultimate Authority

Jesus prefaced his order for Trinitarian baptism with the claim, "All power [i.e., authority, NASB] is given unto me in heaven and in earth" (Matthew 28:18). Jesus' commission to make disciples by going, teaching, and baptizing resides in the two verses immediately after Jesus' assertion that he possessed all power-authority (Matthew 28:19-20).

His Authority Delegated

Previous to his claim to possess "all authority," Jesus invested authority in Peter (See Matthew 16:19. Compare 28:16.). Peter was therefore sensitive to conduct his ministry under the authority of Jesus (i.e., in the name of Jesus). This is born out by Peter's address before a Jewish court annoyed that the apostle had dared to heal a lame man "in the name of Jesus Christ" (Acts 4:10). In defense of that healing, Peter declared to the court, "Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is *none other name* under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved" (Emphasis Added, Acts 4:12). During his ministry Peter gave orders "in the name of Jesus Christ," indicating his recognition that his authority was derived from Jesus Christ's. By calling out the Lord's name, Peter testified to the all-encompassing authority of the Lord Jesus in his ministry and his submission to it. Peter's authority and power was derived from, and was exercised in continuity with, the authority and power of Jesus.

The Apostles and the Name

By invoking "the name of Jesus Christ," the Apostles served public notice of the Lord's authority over their ministry.

Therefore, “in the name of Jesus Christ” should be understood as a referent to the ultimate authority to which the Apostles claimed their authority was linked, namely, that of Jesus Himself. It was Jesus who delegated that authority, first to Peter in particular, and then to the other Apostles (Matthew 16:17-19; Luke 9:1; John 20:21-23).²² By invoking Jesus’ name, and in contrast to the pseudo-apostles (2 Corinthians 11:12-13), the Lord’s true Apostles were confessing that their ministry was neither self-authorized nor self-originated, but resided in continuity with the Lord’s. As Jesus told His inner circle of disciple-apostles, “Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that receiveth whomsoever I send receiveth me; and he that receiveth me receiveth him that sent me” (John 13:20; Compare 1 John 4:6; 1 Corinthians 14:37-38.). Based upon Jesus’ authorization of the Apostles, Paul told the Corinthians, “And God hath set some in the church, *first* apostles . . .” (Emphasis Added, 1 Corinthians 12:28). So the Apostles preached, healed, cast out demons and baptized “in the name of Jesus Christ.” Jesus originally called and authorized the disciple-apostles to continue His ministry under His authority after His ascension (Luke 6:13; Ephesians 4:10-11).

On this point, Johnson notes that, “in the name of Jesus’ recurs throughout Acts as the power and authorization for apostolic activity (3:6, 16; 4:10, 12, 17-18, 30; 5:28, 40-41; 8:12; 9:16, 21, 27, 28; 15:26; 16:18; 19:13, 17; 21:13; 22:16; 26:9).”²³ A traditional Pentecostal scholar views that ‘in the name’ communicates “on his [Jesus Christ’s] authority and in light of all that God reveals through his Son.”²⁴ Robert Saucy adds that, “The

²² One can note the resistance of Oneness Pentecostalism to Jesus’ authority. Jesus ordered baptism “in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit” (Matthew 28:20). Then they proceed to deny the authority of His instruction by baptizing in Jesus’ name only.

²³ Luke Timothy Johnson, *The Acts of the Apostles* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1992): 57.

²⁴ French L. Arrington, *The Acts of the Apostles* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1988): 32. Arrington is a traditional Pentecostal.

book of Acts finds the apostles fulfilling their commission as they minister with the authority of Christ.”²⁵ He goes on to state,

The authority of the apostles, however, rested solely on their commission from Christ. When asked, ‘By what power, or in what name, have you done this?’ their answer was clear—‘by the name of Jesus Christ the Nazarene’ (Acts 4:7, 10). Their works were always performed in the name of Jesus (e.g. Acts 3:6).²⁶

Having addressed the relationship of the apostolic invocation of Jesus’ name—that it relates to Jesus’ claim to possess all authority—we can now address matters relevant to the four passages in Acts where, in relation to baptism, something like the phrase “in the name of Jesus” appears. In order to understand baptism “in the name of the Jesus Christ,” lexical, grammatical, syntactical, contextual and theological matters need to be investigated and addressed. Oneness Pentecostalism claims that four Acts verses support a dogma of “Jesus only” baptism. As a detailed study of these texts will show, they do not. We turn to examine these texts.

²⁵ Robert L. Saucy, “Authority in the Church,” *Wahvoord: A Tribute*, Donald K. Campbell, Editor (Chicago, IL: Moody Press, 1982): 221.

²⁶ *Ibid.*

THE TEXTS OF ACTS EXAMINED

PENTECOST EXTENDED TO THE DESPERATE

The Repentant Souls at Jerusalem

Text 1: “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.”

Emphasis added, Acts 2:38

In fulfillment of the promises of both John the Baptist (Matthew 3:11; Mark 1:8; Luke 3:16), and the Lord Jesus (Acts 1:5; Compare John 7:37-39.), the events of Pentecost announced that the Age of the Spirit had commenced. As Luke described it,

And suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting. And there appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance. (Acts 2:2-4)

The speaking in unlearned foreign languages by the twelve Apostles and/or hundred and twenty disciples served notice to the crowd at Jerusalem that God had begun a new work. The gospel is for all people, Gentiles as well as Jews, and is to be preached in the whole world (Acts 1:8).

The seeming pandemonium of Pentecost amazed and perplexed many who observed the phenomena that took place that day. Therefore, they asked, “What meaneth this?” (Acts 2:12). Other onlookers, drawing their own conclusion, mockingly asserted, “These men are full of new wine” (Acts 2:13).

In response to the last accusation, the Apostle Peter preached a sermon that rehearsed the phenomena of Pentecost

against the backdrop of the Spirit's ministry predicted by the Old Testament prophets (Ezekiel 36:26-27; Joel 2:28), John the Baptist (Matthew 3:11; Mark 1:8) and Jesus (John 7:37-39; Acts 1:5, 8). The events of Pentecost lay in continuum with the Holy Spirit's ministry through Jesus' life in His birth, miracles, crucifixion, resurrection and ascension (Matthew 1:20; 3:16-17; 12:28; Romans 1:4; 1 Timothy 3:16). After referring to the Scriptures which stated that Jesus was God's promised Messiah to the nation, Peter announced,

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. (Acts 2:32-33)

The Apostle concluded his speaking to the crowd, "Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ" (Acts 2:36). When the crowd heard Peter's explanation, "they were pricked in their heart, and said unto Peter and to the rest of the apostles, Men *and* brethren, what shall we do?" (Acts 2:37) In ordering the convicted crowd to first "repent" and then to be individually "baptized," Peter did so "in the name of Jesus Christ" (Acts 2:38).

Oneness Pentecostalism asserts that this verse, Acts 2:38, mandates that "in the name of Jesus Christ" be ritually repeated over each person baptized. But a close study of the text indicates that there's no compelling reason for doing so.

The Syntax of the Text

The prepositional phrase "in the name of Jesus Christ" (Greek, ἐπὶ τῷ ὀνόματι Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ) functions adverbially. A grammatical issue to be resolved is whether the adverbial phrase qualifies the general command to "repent," or the more individual command to "be baptized," or both. In that a conjunction (Greek, καὶ) joins both verbs ("Repent, *and* . . . be baptized"), the phrase

“in the name of Jesus Christ” may best be understood to modify both “repent” and “be baptized.” In other words, Peter commanded *the crowd to repent* and *individuals to be baptized* upon (Greek, ἐπί) the name of Jesus Christ.²⁷ Associating the modifying phrase “in the name of Jesus” with baptism only, as Oneness Pentecostalism does, is too restrictive. Upon the authority of Jesus Christ (upon His name), Peter commanded collective repentance and individual baptism. The phrase “in [or upon] the name of Jesus” does not singularly refer a baptismal liturgy to be repeated over each individual baptized, but rather to refers to the One before whom the crowd was to repent *and* be baptized. And as regards repentance that is heartfelt, no repeated liturgical words can express it! (See Luke 18:13.)

Luke records that in His post-resurrection appearance, Jesus told the disciples, “that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem” (Luke 24:47). In light of this preaching template the Lord established—“that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name”—the phrase “in the name of Jesus” cannot refer to baptism alone, but must include repentance, which incidentally, as it precedes baptism, gives legitimacy to the rite’s application. In continuum with Jesus’ mandate in Luke 24:27, Acts 2 verse 38 indicates how the mandate to preach *repentance and remission of sins* first took place in Jerusalem.

The Preposition “Epi”

The preposition “in” (Greek, ἐπί) means *on* or *upon*, and when used in combination with the dative case, means *on the basis of* the name of Jesus Christ.²⁸ A standard Greek dictionary lists a wide

²⁷ This verse contains two commands. The first command is plural, “Repent” (Greek, μετανοήσατε). The second is individual, “and each of you be baptized” (Greek, βαπτισθήτω).

²⁸ The basic use of the preposition ἐπί with the dative case should be taken to mean, “Cause: *on the basis of*.” See Wallace, *Greek Grammar Beyond*, 376.

With this meaning Mounce concurs that when followed by a noun in the dative case, ἐπί means “on the basis of, at.” See William D.

range of meanings for this preposition when followed by a noun in the dative case.²⁹ The most frequent meaning of ἐπί when followed by that case is figurative, the sense being, “upon which . . . an action . . . is to be taken.”³⁰ The preposition serves notice that Peter’s call was for the crowd to repent, and then, for those individuals who had genuinely repented before Christ, to publicly testify to it by submitting to being baptized “upon” His name. Neither the preposition nor context indicate that the phrase “in the name of Jesus Christ” was meant to modify the verb baptize only. Because it also modifies the command to repent, “in [upon] the name of Jesus Christ” is not a baptismal formula.

The Meaning of “The Name”

Of the association of “name” with baptism, a dictionary notes that the “imagery here is complex. It includes, besides

Mounce, *Basics of Biblical Greek* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1993): 416.

H. Bietenhard agrees that in, “In Acts 2:38 the ἐπί with dative may denote the basis . . .” *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, Abridged in One Volume by Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1985): 699.

²⁹ In fairness to Oneness Pentecostal scholarship, I must note that of the use of ἐπί in Acts 2:38, a standard Greek dictionary does say that the preposition *can mean*, “‘in connection with, or by the use of, i.e. naming, or calling out, or calling upon the name.’” See Walter Bauer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, Second Edition, Translated and Augmented by F. Wilbur Gingrich and Frederick W. Danker (Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press, 1979): 288, II. 3. But I would also note that the dictionary calls this sense “probable.” Therefore, Jesus Only baptism rests on a probable, but not certain meaning of *upon the name*.

But then there is the question of how “naming, or calling out, or calling upon the name” should be understood. Did Luke intend to communicate that such naming was a baptismal liturgy? Or should “in the name of Jesus Christ” simply be understood as a summary statement for the believer’s cry of repentance and faith? After all, the Pentecost audience had hitherto been unrepentant, a fact that Peter noted in his sermon (See Acts 2:23).

