

Water Baptism and Salvation

A Response to the Teaching of the Church of Christ

By Keith Johnson, M.Div.

(Keith wrote this article while completing his M.Div. at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School. A number of comments and suggestions by Trevor Mander have been added to the end of the article. Trevor had completed his M.Div. at Southern Evangelical Seminary a couple of years earlier. The opinions do not contradict Mr Johnson's main thesis and presumably were used to consider alterations to the good work he had already done.)

What must one do in order to be saved? This is an essential question. Some churches known as the Churches of Christ (particularly those associated with the Chicago and Boston Churches of Christ) aggressively teach that unless one believes in Christ and is baptized in their church for the forgiveness of sins, then he or she can not be saved.

This paper is a response to the assertion that water baptism is a condition for salvation. First, I will present four arguments the Church of Christ commonly uses to teach that Baptism is a necessary condition for salvation. The material I will present in the first section comes from three sources: a book called "What's Baptism All About?" by Herbert Mjord (who is a Church of Christ minister), an evangelistic tract by the Sycamore Church of Christ, and my personal experience from talking with members of the Church of Christ.

To fairly represent the viewpoint held to by the Church of Christ I will present their arguments as they would without initially critiquing them. This will necessitate me making assertions that I may not agree with. However, I will respond to these arguments in the second section of the paper. In addition I am using endnotes, not to cite references, but to aid the reader by expanding or clarifying points I will make. The purpose of this paper is to answer one question: Is water baptism a necessary condition for salvation?

ARGUMENTS IN SUPPORT OF WATER BAPTISM AS A CONDITION FOR SALVATION (AS PRESENTED BY REPRESENTATIVES OF THE CHURCH OF CHRIST)

I. First, one advocating this view would argue as follows: The consistent pattern recorded in the book of Acts with regard to baptism was this: Unbelievers heard the gospel and were immediately baptized when they responded with faith. Peter told a group of people who responded to his sermon (Acts 2:38), "Repent and let each one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus..." In Acts 2:41 it records, "So then, those who had received his word were baptized..." Another example of this is Acts 8:12 "But when they believed Philip preaching the good news about the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, they were being baptized, men and women alike." Later in Acts 8 Philip preached the gospel to an Ethiopian eunuch. In response to the gospel message the eunuch said (v. 36b), "Look! Water! What prevents me from being baptized?" Acts 10 recorded Peter's first ministry to Gentiles. After sharing the gospel message with a Gentile named Cornelius and seeing him receive the Holy Spirit, Peter said (v. 47), "Surely no one can refuse the water for these to be baptized who have received the Holy Spirit just as we did, can he?"

Paul also continued this practice in his ministry. His first convert in Europe was a woman named Lydia who lived in Philippi. Acts 16:14b records, "...the Lord opened her heart to

respond to the things spoken by Paul." Verse 15 records that she was "immediately baptized."

The same is true for the Philippian jailer (Acts 16:30-33). He, "immediately was baptized, he and all his household." Other examples include Acts 19:3-5 and Acts 22:16. The thrust of these verses is best stated by Mjord: "No one is counted a Christian in the book of Acts until he is baptized." (pg. 24) Next, one holding this view would probably argue the following.

II. The Apostles included the necessity of water baptism in their gospel presentation, making it a necessary condition for salvation. One believing baptism is necessary for salvation would argue that people were not baptized because they were already Christians but to become Christians.

Consider the application of Peter's first evangelistic message in Acts 2:38. He said, "Repent and let each one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus for the forgiveness of your sins...." Peter didn't say be baptized because you are a Christian, but be baptized so that your sins may be forgiven making water baptism necessary for salvation. Other examples of this include Acts 10:48; 19:1-7; and 22:16.

III. Next a Church of Christ representative might argue that Jesus himself made water baptism a necessary condition for salvation. In his commission to his disciples in Mark 16:15-16 Jesus said, "Go into all the world and preach the gospel to all creation. He who has believed and has been baptized shall be saved..." Here Jesus himself said that one must be baptized in order to be saved. Jesus didn't say that belief alone results in salvation but that faith accompanied by baptism brings salvation. Jesus also alluded to the need for baptism in John 3:5 in his evangelistic message to Nicodemus. he states: "Truly, truly I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God." One who believes this would argue that the phrase "of water" was a reference to water baptism and making baptism a condition for being born again.