³⁰ See Bauer, *Greek-English Lexicon*, 287, II. 1. b. γ. This sense agrees with that which Wallace notes. See previous footnote.

authority, the ideas of a new identity, of a dependent relationship and of another's name as a protective covering."³¹ Note that the primary nuance for "name" is authority. The "name" of Jesus refers to the truth about the complete person and work of the Messiah, something complimented by the meaning of the preposition (i.e., "upon").

Occurring in the genitive case, Jesus Christ stands as appositional or explanatory to "the name." In other words, Peter commanded the Pentecost converts to be baptized upon 'the name' *who is* Jesus Christ.³² Luke specified the name upon which the crowd was to repent, and then to be individually baptized. As Rackham observed, "The baptism itself was no longer simply a sign of repentance: it was now a public confession of faith in the name of Jesus Christ, i.e. that Jesus is the Christ of God."³³

An incident that provides commentary on the meaning of the phrase "in the name of Jesus Christ" can be found in the fourth chapter of Acts. With the growing popularity of the "Jesus faith," the governing Jewish religious body, the Sanhedrin, forbade the Apostles Peter and John, "to speak or teach at all in the name of Jesus" (Greek, ἐπὶ τῷ ὀνόματι τοῦ Ἰησοῦ, Acts 4:18). Obviously "in the name of Jesus" referred to more than a liturgical utterance of His name by the Apostles. Rather it connoted the whole of their preaching and teaching ministry about and under the authority of Jesus Christ.

Marshall concludes "in the name of Jesus Christ" to be "a phrase which may represent a commercial usage, 'to the account of Jesus', or a Jewish idiom, 'with reference to Jesus'."³⁴ In view of

³¹ Emphasis added. "Name," *Dictionary of Biblical Imagery*, Leland Ryken, James C. Wilhoit, and Tremper Longman III, General Editors, (Downers Grove, IL: Inter Varsity Press, 1998): 585.

³² Of its common use, Wallace notes that this type of genitive usually follows an indefinite noun. See Wallace, *Greek Grammar Beyond*, 95. By itself, "the name" is indefinite. Luke's addition of Jesus Christ therefore, explicates "the name."

³³ Richard Belward Rackham, *The Acts of the Apostles* (London, England: Methuen & Co Ltd, 1951): 30.

³⁴ I. Howard Marshall, *The Acts of the Apostles* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1980): 81.

Peter's audience, the latter understanding, "with reference to Jesus," may be best, though Marshall's first meaning is not out of the question.

To a predominantly Jewish crowd, "in the name of Jesus" explained the basis upon which they were to collectively repent, and then be individually baptized. Oneness Pentecostals understand this verse to provide a baptismal formula when in fact no formula is explicated. Years ago, Joseph Alexander wisely commented that *in the name of Jesus Christ*, "is not a formula by which they were to be baptized, and therefore different from the one prescribed by Christ (Matt. 28, 19), but a description of the rite as Christian, and not merely Jewish, much less heathen, baptism, or an unmeaning form, connected with no religious creed whatever."³⁵ By explicating the name of Jesus, Peter differentiated Christian baptism from Jewish and other baptismal rites extant in the ancient religious world.³⁶

³⁵ Joseph Addison Alexander, *Commentary on the Acts of the Apostles*, Volume I (Minneapolis, MN: Klock & Klock Christian Publishers, 1875, Reprinted 1980): 85. As noted by others, "Luke does not give the form of words used in baptism by the Apostles, but merely states the fact that they baptized those who acknowledged Jesus as Messiah or as Lord." See A. T. Robertson quoting Page in *Word Pictures in the New Testament*, Volume III (Nashville, TN: Broadman Press, 1930): 35. Again, "It is clear . . . that no formula of baptism is suggested." See F. J. Foakes-Jackson, *The Acts of the Apostles* (New York, NY: Harper and Brothers Publishers, n.d.): 20.

³⁶ Martin remarked that, "The use of water in religious purifications and cleansings is an age-old custom." Ralph P. Martin, "Baptism," *The Dictionary of Bible and Religion*, William H. Gentz, General Editor (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1986): 101.

As is evident from the archaeological excavation of baptismal pools at Qumran, the Essenes observed ritual baptism. As indicated by the baptismal pools excavated to the south of Jerusalem's Old City, mainstream religious Jews also practiced baptism (See Hebrews 6:2, "instructions about washings"—Greek, βαπτισμῶν διδαχῆς.). Obviously, John the Baptist employed the rite (Matthew 3:1-17), though doing so outside mainstream Judaism, as did Jesus' disciples (John 4:1-2). Therefore, baptism "in the name of Jesus Christ" distinguishes Christian baptism from that practiced by establishment Jews and the sectarian Essenes.

In summary, it is clear that Acts 2 verse 38 provides no clear indication that “in the name of Jesus Christ” was a baptismal liturgy to be recited, for the phrase modifies both imperatives to “repent and be baptized.” As such, “the name of Jesus Christ” served notice of *the authority and foundation* upon which Peter ordered the Pentecost crowd to first repent and then individually to be baptized, which authority, by the way, the crowd had previously rebelled against and mocked. Such baptism would serve public notice to fellow Jewish onlookers that they had genuinely repented and changed their attitude toward the crucified One whom Peter preached was both “both Lord and Christ” (Acts 2:36).

Sidebar: Baptism “for” the Remission of Sins?

As Independent Christian Churches, Oneness Pentecostals link a Christian’s salvation to baptism, the difference being that Christian churches see baptism as a ritual which *completes justification* while Oneness views baptism “in Jesus’ name” as an act that *effects salvation*. In part, both groups seemingly base their beliefs upon the “ace text” of Acts 2:38, where Peter tells the Pentecost crowd, “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.” Christian churches base completed justification upon the administration of the baptismal ordinance.³⁷ Oneness Pentecostals

³⁷ One Christian scholar writes: “Even though we are justified *by* faith, we are not justified as soon as we have faith. Such a view, though held by many, is a very serious error. It confuses *means* with *occasion*. Faith is the means of justification, but according to the Bible, baptism is the occasion during which justification is given. Jesus has promised to meet us in Christian baptism and at that moment apply His blood to us for the remission of sins (Acts 2:38; Romans 6:4-6; Colossians 2:12; Galatians 3:27). If we believe this promise, then we will meet Him there and be justified.” See Jack Cottrell, *Being Good Isn’t Good Enough* (Cincinnati, OH: The Standard Publishing Co., 1976): 12. Peter Nead (1796-1877), a leader among the early American brethren movement, wrote that, “as it respects my faith, I do believe, that baptism is not only a command, but also essential to salvation.” Quoted by Ronald T. Clutter, “Law and Gospel in the Brethren Tradition,” *Grace Theological Journal* (Fall 1991): 221.

base salvation upon the “name” in which the ordinance is administered. So the question arises, is “the remission” of one’s sins based upon baptism in any way, whether upon the rite itself or “the name” by which the rite is administered?

It must be remembered that Peter’s address contains two commands. The first to the multitude is *plural*—“Repent.” The second to the individual is *personal*—“be baptized.” Peter commanded the crowd to corporately repent and then individually, in public demonstration that their repentance was genuine, to submit to public baptism. A.T. Robertson (1863-1934) commented on this point:

This change marks a break in the thought here that the English translation does not preserve. The first thing to do is make a radical and complete change of heart and life. Then let each one be baptized after this change has taken place . . .³⁸

While presupposing repentance, forgiveness of sins does not necessitate that a person be baptized. Consistent with this understanding of Acts 2:38 is a later message of Peter in which he mentions that belief is the *only* requirement for the remission of one’s sins (“through his name whosoever believeth in him shall receive remission of sins,” Acts 10:43; Compare Luke 24:47.). Faith, based upon Jesus’ atonement for sin, and absent any other human work, unto forgiveness is the gold standard of the Christian faith. Yet Acts 2:38 seemingly adds a work of baptism to the salvation equation. The question therefore becomes, how can the contradiction of salvation via naked faith be reconciled with Peter’s statement that salvation seemingly demands a work of ritual baptism, that is, if salvation is to be considered complete or legitimate? The apparent conflict may be resolved in a couple ways.

³⁸Archibald Thomas Robertson, “The Acts of the Apostles,” *Word Pictures in the New Testament*, Vol. 3 (Nashville, TN: Broadman Press, 1930): 34-35.

First, the preposition leading the phrase “for (Greek, εἰς) the remission of sins” can possess, though not common, a causal meaning in the New Testament; that is, that the individuals moved by Peter’s message to repent should be baptized “because of” the remission of sins made possible by Jesus’ previous atonement on the cross.³⁹ Such a use can be observed when Jesus said of the men of Nineveh that they “repented at [Greek, εἰς] the preaching of Jonah” (Matthew 11:41). Surely the citizens of Nineveh repented because they heard Jonah’s message. They did not repent so they could hear Jonah’s message. A causal meaning is also evident when Jesus said, “He that receiveth a prophet in [εἰς, “because of”] the name of a prophet shall receive a prophet’s reward; and he that receiveth a righteous man in [εἰς, “because of”] the name of a righteous man shall receive a righteous man’s reward” (Matthew 10:41)

Second, Peter’s sermon indicted primarily a Jewish audience, “the house of Israel” which he accused had “crucified” the Lord Jesus Christ (Acts 2:36). So the apostle demanded that the reality of their personal repentance be manifested via the ritual of public baptism.⁴⁰ In other words, baptism “in Jesus’ name” indicated that a formerly devout Jew had “switched parties” (By using this metaphor, I do not mean to profane conversion as merely political.) from Judaism to Christ.

³⁹ H.E. Dana and Julius R. Mantey, *A Manual Grammar of the Greek New Testament* (Toronto, Ont., Canada: The Macmillan Company, 1955): 103-105. Wallace extensively discusses the evidence against the causal meaning of εἰς. Though examples of the use of causal εἰς may be lacking in non-biblical Greek sources, even one of Mantey’s critics concedes that, “It is possible that εἰς is used causally in . . . NT passages.” See Wallace, *Greek Grammar Beyond*, 369-371.

⁴⁰ When in Israel in January, 1985, I personally observed numerous baptismal pools outside the old city of Jerusalem where Jews underwent ritual washings and ablutions that were so crucial to the practice of their faith (See Hebrews 6:2). Therefore it was that Peter commanded repentant Jews to individually submit to ritual baptism in order to bear public testimony to their change of heart toward Messiah Jesus and as such, to also bear witness to the reality of their immersion into the new spiritual life that the Holy Spirit was bestowing at Pentecost (“and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost,” Acts 2:38).

To distinguish the meaning inherent in the preposition “for” (Greek, εἰς), the following analogy may help.