IV. Finally, one holding this view would argue that the Bible describes baptism as conferring the benefits of salvation. They would assert that writers like Paul described baptism as conferring the benefits of salvation (Rom 6:4,5; Col 2:12-13; Gal 3:27). Mjord states exactly this (pg. 25): "Because baptism is a means of grace, it confers the sure mercies of Jesus Christ to those who have faith. Then all that is associated with baptism belongs to the believer." Mjord argues that I Peter 3:21 is an example of this: "And corresponding to that, baptism now saves you--not the removal of dirt from the flesh, but an appeal to God for a clear conscience--through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead." Mjord states (pg. 18), "Peter is saying that baptism saves you when you have a clear conscience through the resurrection of Jesus. One can have a clear conscience through Christ only when one believes in Jesus Christ as his Savior and Lord."

Paul also connected the necessity of water baptism with salvation in Romans 6. In verses 3 and 4 he wrote, "Or do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? Therefore we have been buried with him through baptism into death, in order that as Christ was raised from the dead...so we too might walk in newness of life." Paul's readers would have understood this to be a reference to water baptism. They would think about the day they were baptized (and came to know Christ) and were given new life from their baptism in water. They wouldn't think that being immersed in water alone

brought salvation but that being baptized accompanied by faith brought them into new life in Christ.

In summary a representative of the Church of Christ would argue that the New Testament writers and Jesus taught that water baptism was a necessary condition for one to be saved. What follows is my response to this position. Before I will respond to these four arguments I will present three preliminary arguments that form an essential context for evaluating water baptism and salvation.

ARGUMENTS IN SUPPORT OF FAITH ALONE, APART FROM WATER BAPTISM, AS A NECESSARY AND SUFFICIENT CONDITION FOR SALVATION

I. The Greek word βαπτίζω, that we often translate "baptize," is used in a variety of ways in the New Testament. According to BAGD, βαπτίζω means to "dip, immerse, or wash." βαπτίζω is used of Jewish ritual washings (Mark 7:4), the baptizing done by John the Baptist (Mat. 3:6-17), and Christian baptism (Matt. 28:18-20' Acts 2:38,41). In addition βαπτίζω also has a number of figurative uses. In Luke 12:50 Jesus said, "but I have a baptism to be baptized with..." referring to the suffering he would experience. In Matt. 3:11 John contrasted his baptism (with water) and the "baptism by fire" (figurative use) that Jesus would bring. Acts 1:5 and 2:1-13 records that this "baptism" took place at Pentecost when the Holy Spirit was given. I Cor. 12:13 also used baptism (figuratively pointing to the work of the Holy Spirit).

This all demonstrates that language is flexible. The fact that βαπτίζω had a variety of meanings is an essential starting point in our discussion. It implies that the meaning of βαπτίζω must be determined by the context. Yet this is where the Church of Christ often errs -- assuming that every reference to βαπτίζω must have been a reference to water baptism. For sake of clarity, when I use the word baptism I will be referring to water baptism by immersion, unless otherwise noted.

II. The question at hand is not, "Does baptism accompanied by faith in Christ result in salvation?" Both sides agree that it does. The question rather is this: Is water baptism a necessary condition for salvation such that faith, without water baptism, means that one can not be saved? The Church of Christ would also agree that faith is a necessary condition for salvation but not a sufficient condition.

III. To determine whether water baptism is a necessary condition for salvation one must study salvation not baptism. The importance of this can be illustrated as follows. Imagine that one was studying Luke 18:18-23. A rich young ruler said to Jesus, "'Good teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?' And Jesus said to him, 'You know the commandments...'" Jesus then listed five of the ten commandments and told the ruler to sell all his possessions. This appears to teach salvation by works. Imagine that someone concludes then that he or she must study all the passages in the Bible on good works. Consider James 2:14-26. James said (v. 14), "What use is it, my brethren, if a man says he has faith, but he has no works? Can that faith save him?" In verse 24 James continued, "You see that a man is justified by works, and not by faith alone. " After studying these and related passages on good works one might conclude that salvation results from faith plus good works.

However, we know from the rest of Scripture (Rom. 1-3; Eph 2:8,9; John 3:16-20) that we are not saved by works.⁶ The Church of Christ often uses this same approach with baptism. The question, "How am I saved?" is answered by studying passages on baptism. Therefore, to properly answer the question, "Is water baptism a necessary condition for salvation?" we must first consider another question: What must one do in order to be saved? In contrast with a handful of scriptures (Acts 2:38; Mark 16:15-16; I Pet. 3:21) that relate baptism (in some sense) to salvation are hundreds of verses on salvation that say nothing about baptism. With this background I will respond to the arguments put forth by the Church of Christ.