If you saw a poster saying “Jesse James wanted for robbery”, “for” could mean Jesse is wanted so he can commit a robbery, or is wanted because he has committed a robbery. The later sense is the correct one.⁴¹

To illustrate the relationship of repentance, baptism and remission of sins in Acts 2:38, Erwin Lutzer writes: “I might say, ‘Take your keys [repent] and coat [be baptized] and start the car,’ but that does not mean that taking your coat [baptism] is necessary to starting the car [repentance], even though it [baptism] was mentioned along with taking the keys [repentance].”⁴²

We turn now to the second passage in the Acts narrative which Oneness Pentecostalism cites that Christians should be baptized in the name of “Jesus only”.

⁴¹ *Enhanced Strong's Lexicon* (Oak Harbor, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc., 1995): Strong's # 1519.

⁴² Brackets Mine, Erwin W. Lutzer, *How You Can Be Sure That You Will Spend Eternity With God* (Chicago, IL: Moody Press, 1996): 148.

PENTECOST EXTENDED TO THE DESPISED*The Samaritan Half-breeds*

Text 2: “(For as yet he [the Holy Spirit] was fallen upon none of them: only *they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus.*)”

Emphasis Added, Acts 8:16

Luke records that when the Samaritans “believed Philip preaching the things concerning the kingdom of God, and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women” (Acts 8:12). We should note that in addition to Phillip’s preaching about the kingdom of God, “the name of the Lord Jesus” also describes the general focus and content of the evangelist’s message. He preached about Jesus’ person and work under His authority. On account of their believing the “good news” preached by Phillip, the Samaritans (including Simon the sorcerer who believed for “other” reasons) indicated their agreement with and submission to Phillip’s message by being baptized “in” (Greek εἰς meaning “into”) the name of the Lord Jesus (Acts 8:12-13).

Water Baptism before Spirit Baptism

Later, in the same chapter, Luke records Phillip’s baptizing of the Ethiopian eunuch (Acts 8:38). The earlier ministry of Phillip amongst the Samaritans accounts for their having been previously baptized “into” (εἰς) Jesus Christ” before the Apostles arrived from Jerusalem (Acts 8:16).

A Parenthetical Explanation

As regards the phrase “in the name of the Lord Jesus” (Greek, εἰς τὸ ὄνομα τοῦ κυρίου Ἰησοῦ), many of the same arguments against understanding it as a baptismal formula in Acts 2:38 also apply to Acts 8:16. Yet the structure and context of this verse provide additional reasons why “in the name” is not a baptismal formula.

Two versions (KJV, RSV) mark Acts 8:16 to be a parenthetical explanation as to why, from the perspective of Pentecost, the Samaritans tardily received the Holy Spirit. The verse is not didactic.⁴³

Here Luke employed a different preposition from Acts 2:38 (εἰς as opposed to ἐπὶ). Two versions translate the preposition, “into” (NIV, ASV), while the others translate it, “in.” For two reasons this difference can be accounted for.

The Preposition “Eis”

First, linguists have tended to blur distinction between the meaning of εἰς (into) and ἐν (in).⁴⁴ *Second*, grammarians view the meanings for the prepositions to overlap.⁴⁵ As he lists eight basic uses for the preposition εἰς, Wallace notes that all of the meanings for ἐν are interchangeable with εἰς.⁴⁶ An NIV marginal note on this verse marks equivalency between the two prepositions.⁴⁷ The translation reads “into” while a marginal reading offers the translation “in.” In spite of possible equivalency between the two different meanings, good reason exists to allow a distinction to be made regarding the preposition’s precise nuance in this context.

For a number of reasons, “in” may be the best translation. “In” may indicate that the Samaritans had been baptized in the

⁴³ The conjunction γὰρ indicates that, “additional information is being given about what is being described.” Wallace, *Greek Grammar Beyond*, 673.

⁴⁴ Robertson viewed that, “No distinction is to be insisted on between *eis to onoma* and *en toī onomati* with *baptizō* since *eis* and *en* are really the same word in origin.” *Word Pictures*, Volume III, 35.

⁴⁵ Wallace sees similar, if not same, meanings for εἰς and ἐν. He sees equivalency between the prepositions when he notes that εἰς can be used, “in the place of ἐν (with its various nuances).” He illustrates this by an English analogy of, “I jumped **in** a pool” to equate to, “I jumped **into** a pool.” *Greek Grammar Beyond*, 369, 362-363.

⁴⁶ Wallace lists eight basic uses for εἰς with the accusative case. See *Greek Grammar Beyond*, 369. Of the eight, two ways to view εἰς might be, “Spatial: *into, toward, in,*” or “Reference/Respect: *with respect to, with reference to.*”

⁴⁷ Kenneth Barker, General Editor, *The NIV Study Bible* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Bible Publishers, 1985): 1658.

sphere of Christian profession,⁴⁸ or in reference to the Lord Jesus.⁴⁹ In the view of many scholars, the sense of “in reference or respect to Jesus” is preferable. Either way, by earlier baptism, the Samaritans associated themselves with Jesus. In light of the many baptisms in the ancient religious world, Arrington comments: “Baptism in the name of Jesus identified it as Christian baptism.”⁵⁰

It should also be noted that as in Acts 2:38, the prepositional phrase “in the name of the Lord Jesus” is adverbial to “been baptized” (Greek, βαπτισμένοι ὑπὸ ἰησοῦ). As such, the

⁴⁸ Lexicographers Bauer, Gingrich and Danker observe that when used with “name” (Greek, ὄνομα), εἰς can communicate that, “the one who is baptized becomes the possession of and comes under the protection of the one whose name he bears; he is under the control of the effective power of the name and the One who bears the name, i.e., he is dedicated to them.” BGD, 572 (I. 4. c. B.). Upon Peter’s arrival in Samaria, the Samaritans had already become Jesus Christ’s possession, first, by believing in him, and then, by being baptized with reference or respect to him, a rite by which they made public confession of their faith.

⁴⁹ Exact assignment to a grammatical category is difficult. “In the name of the Lord Jesus” may be understood as the sphere *in* or *into* which baptism had placed the Samaritans.

Better I think, that εἰς be understood to nuance “Reference/Respect”. Then the sense would be that the Samaritans had been baptized with reference or regard to Jesus Christ. Several lines of evidence suggest this understanding to be appropriate. *First*, “Reference/Respect” is an interchangeable meaning category of both εἰς and ἐν. See Wallace, *Greek Grammar Beyond*, 372. *Second*, lexicographers Bauer, Gingrich and Danker note that εἰς can “denote reference to a person or thing *for, to, with respect or reference to,*” BGD, 230. *Third*, H. Bietenhard states: “The phrase *eis (tō) ónoma* is difficult. It sometimes has the force of ‘with regard to’ or ‘because’ (cf. Mt. 10:41-42; Mk. 9:41).” See his article, “όνωμα,” *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, Abridged, 699. *Fourth*, the reference of ‘with regard to’ category may best suit the parenthetical and explanatory function of Acts 8:16. And *fifth*, Pentecostal J. Rodman Williams views that, “*eis* may . . . signify ‘with reference to,’ hence ‘in relation to.’” See *Renewal Theology*, Volume II, 286, Footnote 46. Oneness Pentecostal French understands this sense of εἰς or ἐν when stating that the New Testament recognizes that baptism was “either into, with respect to, or with reference to ‘Jesus’ . . .” See *God Is One*, 218, Footnote 23.

⁵⁰ Arrington, *Acts*, 88.

Acts narrative describes only the time frame and manner in which the Samaritans had experienced baptism.

No Baptism Liturgy

No matter how εἰς is understood, it is clear that Acts 8:16 parenthetically stands as a commentary on the spiritual state of the Samaritans. The verse indicates only that the Samaritans had not yet been initiated into the sphere of life in the Holy Spirit, and as such, provides no baptismal formula or liturgy. The mention of baptism in this verse does not warrant that Jesus' Trinitarian formula for baptism be denied. Rather, the verse explains the Samaritans' relationship with Jesus by noting their previous identification with Him through ritual baptism by Phillip (Acts 8:16), and not the Spirit baptism that was later conferred upon the Samaritans by Peter and John (Acts 8:17).

In this light, Luke provides no indication that Samaritans were re-baptized, even though the act of water baptism preceded the experience of Spirit baptism. The Apostles found that the Samaritans' previous baptism "into the name of the Lord Jesus" was enough to warrant extension of Holy Spirit baptism to them. To assume that the text contains a Jesus only baptismal formula is to twist the meaning of this verse beyond the historical narrative's intent. On this point, Acts is historical commentary, and that's all. Luke's purpose in writing these words is *descriptive and indicative*, not *didactic and instructional*.

Acts—A Transitional Book

When reading this verse in the context of Acts, its transitional character is evident. The gospel has been extended to the despised Samaritans. In order to safeguard the unity in the emerging church, the Jerusalem congregation sent the Apostles Peter and John to officially recognize and incorporate the Samaritans into the Christian community. Larkin observes, "If God had not withheld his Spirit until the Jerusalem apostles came,

converts on both sides of the cultural barrier might have found Christ without finding each other.”⁵¹

⁵¹ William J. Larkin Jr., *Acts* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1995): 128.

PENTECOST COMES TO THE DISCRIMINATED*Gentiles at Caesarea*

Text 3: “And he [Peter] commanded them to *be baptized in the name of the Lord.*”⁵²

Emphasis Added, Acts 10:48

Being the physical descendents of Abraham, Jews viewed Gentiles to be less worthy in the sight of God (See Ephesians 2:11-12.). Therefore Jews discriminated against Gentiles. Equally so, God-fearing Gentiles viewed themselves to be second class citizens in the sight of God (See Matthew 15:21-28.). As it had been extended to the Samaritans in Acts 8, so also God was going to extend the full gospel to the Gentile Cornelius and his household (Acts 11:1, 18). As the apostolic visit to Samaria assured the early church that God no longer discriminated between Jews and Samaritans—a division Jesus previously bridged by his contact with the Samaritan woman (John 4:4-32)—so also Peter’s visit to Caesarea served notice of God’s full acceptance of Gentiles into the body of Christ. By one Gospel and by one Spirit, God would incorporate all—Jew, Samaritan, and Gentile—into one church (Galatians 3:28).

In order to understand what baptism “in the name of Jesus Christ” meant in the baptism of Cornelius and his household, we

⁵² Though slight, the difference between translations of Acts 10:48 ought to be noted. The KJV and NKJV read “in the name of the Lord.” Other translations read “in the name of Jesus Christ” (NASB, ESV, NIV, NRSV). This difference is accounted for reason of the underlying difference between the Greek texts upon which the translations are based (i.e., the Received as opposed an eclectic text). Without engaging the arguments of the preferred textual tradition, what I do find contradictory to the Oneness argument that believers are to be baptized “in the name of Jesus Christ,” is that the KJV translation reads “in the name of the Lord.” Thus, as far as concerns Acts 10:48, Oneness Pentecostalism bases “Jesus Only” baptism on a KJV text—the textual tradition from which the movement originally derived its baptismal formula—that literally, does not mention the name of Jesus (though of course, His name is implied)!

must again give attention to interpretive details. As in the two previous passages, these details do not support a dogma that “in the name of Jesus Christ” was to be liturgically repeated over each individual who was baptized. Though similarities exist between the record of what initially happened at Jerusalem (Acts 2:4; 11:15; 15:8), there are also differences. Questions must be answered, and issues resolved, before “in the name of Jesus Christ” can be understood in relationship to Cornelius and his household.

To What Does “in the name of Jesus Christ” Refer?

As in earlier Acts passages, the grammar of this verse strongly argues against viewing “in the name of Jesus Christ” as a baptismal formula. To understand the phrase, two issues need to be resolved. *First*, what verb does “in the name of Jesus Christ” modify? *Second*, what meaning does the preposition ἐν possess?⁵³ The answer to the second question relates to the answer of the first.

The Verb Modified

Within the sentence that is Acts 10:48, there are two verbs, the main verb “he ordered,” and an infinitive, “to be baptized.” The prepositional phrase (ἐν τῷ ὀνόματι Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ) is adverbial, and can be understood to modify either the verb or the infinitive. The question becomes, does the phrase modify the verb “he ordered” (προσέταξε), or the substantival infinitive, “to be baptized” (βαπτισθῆναι)?⁵⁴

⁵³ Wallace lists nine usage categories, plus notes that ἐν includes all the possible uses of εἰς. See *Greek Grammar Beyond*, 372. Perschbacher identifies a use of ἐν with name (ὀνόματι) as a dative connoting “spiritual relationships.” See Wesley J. Perschbacher, *New Testament Greek Syntax* (Chicago, IL: Moody Press, 1995): 204-205. If the preposition is understood to denote an aspect of “sphere/spiritual relationship,” then the meaning might be that Peter ordered the baptism of Cornelius and his household as a public act signaling that Gentiles had been incorporated into the Body of Christ, into union with the one church.

⁵⁴ See Wallace, *Greek Grammar Beyond*, 603-605. He identifies the infinitive βαπτισθῆναι to function as a substantive of indirect discourse,

If the phrase is taken to modify the main verb, then Luke's emphasis is that Peter issued his command under the authority of, "in the name of Jesus Christ."⁵⁵ However, if the prepositional phrase modifies the infinitive, then Peter commanded the Gentiles "to be baptized . . . in the name of Jesus Christ."⁵⁶ Two points, one grammatical and the other contextual, argue for understanding "in the name of Jesus Christ" as modifying the verb "he commanded," rather than the infinitive, "to be baptized."

First, the prepositional phrase is positioned after the verb "he commanded." Had Luke meant to communicate that baptisms were to be performed "in the name of Jesus Christ," he might have positioned the prepositional phrase after the infinitive "to be baptized." He did not.

Second, a parallel incident in Acts provides support for understanding "in the name of Jesus Christ" to modify Peter's order. When confronted with a demon possessed slave girl, Paul "turned and said to the spirit, 'I command you in the name of Jesus

a common NT usage. As such, "to baptize" expresses the content or substance of Peter's order "in the name of Jesus Christ."

⁵⁵ F.F. Bruce observes that, "Grammatically these words [i.e. "in the name of Jesus Christ] might be taken with προσέταξεν, but the analogy of ii. 38, etc., makes it fairly certain that they go with βαπτισθῆναι." See *The Acts of the Apostles* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1951): 228. Dealing with the Greek text, this Acts volume differs from the scholar's *Commentary on the Book of Acts*.

I disagree that Acts 2 determines what verb "in the name of" modifies in Acts 10. *First*, the phrases are not parallel. Luke employed a different lead preposition in each case (ἐν here, and ἐπι in Acts 2:38). *Second*, "in the name" follows the main verb of the sentence, "he ordered." Had Luke intended to emphasize that baptism was to have been accomplished by a formulaic use of "in the name of Jesus Christ," he could have positioned the phrase after "to baptize." In this case the translation would be, "And he ordered them to be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ." As the wording stands, it literally reads, "And he [Peter] ordered them in the name of Jesus Christ to be baptized." As such, "in the name of Jesus Christ" modifies "ordered" and denotes the source and authority of the command which he gave to be baptized.

⁵⁶ Even if the prepositional phrase modifies "to be baptized," this does not determine that "in the name of Jesus Christ" was to be liturgically employed in the baptism rite.

Christ to come out of her!” (Acts 16:18) Obviously, “in the name of Jesus Christ” modifies the main verb “I command,” not the infinitive, “to come out.” Paul performed the exorcism by the authority of Jesus Christ (i.e., “in the name of Jesus Christ”). In the same way, “in the name of Jesus Christ” Peter commanded Cornelius’ baptism.

When tied to Jesus’ authority, baptism “upon . . . into . . . in the name of Jesus Christ” can be understood as an act performed under cover of the Lord’s authority. In this light, it must be noted that Peter did not do the baptizing, but by the authority of Jesus Christ commanded others to do it. As Robertson noted of the passages in Acts, associating Jesus’ name with baptism identified the authority by which the rite was administered, and “not the formula that was employed . . .”⁵⁷

Any apostolic invocation of “the name of Jesus Christ” provides no basis for rejecting the Trinitarian formula originally instituted by Jesus. The words “in the name of” provide no warrant for adopting the baptismal liturgy advocated by Oneness Pentecostalism. Ironic it is that the key to understanding “in the name of Jesus” lies in the original context of the Trinitarian formula which Oneness Pentecostalism denies. By using “in the name of Jesus Christ,” the Apostles gave due recognition to the authority the Lord claimed in Matthew 28:18 (“All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth.”) In other words, the phrase “in the name of Jesus” does not contradict Matthew 28:19, but actually, by way of invoking His name, serves notice of Jesus’ authority over their ministries. If they linked the authority for their ministries to the authority which Jesus claimed for Himself and gave to them, would it not have been disingenuous of the Apostles to turnabout and baptize Christian disciples in a name other than that which Jesus originally commanded (i.e., “in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost”)?

Having attended to the question as to what verb the phrase “in the name of Jesus Christ” modifies, the next exegetical matter to be determined is what the preposition ἐν communicates.

⁵⁷ Robertson, *Word Pictures*, III, 150.

The Preposition “En”

In that “in the name of Jesus Christ” is understood to modify the verb “he commanded,” the usage of ἐν may again be understood to be referential.⁵⁸ In this way, Peter commanded them to be baptized with reference to the name of Jesus Christ.

A Conspicuous Absence

Luke provides no indication that Peter intended “in the name of Jesus Christ” to be repeated as Cornelius and his household were baptized. To indicate that Peter ordered the phrase “in the name of Jesus Christ” to be pronounced over each baptism, Luke could have grammatically marked it to be so, but he did not. He could have inserted the conjunction (ὅτι) signaling the phrase to be discourse, either direct or indirect. If such a marker were present, then it could be understood that Peter was ordering the Gentiles to be baptized quote, “in the name of Jesus Christ.”⁵⁹ But the text contains no indicator of either direct or indirect discourse.

⁵⁸ Wallace notes that ἐν can nuance, “Reference/Respect: *with respect to/with reference to*,” *Greek Grammar Beyond*, 372. Williams recognizes “*eis* may . . . signify ‘with reference to,’ hence ‘in relation to.’” See *Renewal Theology*, Volume II, 286, Footnote 46.

⁵⁹ The verse might literally be translated, “And he ordered them in the name of Jesus Christ to be baptized.” A grammatical means whereby Luke could have marked the phrase to be either direct or indirect discourse would have been the insertion of ὅτι before “in the name of the Lord Jesus.” Coupled with the indicative mood of Peter’s command, ὅτι would have indicated that Peter wanted “in the name of Jesus Christ” to be recited at the baptisms. In this vein, the verse would have read, “And he [i.e., Peter] ordered *that* (ὅτι) in the name of Jesus Christ they were to be baptized.”

Though awkward in the English, the Greek would have marked out “in the name of Jesus Christ” to have been a baptismal liturgy. Though he could have, Luke used no marker for either direct or indirect discourse. See Wallace, *Greek Grammar Beyond*, 453-461, for discussion of ὅτι as marker for either *direct* discourse (And he ordered them to be baptized, “In the name of Jesus Christ.”), or *indirect* discourse (He ordered them to be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ.).

When comparing the four baptismal texts, especially Acts 10:48 to Acts 4:10, the lack of a discourse marker is a problem for Oneness Pentecostals. In defense of his healing of the lame beggar (Acts 4:1-10), the Apostle Peter said to the rulers and elders of the nation, “let it be known to all of you . . . that (ὅτι) by the name of Jesus Christ . . . by this *name* this man stands here before you in good health” (Acts 4:10).

In this instance, Luke uses ὅτι to emphasize that Peter had repeated, “In the name of Jesus Christ . . .” at the instant of the man’s healing (See Acts 3:6). One can only note the lack of such a quotation notice in any of the four passages associated with baptism in Acts, especially Acts 10:48. This absence of ὅτι counters the claim of Oneness Pentecostals that the phrase “in the name of Jesus Christ” was to be ritually uttered at each baptism.

The phrase “in the name of Jesus Christ” does not contradict the Trinitarian formula established in Matthew’s gospel, but, rather, gives recognition to the authority by which the Apostles administered the rite. The ministry of the Apostles was based upon the Lord’s authority, i.e., “in the name of Jesus Christ.” By invoking His name, the Apostles gave verbal confession that their authority to teach doctrine, exorcise demons, and baptize believers was derived from none other than the Lord Himself.

PENTECOST COMES TO THE DEFICIENT*The Disciples of John the Baptist at Ephesus*

Text 4: “And when they heard *this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus.*”

Emphasis Added, Acts 19:5

Having passed westward through the mountains of Galatia during his Third Missionary Journey, Paul arrived at the thriving coastal city of pagan Ephesus. There he encountered and asked questions of a group of disciples in order to discern where they stood in their Christian experience. Initially, Paul’s inquiry concerned whether they had received the Holy Spirit. “Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?” he asked (Acts 19:2a).

To this question, the disciples confessed complete ignorance of the Holy Spirit (Acts 19:2b). Because of their negative answer, the Apostle asked a follow-up question. He inquired: “Into what then were you baptized?” (Acts 19:3a) The relationship of these two questions to one another indicates the importance of baptism in the apostolic church, and also something about the formula used by the Apostles in baptizing early Christians.

The book of Acts narrates an order of events that occurred when persons converted to Christianity. First, there was *preaching*, then based upon the gospel message, *believing* and finally, *baptizing*. Acts never describes a violation of this sequence. After preaching and faith, the new believer’s public identification with Christ through water baptism was of primary importance (Matthew 28:19). In their ministries, both Peter and Paul endorsed water baptism as a first step of obedience to be taken by new believers, a step that confessed the newly discovered authority of Jesus over their lives (Matthew 28:18, “All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth,” NASB) Those who reduce baptism to an unimportant, or secondary, issue of the Christian life are misinformed. Regarding baptism, one scholar stated that in the New Testament, “the idea of an unbaptized Christian is simply not

entertained.”⁶⁰ Paul’s question about baptism therefore indicates the high regard with which he viewed it.