IV. The historical data we have, particularly in the book of Acts, does suggest that individuals who professed faith in Christ were immediately baptized. Here I believe the Church of Christ has made an accurate observation. The N.T. pattern is different from the pattern practiced, for example, in most Baptist churches where an individual is baptized some time later after they express faith in Christ. Our modern approach to baptism often forms context from which we evaluate these passages. This may lead to confusion when we read through passages in the New Testament like Mark 16:15; I Pet. 3:21; Rom 6:3-5 and others. But, an important distinction needs to be made. The historical fact that many people in the book of Acts, who placed their faith in Christ, were immediately baptized does not make water baptism a necessary condition for salvation. A Church of Christ representative would probably agree with this statement but respond that the Apostles did include baptism in their gospel message. this argument will be considered next.

V. The claim made by Church of Christ representatives that because the apostles included water baptism in their gospel message they believed it a necessary condition for salvation is false. In Acts 2:38 Peter said, "Repent and let each one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus for (Greek: εἰς) the forgiveness of your sins..." Two points can be made about this passage. First, Peter's statement was in response to a general question by his listeners (v. 37b), "what shall we do?" Peter said "Repent and be baptized." Peter was fulfilling what Jesus had commanded him to do in Matt. 28:18-20 ("make disciples...baptizing them"). Second, although Peter linked repentance and water baptism to the forgiveness of sins it does not clearly make baptism a condition for salvation. The Greek preposition εἰς (translated "for" by NAS) according to BAGD has a broad range of meanings which can include purpose ("in order that") or result ("with the result").

Although Peter's command to repent and be baptized is clear, the logical connection to forgiveness of sins is somewhat cloudy. If I say, "Repent and come to the front of the church so that you may have eternal life," I may or may not believe coming forward is a necessary condition for salvation. But, if I clearly taught elsewhere that repentance/belief alone was sufficient no one would think coming forward is necessary for salvation.

In contrast to this one statement by Peter are many other examples in the Scriptures where forgiveness of sins is connected to repentance alone. Consider Peter's second sermon in Acts 3:19. he said, "Repent and return, that your sins may be wiped away...(no mention of baptism)." In Acts 8:36, 37 the Ethiopian eunuch asked Philip if he would baptize him. In verse 37 Philip responded, "If you believe with all your heart you may." While preaching to Cornelius in Acts 10:43 Peter said, "Of Him all the prophets bear witness that through His name everyone who believes in Him receives forgiveness of sins." Again no mention of baptism. The example of Cornelius is significant because Cornelius received the Holy Spirit before he was baptized. Peter responded (v. 47), "Surely no one can refuse the water for

these to be baptized who have received the Holy Spirit just as we did, can he?" Here we have clear evidence of a genuine believer who had not been baptized.

A Philippian jailer asked (Acts 16:30) an important question to Paul and Silas: "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" In response (v. 31) Paul and Silas said, "Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you shall be saved." Paul didn't include water baptism! After the jailer responded Paul baptized him. The more consistent pattern therefore seems to be this. Unbelievers heard the gospel and responded. Then they were immediately baptized (immersed) in water at moment of faith. The preaching of the apostles does not demonstrate that baptism is a necessary condition for salvation. Paul in fact drew a clear distinction between the preaching of the gospel and baptism when he said, "For Christ sent me not to baptize, but to preach the gospel..." (I Cor 1:17)

VI. The claim that Jesus made water baptism a necessary condition for salvation is also false. Although it is possible that John 3:5 is an allusion by Jesus to water baptism it is unlikely. Let us then consider Jesus' statement in Mk. 16:16, "He who has believed and has been baptized shall be saved..."¹¹ Does this prove that Jesus believed water baptism was a necessary condition for salvation?

The position of the Church of Christ with regard to this passage can be stated via a syllogism:

Premise #1: Anyone who believes in Jesus and is baptized will be saved.

Premise #2: Although Joe believes in Jesus, he has not been baptized.

Conclusion: Joe will not be saved.

However, this argument is not a valid one.¹² The invalidity of this argument form can be shown by considering a different example.

Premise #1: Everyone who is enrolled at Northwestern and lives in a dorm is a college student.

Premise #2: Joe does not live in a dorm.

Conclusion: Joe is not a college student.

Obviously this is false. Joe may be a Northwestern student who lives in an apartment off campus. This logical fallacy is often called the "Fallacy of Negative Inference." The Church of Christ commits this fallacy by arguing that passages like Mark 16:16 teach that one must be baptized to be saved. All this passage says is that baptism plus belief results in salvation. This passage says nothing about one who places their faith in Christ but has not been baptized. Therefore, the claim made by the Church of Christ that Jesus made baptism necessary for salvation can not be supported by this passage.

To prove that water baptism is necessary for salvation a Church of Christ representative must produce a verse like Mark 16:16b ("he who disbelieves is condemned") stating that without water baptism one can not be saved.¹³ Finally consider Jesus' words to the thief on the cross (who more than likely was not taken off the cross and baptized before he died), "Truly I say to you, today you shall be with me in paradise." This brings us to the question, "What is the necessary and sufficient condition for salvation?"

VII. The overwhelming testimony of Scripture is that faith alone is both a necessary and sufficient condition for salvation. By necessary and sufficient I mean that not only is faith necessary for salvation (both sides agree about this), but that faith is also sufficient.¹⁴ A

study of the word group believe, belief, faith, and save will demonstrate this. The Greek verb πιστεωω (that is translated "believe") occurs 248 times in the N.T. and can mean believe, trust, or entrust. πιστεωω occurs 100 times alone in the gospel of John. This is not surprising. John wrote, "But these things have been written that you may believe (πιστεωω) that Jesus is the Christ...and that by believing you may have life in His name." (Jn. 20:31) In John 1:12 John wrote that all "who believe in His name" are children of God. John 3:16 recorded, "whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life." Also consider John 3:18 and 7:38, 39.

In Peter's second sermon (Acts 10:43) he said, "everyone who believes in Him receives forgiveness of sins." Another example from Acts 16 is the Philippian jailer. Paul said, "Believe in the Lord Jesus and you will be saved..." In Rom. 1:16 Paul said that the gospel is the power of God to salvation to all who "believe." In Rom. 3:21-26 Paul talked about how unrighteous sinners can stand in the presence of a righteous God. Paul described how God "justifies" sinners (v. 22). "this righteousness from God comes through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe." (NIV) In Rom. 4:1-12 Paul argued that Abraham was saved, not because he was circumcised, but through faith ("belief"). In Rom 10:9 Paul stated, "if you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you shall be saved..." In Eph. 1:13 Paul wrote, "after listening to the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation-- having also believed, you were sealed in Him..." The noun form of πιστεωω is πιστις and occurs 244 times in the New Testament. It can mean faithfulness, trust, faith, or refer to a set of beliefs. The following passages use πιστις (faith or belief) in reference to salvation: Rom 5:1, 2; Gal 2a;16; 3:2, 5, 6, 24, 26; Eph 2:8, 9. None of these passages link baptism to salvation. The Greek word translated save is σωζω. It occurs 111 times in the New Testament. None of the following passages present water baptism as a condition for salvation: John 3:17; 10:9; Acts 2:21; 4:12; 11:14; 15:1, 11; 16:30; I Cor 1:18, 21; 15:5. the only passage linking baptism to salvation is I Pet. 3:21. It is dealt with next. What we see from a study of the Greek word group believe (verb-- πιστεωω), faith (noun-- πιστις), and save (verb-- σωζω) is that faith alone¹⁵ is the necessary and sufficient condition for salvation.

VIII. Passages that describe baptism as conferring the benefits of salvation may be referring to something other than water baptism or may be using baptism in a symbolic way. Consider I Cor. 12:13. Paul wrote, "For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body...we were all made to drink of one Spirit." In what way was Paul using the word baptism? Although the exact meaning of this passage is disputed, what is clear is that Paul used the word baptize figuratively. The Holy Spirit did not baptize us in water. Rather, this "baptism" involved our inauguration into the family of God. Paul argued similarly in Rom 6:4, 5; Gal. 3:27; and Col 2:12, 13.

I want to consider two passages: Rom. 6:4, 5 and I Pet. 3:21. In Rom 6:1 Paul responded to an objection raised against justification by faith. The objection is that if we are under grace, won't our motivation be to sin? Paul argued that the reason being under grace is not an excuse for sin is because believers have died to sin. As evidence of this he pointed to baptism (v. 3). "do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus have been baptized into his death?" Paul was saying, "Wait a minute; you don't understand. When you placed your faith in Christ you were joined to Christ. Just as he died, was buried, and was raised to new life so were you (see v. 4)."