Also, the dialog between Paul and the Ephesian disciples of John provides insight into the standard formula used in baptism. “Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?” he asked, to which they responded, “No, we have not even heard whether there is a Holy Spirit” (Acts 19:2). Note: their confessed ignorance of the Holy Spirit then stimulates Paul to ask them, “Into what then were you baptized?” (Acts 19:3) Evidently, it appeared incredulous to Paul that, in their undergoing the baptismal rite, these Ephesian disciples had “not even heard whether there was a Holy Spirit.” As his follow-up question indicates, Paul assumed that they would have at least heard of the Holy Spirit when they were baptized. Two Wesleyan commentators observed that, “if these disciples had already received Christian baptism they would have heard of the Holy Spirit . . .”⁶¹ Those disciples should have become acquainted with the name of the Holy Spirit at the time of their being baptized according to the Trinitarian formula (“Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of *the Holy Ghost*,” Emphasis added, Matthew 28:19).

Paul’s question to the Ephesian disciples implies a connection between ritual baptism and the name of the Holy Spirit. Paul expected that the name of the Holy Spirit would have been recited at their baptism. As Alexander commented, Paul’s question “implies . . . that Christian baptism was administered from the beginning in the form prescribed by Christ himself (Matt. 28, 19), and that no one therefore could receive it without hearing of the Holy Ghost, in whose name, as well as in the Father’s and the Son’s, every convert was baptized.”⁶² Alexander then concludes, “Since they could not be baptized into Christ . . . without so much as hearing of the Holy Spirit, Paul infers that they had not been so baptized at all . . .”⁶³

⁶⁰ Bruce, *Commentary on the Book of Acts*, 77.

⁶¹ Charles W. Carter and Ralph Earle, *The Acts of the Apostles* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1959): 283.

⁶² Alexander, *Acts*, 649-650.

⁶³ *Ibid.*

This answer of John's disciples, about twelve in number, reveals that they were "living without either the truth or the power of the gospel."⁶⁴ They may be compared to Apollos who too was "acquainted only with the baptism of John" (Acts 18:25).

Paul then went on to explain to them that John's baptism was not Christian baptism, but was a preparatory baptism, a good faith gesture of repentance toward God based upon incomplete knowledge. Complete repentance toward and trust in Jesus would eventually need to take place (Acts 19:4). Having recognized their deficiency, Luke records that when these former disciples of John "heard this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus" (Acts 19:5). After this there followed a laying on of hands by the Apostles, the baptism of the Holy Spirit, and an accompanying speaking in tongues and prophesying, all of which signaled that these Ephesian disciples were officially and spiritually incorporated into the church which had begun at Pentecost (Acts 19:6; See Acts 2:1-13.). These events certified to the church community that these former disciples of John were now spiritually united with them.

Before and After—Acts 8:16 and Acts 19:5 Compared

Having reviewed the situation at Ephesus, we must now give attention to the exegetical details of the phrase stating these disciples were "baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus" (Acts 19:5), words employed by Oneness Pentecostals to build their case for "Jesus only" baptism. From the context, we have observed Paul's assumption that if their baptism had been Christian, those Ephesian disciples would have become acquainted, in the administration of the rite, with the name of the Holy Spirit. Now, as in the three previous Acts passages, it will be demonstrated that Acts 19:5 does not indicate support for the Oneness contention that "in the name of Jesus Christ" was verbally repeated over each person baptized.

⁶⁴ Larkin, *Acts*, 273. Larkin's comments correct the Oneness contention that any baptized by the Trinitarian formula are not saved, and therefore need to be re-baptized "in the name of Jesus." On this point, note Acts 8 records no rebaptism at Samaria. If baptism in Jesus' name is crucial to salvation, why not?

At this point, it must be noted that the material presented in the study of Acts 8:16 may be applied to the understanding of Acts 19:5. In that the Samaritans had already been baptized into Jesus Christ, Peter mandated no rebaptism. By visiting Samaria, Peter officially extended the spiritual benefits of Pentecost to the Samaritans as he gave apostolic recognition that this splinter group from Judaism was also officially being incorporated into the church. By way of contrast, having only been baptized with the baptism of John, the Ephesian disciples of Acts 19 were, upon orienting their faith in Jesus Christ, baptized “in” His name. Larkin points out this baptism was not rebaptism, “for after the triumph of Easter and the provision of full salvation blessings at Pentecost, a preparatory baptism of repentance is more than incomplete—it is obsolete (Lk 16:16; Eph 4:5).”⁶⁵

Both the Samaritans (Acts 8) and the Ephesian disciples (Acts 19) were baptized “in the name of the Lord Jesus,” the difference being that in the case of the Samaritans, water baptism occurred *before* Spirit baptism, while in the instance of John’s Ephesian disciples, water baptism occurred *after* Spirit baptism. The prepositional phrases used to describe the baptisms that took place in both Samaria and at Ephesus are identical (Greek, εἰς τὸ ὄνομα τοῦ κυρίου Ἰησοῦ).⁶⁶ The preposition *eis* may therefore, carry similar meaning in both contexts.⁶⁷

The Preposition “Eis”

As we pursue this discussion, it should be noted that there’s great theology in prepositions and be careful therefore, to dismiss the theology of prepositions to be like arguing about how many angels can dance on the head of needle!

⁶⁵ Ibid. 273-274.

⁶⁶ See arguments presented on pages 25-28 of this booklet.

⁶⁷ One could argue that in Acts 8, *eis* nuances that before their Spirit baptism, the Samaritans had been baptized with reference to Jesus Christ, while in the case of the Ephesian disciples of John, that they were baptized into close association with Jesus Christ and the Apostles. No matter how “in” or “into” is understood, the preposition serves no notice that either Peter or Paul employed a particular baptismal liturgy.

One must note the threefold use of the preposition *eis* (Acts 19:3, 5).⁶⁸ *First*, Paul asks, “**Unto** (εἰς) what then were ye baptized?” (Acts 19:3) *Second*, the disciples answer, “**Unto** (εἰς) John’s baptism.” (Acts 19:3) And *third*, Luke records those disciples were then baptized, “**in** (εἰς) the name of the Lord Jesus” (Acts 19:5). Given the consecutive mentions of baptism in the context, sound interpretation would view the preposition *eis* to possess a consistent meaning in all three phrases, something that, with the exception of marginal readings in the NASB and ESV (“into”), our English translations do not preserve.⁶⁹

Grammarians Wallace lists eight uses for the preposition *eis*, a preposition commonly followed by a noun in the accusative case.⁷⁰ Of the meanings for *eis*, the fifth category noted by Wallace, “Reference/Respect: *with respect to, with reference to*” the name of the Lord Jesus, appears appropriate. Pentecostal theologian Williams confirms that, “eis may also signify ‘with reference to,’ hence ‘in

⁶⁸ Matthew’s use *eis* to record the Lord’s institution of the Trinitarian baptismal formula should be noted. “Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name (εἰς τὸ ὄνομα) of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit” (Matthew 28:19). The singular name may be understood as a distributive plural which includes the three members of the triune Godhead.

⁶⁹ Bruce views the use of εἰς to be instrumental in the first two occurrences. “As in Paul’s preceding question, εἰς is here equivalent to instrumental ἐν.” See *The Acts of the Apostles*, 354.

The difference between *the instrumental* use (Q: ‘By, *with* what then were you baptized?’ A: ‘By, *with* John’s baptism.’), and *the reference/respect* use (Q: ‘*With respect to/with reference to* what then were you baptized?’ A: ‘*With respect to/with reference to* John’s baptism’) of εἰς or ἐν, is slight.

If in the first two instances εἰς means that the disciples were baptized with respect/reference to the name of John the Baptist, it is consistent to suppose they then were also baptized with reference/respect to “the name Lord Jesus.” If the third use of the preposition εἰς, like the preceding two, connotes reference to Jesus’ name, then Acts 19:5 does not indicate Paul employed a recitative formula to baptize the Ephesian disciples. On this point I would fault the KJV translation. Inconsistently, it employs the English preposition “unto” (εἰς) as regards the baptism of John, but substitutes the preposition to “in” for εἰς as regards the name of Jesus.

⁷⁰ Wallace, *Greek Grammar Beyond*, 369.

relation to’.”⁷¹ Another scholar reinforces the category of reference/respect with regard to the construction “in the name.” He writes: “The phrase *eis (tō) ónoma* is difficult. It sometimes has the force of ‘with regard to’ or ‘because’ (cf. Mt. 10:41-42; Mk. 9:41).”⁷²

There exists therefore, a scholarly consensus that baptism “unto” (εἰς) means with regard or respect to the Lord Jesus. If this is the correct, then the sense of Acts 19 verse 5 would be that these disciples who had formerly been baptized with reference to John (They certainly were not baptized in the name of John the Baptist!), were then re-baptized with reference to the authority and name of the Lord Jesus (See Matthew 28:18.).

In the Name of the Lord Jesus

One must note that the Ephesian disciples were baptized with respect to “the name of the Lord Jesus.” The name Lord indicates that by baptism these disciples were transferred from their former association with the message of John into the sphere of Jesus’ authority over their lives. Missionaries have noted that baptism becomes the decisive sign that publicly marks out individuals as Christians in the eyes of others. Persons that claim conversion may testify thereto, read and study the Bible, attend church services as opposed to Synagogue or Mosque, and their family and community will pay curious attention. However, when they are baptized, their conversion is set in stone and persecution of them often follows. Families disown them, employers dismiss them, police may arrest them, and judges throw them in jail (See Matthew 10:32-33.). In extreme instances a newly baptized convert might be tortured and executed. Why? Baptism has officially marked them to be subject to “the name [i.e., the authority] of the Lord Jesus.”

The scholar Bruce remarks:

⁷¹ Williams, *Renewal Theology*, 286, Footnote 46.

⁷² H. Bietenhard, “ónoma,” *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, Abridged, 699.

The phrase εἰς τὸ ὄνομα is common in a commercial context where some property is transferred or paid ‘into the name’ of someone. So the person baptized ‘into the name of the Lord Jesus’ bears public witness that he has become the property of Jesus and that Jesus is his Lord and Owner.⁷³

A previous baptism had identified these Ephesians to be disciples of John. By submitting to the baptism ordered by Paul, these former disciples of John served public notice that their lives had come under “new ownership,” that they now lived under the authority of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Summary

In summary, problems arise from a study of Acts 19 as regards the belief system of Oneness Pentecostalism.

First, the context does not support the notion that baptism needs to be administered in the name of Jesus only or it is not legitimate baptism. The context indicates Paul knew that proper baptism would have included mention of the Holy Spirit’s name. That’s why the apostle assumed that John’s Ephesian disciples should have known of the Holy Spirit (and presumably, the Father also). Additionally, the grammar and context of Acts 19:5 do not support a dogma that “in the name of the Lord Jesus” needs to be recited over each person baptized.

Second, the rebaptism of the Ephesian disciples was no rebaptism at all. It was an initial baptism of disciples with reference to Jesus Christ becoming Lord in their lives. To deduce that this text warrants, even mandates, a rebaptism in the name of Jesus stretches the text beyond legitimate application. As A.T. Robertson observed,

⁷³ F.F. Bruce, *Commentary on the Book of Acts* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1954): 181, footnote 32.

The point here is simply that these twelve men were grossly ignorant of the meaning of John's baptism as regards repentance, the Messiahship of Jesus, the Holy Spirit. Hence Paul had them baptized, not so much again, as really baptized this time, in the name or on the authority of the Lord Jesus as he himself commanded (Matt. 28:19) and as was the universal apostolic custom. Proper understanding of "Jesus" involved all the rest including the Trinity (Father, Son, and Holy Spirit). Luke does not give a formula, but simply explains that now these men had a proper object of faith (Jesus) and were now really baptized.⁷⁴

Let there now be made some conclusions made concerning baptism "in the name Jesus" only.

⁷⁴ Robertson, *Word Pictures*, Volume III, 312-313.

CONCLUSION

Contradicting Jesus' clear Trinitarian statement to baptize "in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit" (Matthew 28:19), Oneness Pentecostals advocate that the only legitimate baptismal formula to be repeated over each person being baptized is, "in the name of Jesus Christ." As Vinson Synan affirms about the movement, "According to oneness teaching, the only valid baptism is in 'Jesus' name' and not 'in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost.'" ⁷⁵ They premise their use of this formula on four Acts verses that associate baptism with either the name of "Jesus Christ," "the Lord Jesus," or "the Lord" (Acts 2:38; 8:16; 10:48; 19:5).

Study of these passages in the King James Version of the Bible by early Pentecostal ministers no doubt aroused excitement about this baptismal formula supposedly employed by the Apostles, but which is at odds with the formula a consensus of Christians has employed in administering the rite for two millennia. All four Acts verses relating baptism to the name of Jesus in a KJV reading are superficially and nearly identical. They read:

1. "in the name of Jesus Christ" (Acts 2:38).
2. "in the name of the Lord Jesus" (Acts 8:16).
3. "in the name of the Lord" (Acts 10:48).
4. "in the name of the Lord Jesus" (Acts 19:5).

From these mentions of the Lord's name, early Oneness Pentecostals assumed that baptism was to be performed in the name of Jesus only, and that reference to the Trinity, as Jesus commanded, should be excluded in the administration of the rite. For them Jesus only baptism became "the new issue."

But other contentions grew out of this conviction. ⁷⁶ Gregory Boyd states that, "Indeed, the belief that baptism should

⁷⁵ Synan, *Century of the Holy Spirit*, 141.

⁷⁶ Gregory Boyd points out that, "historically speaking, the Oneness belief that baptism should be performed 'in Jesus' name' or 'in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ,' rather than the traditional trinitarian

be done ‘in Jesus’ name’ was the principal factor that ultimately led to the belief that Jesus is himself the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.”⁷⁷

The conviction that baptism was to be administered in the name of Jesus gave rise to modalism, or Jesus-Unitarianism. Oneness Pentecostals accuse Trinitarianism to be polytheistic, the worship of three gods, a worship Scripture strictly prohibits (See Deuteronomy 6:4; Mark 12:29; 1 Corinthians 8:4; etc.). Former Oneness Pentecostal David Reed summarizes the movement’s view of the Trinity to be, “the threefold way that God reveals Himself and acts in the world. That is, God is radically one in His transcendence, but threefold in His immanence.”⁷⁸

Theologians note such a view of the Trinity is not unprecedented in church history. Called Sabellianism, or modalistic monarchianism, the early church father Tertullian vehemently opposed this view.⁷⁹ In words appropriate to modern Oneness Pentecostalism, the church father remarked that such Unitarianism “put to flight the Paraclete and crucified the Father.”⁸⁰ By way of contrast, the Bible teaches there never was a time when the Son was not (John 1:1-2). The Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit are eternal contemporaries one with another (John 17:5; 15:26). As such, the Son, as distinct from the Father and Holy Spirit, existed as a divine Person before His birth in Bethlehem. This is the Trinitarian teaching of Holy Scripture.⁸¹

formula, actually preceded the Oneness doctrine of God.” See *Oneness Pentecostals*, 139.

⁷⁷ Ibid.

⁷⁸ Reed, “What Do Oneness Pentecostals Believe?” *Aspects of Pentecostal-Charismatic Origins*, 144.

⁷⁹ Sabellianism is the ancient view which espoused the unity and monarchy of God as opposed to His eternal triune being revealed in Scripture.

⁸⁰ William Kelly, “Monarchianism,” *Baker’s Dictionary of Theology*, Everette F. Harrison, Editor-in-Chief (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1960): 361.

⁸¹ However, the purpose of this booklet was not to deal with the Trinitarian issue. Many others have done so. See E. Calvin Beisner, *God in Three Persons* (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, Inc., 1984. Edward

The intent of this writing has been to present the biblical evidence that is contrary to Oneness Pentecostalism's assertion that legitimate baptism can only be performed in the name of Jesus only. Such a claim contradicts the command of Jesus to baptize "in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost" (Matthew 28:19). It has been shown that the four Acts passages provide no direct evidence that the Apostles employed a formula any different from that instituted by Jesus Christ. Continuity, not discontinuity, exists between the Lord's command in Matthew and the application of it by Jesus' disciples as the Acts of the Apostles narrates.

In the Acts passages, we have found that the Apostles established no contrary baptismal formula to that which Jesus originally instituted. The superficial biblical basis upon which Oneness Pentecostalism derives its distinctiveness is exegetically flawed, as are the heretical inferences that have followed upon the heels of that interpretive presumption; namely, theological conjectures that defy the clear Trinitarian teaching of the Bible.

Adolf Schlatter (1852-1938) observed that, "The idea that a baptism in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit was not a baptism in the name of Christ or that baptism in the name of Christ was not a baptism in the name of God or the Spirit belongs to an entirely different conceptual world than that of the New Testament."⁸² He goes on to propose that emphasis upon repeating a certain formula (as in the instance of Oneness Pentecostalism) may belong to a magical worldview which thinks religion can only be effective "by the invocation of a particular

Henry Bickersteth, *The Trinity* (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publications, 1957). Millard J. Erickson, *God in Three Persons* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1995). Alister E. McGrath, *Understanding the Trinity* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1988). Robert Morey, *The Trinity* (Grand Rapids, MI: World Publishing, 1996). Peter Toon, *Our Triune God* (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1996). James R. White, *The Forgotten Trinity* (Minneapolis, MN: Bethany House Publishers, 1998).

⁸² Adolf Schlatter, *The Theology of the Apostles*, Andreas J. Köstenberger, Translator (Grand Rapids, MI: BakerBooks, 1998): 45, Footnote 13.

formula.”⁸³ On this point, we would note that repeatedly baptizing “in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost” is not magical for it is born out of the desire to obey and submit to the authority and instruction of the Lord.

As we have seen, Acts presents no clear baptismal formula that trumps the Trinitarian one originally established by Jesus. The radical Christocentrism spawned by these passages is unjustified. The movement’s deviation from orthodoxy causes Ron Rhodes to classify Oneness Pentecostalism as a cult. He concludes that, “Oneness Pentecostals set forth a different God, a different Jesus, and a different gospel” and that those “differences with mainstream historic Christianity are not mere peripheral issues but relate to the foundational doctrines upon which Christianity rests.”⁸⁴

⁸³ Ibid.

⁸⁴ Ron Rhodes, *The Challenge of the Cults* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2001) 275.

APPENDIX I

A Reader's Digest Version
A Concise Statement of the Argument

In a non-technical way, this appendix seeks to state the origination of Jesus only baptism, and to demonstrate the interpretive error of the four Acts passage Oneness Pentecostalism employs to support their practice of administering baptism in Jesus' name alone. This statement will avoid the complex arguments previously stated in this book.

Upon a superficial reading of Acts in the King James Version of the Bible, one can see how the first Oneness Pentecostals concluded that the Apostles had administered baptism by a phrase different from the triune formula ("in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Ghost") ordered by the Lord Jesus Christ (Matthew 28:19). In the KJV, those Acts passages declare baptism to have been:

1. "in the name of Jesus Christ" (Acts 2:38).
2. "in the name of the Lord Jesus" (Acts 8:16).
3. "in the name of the Lord" (Acts 10:48).
4. "in the name of the Lord Jesus" (Acts 19:5).

From these verses and differing from the traditional Trinitarian formula, Oneness Pentecostals take "in the name of Jesus" to have been the formula the Apostles repeated over each person who was baptized into the Christian faith. However, the formulaic approach to these verses is not supported by a linguistic, grammatical and contextual understanding of these texts. Though in the KJV version these Acts texts read in almost "cookie cutter" fashion, beneath the surface no such uniformity exists. It is the conviction of my study that the four Acts passages which associate baptism with the name of Jesus do not support the Oneness Pentecostal contention that the Apostles employed a formula any different from the Trinitarian one instituted by Jesus Christ at the end of Matthew's gospel. To have done so, would have removed them from being under the authority of the Lord. In point of fact,

Luke's record of the early church baptisms by the Apostles indicates no particular baptismal formula was employed. Luke's narrative is *descriptive* of events as they took place during the apostolic age and not *didactic* for the purpose of establishing church practices.

The Origin of Oneness Pentecostalism

Historically, the Oneness movement began in the first part of the last century. Early Pentecostals focused upon the study of the book of Acts. According to historian Kenneth Gill,

In April 1913, a Pentecostal holiness meeting was held in Arroyo Seco, California. Between 1,500 and 2,000 Pentecostals, mainly pastors, attended the meetings each night, with hundreds more filling the camp on Sundays. It was here that Robert Edward McAlister, a respected Canadian minister, observed that though Jesus had told His disciples to 'baptize [disciples] in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,' the New Testament invariably records the apostles baptizing only "in the name of Jesus".⁸⁵

From McAlister's observation and preaching at that camp meeting, the distinctive movement of Oneness Pentecostalism was, amidst controversy and division, born.

Subsequently, the movement spawned a Jesus-Unitarianism that opposes the Trinitarian faith expressed in the Bible and stated in the historic creeds and confessions of the Christian church. Oneness Pentecostals view Jesus' incarnation to have been a temporary mode of God's being.

To understand the significance of "baptism in the name of Jesus Christ," the phrase needs to be understood in its apostolic context, that "the name" of Jesus denotes the authority of Jesus.

⁸⁵ Gill, "Dividing Over Oneness."

The Authority of Jesus

Jesus claimed to possess “all authority” (Matthew 28:17, NASB), which He then delegated to the Apostles. The Apostles ministered in His name—they preached, commanded, healed, exorcized demons, and baptized “in the name of Jesus Christ.” The Apostles pursued their ministry in continuity with and under the authority of the Lord Jesus Christ. The early church recognized and submitted to that authority. A consensus of biblical scholarship acknowledges that, above all else, “in the name of” connotes the authority of the Lord Jesus. Therefore when the Apostles invoked His name, they were appealing to, and thus acknowledging, His authority over their ministry even as those who were being disciplined and baptized by the Apostles were acknowledging Jesus’ authority over them.

The Four Acts Texts

We turn now to the four Acts passages which mention the name of Jesus and connect the baptismal rite to His authority.

TEXT ONE

Pentecost Comes to the Desperate

The Jews at Jerusalem

“Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.”

Acts 2:38

In Acts 2:38 Peter appealed to the Pentecost crowd to repent and be baptized in the name of Jesus. The Greek preposition connotes “upon the basis of” Jesus’ name. The prepositional phrase “upon the name of Jesus Christ” is adverbial. It can justifiably be understood to modify either the active and plural imperative verb “repent,” or the passive and singular imperative verb “be baptized,” or both. Because the verbs are joined together by the conjunction “and” (“repent, *and* . . . be

baptized”), the prepositional-adverbial phrase is perhaps best taken to modify both “repent” and “be baptized.” The verse narrates that Peter ordered the crowd to repent “in the name of Jesus Christ,” and individuals in that crowd to be baptized “in the name of Jesus Christ.”

Oneness Pentecostalism errs by referencing “upon [in] the name of Jesus Christ” only to baptism. Because there is no apostolic formula for repentance mentioned in the narrative, then neither can it be inferred that “in the name of Jesus” is a formula for baptism. In referencing his command to repent and be baptized “upon” Jesus’ name, Peter appealed to the Lord’s authority for what he had ordered. In other words, standing in Christ’s stead and beneath His authority, Peter commanded the crowd to repent and individuals to be baptized “in the name of Jesus Christ.” In that there is no formula for repentance in this context, neither is there for baptism.

TEXT TWO

Pentecost Comes to the Despised

The Half-breeds at Samaria

“(For as yet he was fallen upon none of them: only they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus.)”

Acts 8:16

The case of the Samaritans, who had been evangelized and baptized by Phillip in Acts 8, contains the next reference that associates the name of Jesus with baptism. The reader needs to note that verse 16 is explanatory of the baptism the Samaritans had experienced. The opening preposition “for” indicates such. The King James Version correctly places the verse in parenthesis. Phillip had baptized them into the ownership of Jesus Christ before the Apostles arrived at Samaria from Jerusalem.

Upon arrival, Peter and John administered Holy Spirit baptism to them so as to prevent any potential schism between Jewish and Samaritan believers in the apostolic church, a division

already religiously and culturally extant between Jews and Samaritans (See John 4:9). The presence of the Apostles and the baptism of the Spirit served notice to Christian Jews and Samaritans that God had united them together in the church under the authority of the Lord Jesus. As Acts 2, Acts 8 provides no indication of an extant baptismal formula invoked by the Apostles. In the flow of the narrative, Acts 8:16 is explanatory, not didactic.

Luke provides no indication that Samaritans were re-baptized even though their obedience to water baptism preceded their experience of Spirit baptism. To assume that the text contains a Jesus only baptismal formula is to twist the intent of this verse from being parenthetical to prescriptive.

This brings us to the third text.

TEXT THREE

Pentecost Comes to the Discriminated

The Gentiles at Caesarea

“And he [Peter] commanded them to be baptized in the name of the Lord.”

Acts 10:48

When Peter arrived at Caesarea in Acts chapter 10, he encountered a God fearing Gentile by the name of Cornelius. Upon his coming to faith in Jesus, Peter commanded baptism to be administered “in the name of Jesus Christ.” This prepositional phrase again is adverbial, and the question is, which verb does the phrase modify, the main verb “he [Peter] ordered,” or the complimentary infinitive, “to be baptized”? For a good syntactical reason, the phrase can be interpreted to mean that Peter “*ordered them in the name of the Lord* to be baptized.” As such, *in the name of the Lord* modifies the apostle’s order more than the act of baptism. As such, “in the name of the Lord” is not a liturgical formula to be repeated at each believer’s baptism.

Had Luke intended “in the name of the Lord” to be a liturgical saying, he could have done so by employing the quotation marker “that” (Greek, *hóti*). The text could have read, Peter ordered

that “in the name of Jesus” they be baptized. The lack of a discourse marker is a problem for Oneness Pentecostals when comparing the four baptismal texts, especially Acts 10:48, to Acts 3:6 and 4:10.

When he healed the lame man, Peter addressed him, “I do not possess silver and gold, but what I do have I give to you: In the name of Jesus Christ the Nazarene—walk!” (Acts 3:6, NASB). From this verse we observe that “in the name of Jesus Christ” was a clear declarative statement uttered by Peter when he healed the man.

The man’s healing offended the Jews, and Peter was called to defend his action before the council. Before that austere religious group, Peter defended his healing of lame beggar (Acts 3:1-10). He said to the rulers and elders of the nation, “[L]et it be known to all of you . . . that (Greek, *bóti*) by the name of Jesus Christ . . . by this *name* this man stands here before you in good health” (Acts 4:10). The use of *bóti* served notice that Peter recited “in the name of Jesus Christ” at the moment the healing took place.

Acts 10:48 provides no such indicator (*bóti*) that “in the name of Jesus Christ” was repeated over each person who was baptized. The text only indicates that “in the name of Jesus Christ, Peter ordered baptism.

We turn to the final text out of which Oneness Pentecostalism wrongly constructs its idea of Jesus only baptism, Acts 19:5.

<p>TEXT FOUR</p> <p>Pentecost Comes to the Deficient</p> <p><i>The Disciples at Ephesus</i></p> <p>“When they heard <i>this</i>, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus.”</p> <p>Acts 19:5</p>
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The dialog between Paul and the disciples provides insight to the formula that the apostle presumed was to be used in

baptism. “Have ye received the Holy Ghost since ye believed?” he asked, to which they responded, “We have not so much as heard whether there be any Holy Ghost” (Acts 19:2). Their confessed ignorance of the Holy Spirit caused Paul to then ask them, “Unto what then were ye baptized?” (Acts 19:3).

Note that the Ephesian disciples’ confessed ignorance of the Holy Spirit stimulated Paul to ask them, “Unto what then were ye baptized?” (Acts 19:3). It was incredulous to Paul that those baptized disciples had “not even heard whether there was a Holy Spirit.” Presumably, Paul thought that in accord with Jesus’ command, they should have heard of the Holy Spirit’s existence as they were baptized “in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost” (Matthew 28:19).

Paul’s question implies a supposition on his part. It is that the Holy Spirit’s name was normally repeated in the administration of the baptismal rite. In the Apostle’s mind, those disciples should have become acquainted with the name of the Holy Spirit when His name was repeated at the time that a Trinitarian formula was repeated to them as their Christian baptism was administered. The Ephesian disciples should have “heard” of the Holy Spirit then, but because their baptism was from John, they had not. The formula of apostolic baptism included more than the mention of Jesus’ name. It included the name of the Father and the Holy Spirit. The present age, after all, is known as the age of the Spirit.

Conclusion

The Oneness Pentecostal discovery of baptism “in the name of Jesus” only is no discovery at all. Someone once said, “If it’s new it’s not true, and if it’s true, it’s not new.” Though not ironclad, that maxim provides good guidance, especially in light of all the “spinning” of the gospel that is going on today. As regards the triune formula for baptism, are we to think that after nineteen hundred years of church history, Oneness Pentecostalism finally got it right? The question implies a negative answer. This becomes ominous in light of the Acts passages Oneness Pentecostals assume support their notion of Jesus only baptism. These biblical narratives really present no baptism formula at all!

The dogma that forgiveness of sins depends upon the recitation of a particular formula over each person baptized belongs to a different world view than that of New Testament Christianity. Adolf Schlatter observed,

The idea that a baptism in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit was not a baptism in the name of Christ or that baptism in the name of Christ was not a baptism in the name of God or the Spirit belongs to an entirely different conceptual world than that of the New Testament.⁸⁶

Schlatter goes on to propose that such an anti-Trinitarian emphasis may belong to a magical worldview which thinks religion can only be effective “by the invocation of a particular formula.”⁸⁷

Cult expert Ron Rhodes also points out,

In Oneness Pentecostalism salvation is difficult to achieve. In their theology, faith, repentance, water baptism (by immersion) in the name of Jesus only, and baptism in the Holy Spirit (as evidenced by speaking in tongues) are all necessary for the new birth.⁸⁸

Far better it is to trust the word of God, which says that we are justified by grace alone through faith alone (Ephesians 2:8-9), and that we are not saved for reason of a particular baptismal formula that is recited over us.

To Titus the apostle Paul wrote,

But when the kindness of God our Savior and *His* love for mankind appeared, He saved us, not on the basis of deeds which we have done in righteousness,

⁸⁶ Schlatter, *Theology of the Apostles*, 45, Footnote 13.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸⁸ Ron Rhodes, *Challenge of the Cults*, 260-261.

but according to His mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewing by the Holy Spirit, whom He poured out upon us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior, that being justified by His grace we might be made heirs according to *the* hope of eternal life” (Titus 3:4-7).

Salvation comes to us from God through the merits of Christ alone, and not for reason of some particular recited formula. It is our comfort that God made Christ “who knew no sin *to be* sin on our behalf, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him” (2 Corinthians 5:21). Jesus-only-baptismal-salvation negates the straightforward gospel of God and as such, is “another gospel of a different kind” (Galatians 1:6-10).

APPENDIX II

Dealing with Discrepancies

Attempts to reconcile the Different Formulae

Between Jesus' commission to baptize "in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit" (Matthew 28:19), and the apparent apostolic practice of baptizing "in the name of Jesus Christ" (Acts 2:38, etc.), scholars see a disparity, if not outright contradiction. In resolving the difference, one theologian observes that, "there is no simple solution to the problem."⁸⁹ Scholars have sought to account for the distinction between the biblical texts in various ways. This appendix will set forth the approaches that have been taken to resolve the apparent, though not actual, discrepancy between Jesus' baptismal order and the narrative of the Apostles' baptismal practice. We shall begin with the most radical and least acceptable view—that of liberals who do not hold to the authority of the Scriptures.

The Low View of the Higher Critics

In line with their presuppositions and higher critical methodology, liberal scholars propose that Jesus never uttered the Trinitarian formula contained in Matthew's gospel. It is viewed that the church inserted the words in Matthew's gospel long after the life of Jesus. According to New Testament critics, a later editor inserted the Trinitarian baptismal formula into the text of Matthew. In other words, the church put words into Jesus' mouth. Feine traces this view to William J. Coneybeare (1815-1857), who advocated that Matthew 28:19 was, "interpolated [into the Matthew text] . . . at the beginning of the third century."⁹⁰ F.W. Beare writes:

If any such command [i.e., to go to the Gentiles] had been known to the apostles and to the early church,

⁸⁹ J. Rodman Williams, *Renewal Theology*, Volume II (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1996): 286.

⁹⁰ P. Feine, "Baptism," *The New Schaff-Herzog Encyclopedia of Religious Knowledge*, Volume I, Samuel Macauley Jackson, Editor-in-Chief (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1977): 435.

they would not have debated about the legitimacy of such a mission . . . This alone would be enough to demonstrate that this charge of the risen Jesus is a relatively late formation.”⁹¹

The liberal position that Matthew 28:19 is an interpolation by a later editor of that gospel squares neither with the authority of Jesus, Scripture or common sense.

First, thinking that the Trinitarian formula did not directly derive from Jesus, but was later on edited into Matthew by the church, destroys confidence in both the Savior and the Scriptures. One of the great principles coming to the evangelical church out of the Reformation is that of *sola scriptura*, that scripture alone is the final rule for both the determination and practice of the faith. Liberal thinking like that of Beare subjects the authority of both Jesus and the Scriptures to the authority and opinions of men.

Though he rejects their critical approach, Oneness Pentecostal Talmage French notes that, to justify Jesus only baptism, some Oneness scholars “have appealed to textual critical scholarship which denies Jesus ever spoke the words recorded in the Matthew 28:19 account.”⁹² This tactic betrays double-mindedness on the on the part of Oneness scholars. On the one hand, they deny the authority Matthew 28 for reasons of critical scholarship, yet on the other hand, affirm the authority of the Acts passages. True believers cannot accept such double mindedness and logical inconsistency.

Second, upon leaving the gospels and entering into the narrative of the early church’s history, one is immediately struck by the importance baptism assumed in the ministry of the Apostles. Peter ordered repentance and baptism in the same breath (Acts 2:38). One observes that preaching and believing in Acts are inevitably followed by baptism (See Acts 8:12-13; 8:36-38; 9:18; 10:47-48; 16:15; 16:33; 18:8; 19:5; 22:16.). Given the significance

⁹¹ Francis W. Beare, *The Gospel According to Matthew* (Peabody, MA, 1987): 544-545.

⁹² French, *Our God Is One*, 216. French rejects the higher critical view.

placed upon baptism in Acts, the reader is left to question, if at a later date some editor interpolated the commission to baptize into Matthew's gospel, why there was such urgency on the part of the Apostles and apostolic church to immediately observe the rite in the instance of new converts? Is it not reasonable to account for their urgency based upon the fact that the command to baptize new disciples descended from authority of the Lord Jesus himself? If Matthew 28: 19-20 is subtracted from having come from the mouth of Jesus, as radical scholarship does, one is left groping to explain the origin of Christian baptism, and why it assumed such importance in the life of the early church.

Baptism in the name of Jesus Christ relates the practice of it to our Lord and the authority He claimed and the commission He ordered at the end of Matthew's Gospel. There can be no accounting for both the urgency and priority with which the Apostles embraced baptism in their ministries unless its command originated with Jesus, and the only place the command is extant in the Gospels, notwithstanding the veiled mention of it in Mark 16:16, is in Matthew 28:19.

Therefore the order to baptize authentically originated with Jesus, and was not interpolated into Matthew's text by later Christians. Baptism was practiced in "the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit" because Jesus Himself ordered it to be an integral part of the discipleship making process.

The View of Oneness Pentecostalism

The view of Oneness Pentecostalism has been the subject of this booklet. The movement uses the Acts passages associating baptism with "in the name of Jesus" to trump the Trinitarian formula instituted by Jesus, thereby denying the authority of the One who is Lord (Acts 2:36; 10:36, "He is Lord of all"). Assuming the authenticity of the Great Commission as having come from the lips of the Christ, the Son of the living God (Matthew 16:16), one cannot deny Trinitarian baptism on the one hand and uphold Jesus' authority on the other.

"Jesus only" baptism is unacceptable to Bible believing and orthodox Christians for reason that it excludes mention of the

Trinity contained in Jesus' original command. Paul assumed that, in the normal administration of the baptismal rite, the Ephesian disciples should at least have heard of "the Holy Spirit" (See Acts 19:2-3). This booklet demonstrates that it's not clear that the Apostles practiced formulaic baptism "in the name of Jesus" only, and therefore, in administering baptism in the church, the triune formula ought not to be forsaken. Luke's narrative of early church life provides no direct indication of *any* precise recitative baptismal formula. In mentioning "in the name of Jesus," the four texts in Acts simply reference baptism and other ministries the Apostles engaged in—preaching, healing, exorcisms, etc.—to the authority of Jesus.

The View of J. Rodman Williams

J. Rodman Williams, a Pentecostal theologian, acknowledges the difference between Jesus' commission and the apostolic practice of baptism in the New Testament. In his discussion of the formula of baptism, he acknowledges two formulas, baptism in the triune name—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—and baptism in the name of Jesus Christ, or the Lord Jesus.⁹³ Concerning the choice of which formula to employ, he writes, "Both . . . are found in the New Testament and either of them may properly be used in a baptismal ceremony."⁹⁴ As regards using either the triune, or Jesus only, formula, he concludes:

The fact that the early church in Acts did not practice triune baptism is sufficient basis for the church today, despite centuries of baptismal practice, also to baptize in the name of Jesus only. Either practice is surely valid.⁹⁵

Williams' view is commendable. At least he attempts to uphold both the authority of Jesus and the Apostles in

⁹³ Williams, *Renewal Theology*, Volume III, 222.

⁹⁴ Ibid.

⁹⁵ Ibid.

administering the rite. However, his view fails upon the assumption that “the early church in Acts did not practice triune baptism . . .”⁹⁶ As arguments in this paper contend, none of the Acts passages indicate that the Apostles employed a formula any different from that instituted by Jesus at the end of Matthew’s gospel.

The View of F.F. Bruce

In an attempt to reconcile what he views to be the discrepancy between Jesus’ Trinitarian mandate (Matthew 28), and the way that Acts records the Apostles to have carried it out (Acts 2:38; 8:16; 10:19:5, “upon, into or in the name”), respected scholar F.F. Bruce provided a curious insight. He views the Trinitarian formula to be appropriate for pagan Gentiles (“all the nations”), but unnecessary in the instances where God fearing Jews, Samaritans, and Gentiles were baptized. In a footnote he wrote,

The longer expression in Matt. 28:19 (cf. *Didache* 7:1), where baptism is to be “into the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit”, is appropriate for disciples of all nations (*i.e.* Gentiles), turning from paganism to serve the living God, whereas Jews and Samaritans, who already acknowledged the one true God, were required only to confess Jesus as Lord and Messiah.⁹⁷

In light of the grammatical, syntactical, and contextual aspects inherent within the Acts baptismal texts which deny the existence of any liturgical repetition of “in the name of Jesus Christ,” Bruce’s attempt to reconcile the Trinitarian formula with ‘Jesus Only’ baptism though possible, is unnecessary. If left to speak for themselves, the four Acts texts provide no indication, in submission to the authority of Jesus and in the administration of the baptismal rite, that the Apostles employed words different from those instituted by the Lord at the end of Matthew’s Gospel.

⁹⁶ Ibid.

⁹⁷ Bruce, *The Book of Acts*, 181, Footnote 32.

The Lordship of Jesus View

Through detailed study of the four Acts passages where “in the name” appears, we discovered that any perceived contradiction between Jesus’ institution of the triune baptismal formula recorded in Matthew, and apostolic and early church’s application of it is only apparent, not actual. It is not discernable that the Apostles employed a different formula from that which Jesus initially prescribed. In fact, the Acts narrative points to no formula at all. Paul’s assumption that in addition to the name of Jesus, baptism was also routinely performed in the name of the Holy Spirit (The Ephesian disciples, Paul assumed, should have heard of the name of the Holy Spirit when they were baptized.), the name (presumably the Father’s also) of whom the Ephesian disciples said they had not even heard of (Acts 19:2-3). That the Ephesian disciples should have heard of the name of the Holy Spirit in their baptisms contradicts the notion of Oneness Pentecostals that baptism is to be performed only in Jesus’ name.

By using “in the name of Jesus Christ,” the Apostles referenced the practice of baptism back to the authority of Jesus. The employment of this phrase served notice that, “the message of salvation in Jesus proclaimed by the church is in direct continuity with the ministry and teaching of Jesus.”⁹⁸

The four Acts passages, in which baptism is associated with Jesus’ name, are descriptive of but not prescriptive for administering the rite. As Beasley-Murray notes, “Baptism in the name of the Lord Jesus, whatever else it came to imply, was in the earliest time a baptism ‘for the sake of’ the Lord Jesus and therefore in submission to Him as Lord and King.”⁹⁹

⁹⁸ Richard N. Longenecker, “Acts,” *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary*, Volume 9, Frank E. Gaebelin, General Editor (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1981): 218.

⁹⁹ G.R. Beasley-Murray, *Baptism in the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1962): 101.

READER'S NOTES

“IN THE NAME OF JESUS”

Oneness Pentecostalism & *Jesus Only* Baptism

“Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world. Amen.”

Jesus, Matthew 28:19-20, King James Version

“Either God is both three and one (as Trinitarians believe and Unitarians deny) or God is only one (as Unitarians like Oneness Pentecostals believe and Trinitarians deny). There is no bridging this divide without losing the Trinity itself, for He is the God we worship.”

Michael Foust, *Christianity Today* Blog

“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.”

Peter, Acts 2:38, King James Version

“Baptism ‘in the name’ of the Lord Jesus Christ endures as the premiere issue for Oneness Pentecostalism—a corollary doctrine with the Oneness of God.”

Talmage L. French, Oneness Pentecostal Pastor

“In the Acts passages, we have found that the apostles established no contrary baptismal formula to that originally instituted by Jesus at the end of Matthew’s Gospel. The supposed biblical basis upon which Oneness Pentecostalism derives itself is seriously flawed, as are the heretical inferences that have followed upon the heels of that presumption; namely, conjectures that defy the clear Trinitarian teaching of the New Testament faith.”

Larry DeBruyn, *Guarding His Flock Ministries*

The Author: Larry DeBruyn is a graduate of Taylor University (B.S., 1968) and Dallas Theological Seminary (Th. M., 1974) where he received the Charles A. Nash Award in Church History. He pastored local churches for over forty-one years. He now ministers internationally, having preached, lectured and taught in Australia, the Baltic States, Hungary, New Zealand and the Ukraine. He has written three previous books, been published in Christian magazines, theological journals and numerous on the Internet, including his discernment-apologetics website, *Guarding His Flock Ministries* (www.guardinghisflock.com). Currently with his wife of forty-four years, he resides in New Palestine, Indiana. Together, they have two grown sons.