From our survey of Acts we saw that individuals were baptized at the time of faith. Paul was pointing these believers back to their baptism (when many of them presumably placed their faith in Christ). He was saying, "Don't you know that when you were baptized you were taking place in the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ? While you were being baptized in water, something far more important happened--you were baptized into Christ."

In other words their water baptism had a very rich symbolism. It pictured their participation as believers in the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ. This understanding of Rom. 6:3-5 does not imply that baptism is a necessary condition for our salvation but an attendance circumstance that witnesses what takes place at conversion in the spiritual realm. Therefore Christian baptism is quite different from the baptism of John the Baptist because it points to what Christ accomplished on the cross.

I will now consider Peter's statement about baptism found in I Pet. 3:21. Peter wrote, "And corresponding to that baptism now saves you—not the removal of dirt from the flesh, but an appeal to God for a good conscience--through the resurrection of Jesus Christ." Regardless of one's views on water baptism, this confusing passage does not teach that water baptism (alone) saves.¹⁶ Peter said, "not the removal of dirt" (i.e. water baptism).

Yet, to what kind of baptism was Peter referring? Did he mean water baptism or was he using the term in a figurative way? If he was referring to water baptism, in what sense did it save? Peter compared baptism to Noah's experience (v. 20). Noah was saved by an ark through water. This water represented God's judgment upon wickedness. Peter suggested that this deliverance of Noah through the waters of God's judgment was symbolic of baptism. Hence we see another part of the imagery of baptism.

From Rom. 6 we know that baptism pictures our co-participation with Christ in his death and resurrection. Christ experienced God's judgment (on our behalf) in his death and burial. Yet, He was also raised. Therefore water baptism also pictures our joining with Christ in passing through God's judgment to new life. We will safely pass through God's judgment because we were joined to Christ and he was raised from the dead. In what sense does the baptism Peter talks about save? The baptism that involves being joined to Christ, passing through the waters of God's judgment, and raised to new life saves us from God's judgment.¹⁷ Like the ark that saved Noah from the flood our relationship with Christ protects us from God's judgment. Peter probably meant this message to be a source of hope to believers who were experiencing persecution for their faith.

IX. Making baptism a condition for salvation is similar to the mistake some in the early church made who taught that unless a person was circumcised he or she can not be saved. Acts 15:1-21 summarizes that the early church clearly rejected circumcision as necessary for salvation not just because it was no longer valid but because it doesn't save. Paul vigorously refuted this heresy in his letter to the Galatians where he argued that it is by faith alone that we are saved (Gal. 2:16 and 3:1-27). He also argued that Abraham (Rom 4:1-25) was saved before he was circumcised. I believe the Church of Christ makes a similar mistake with baptism.¹⁸

X. Finally, the fact that baptism is not a necessary condition for salvation does not detract from its importance. Perhaps the Church of Christ does not want to see baptism ignored as unimportant. This is a valuable desire. However, it is not necessary to make baptism a

condition for salvation in order for it to remain important. Jesus commanded it (Matt. 28:19-20). Is that not enough?

In summary I have considered four arguments commonly put forth by those who believe that water baptism is a necessary condition for salvation and shown them to be false. We can rest assured in the consistent witness of Scripture that faith in the Lord Jesus Christ is the necessary and sufficient condition for salvation. It is unfortunate that those who teach this doctrine often rob genuine believers of an assurance of their salvation and a rich understanding of what water baptism really pictures--namely, a person's new identity in Christ.

ENDNOTES

1. One believing that baptism is necessary for salvation would point out that baptism is not a "work" (cf. Eph 2:8) added to salvation but a necessary condition that must accompany faith.
2. Bauer, Walter, *A Greek English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, (Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1958), pg. 131-132.
3. Specific examples will be examined later including Rom. 6:3-5, Col. 2:12-13, and Gal 3:27.
4. I realize that some who believe that the proper mode of baptism is sprinkling or washing might disagree with this point. Although it seems to me that the consistent mode of baptism in the New Testament (from a word study of the Greek word we translate baptize) is immersion, the proper mode of baptism is not crucial to this discussion.
5. Logicians use the terms necessary and sufficient to describe conditions that must exist for a given event to occur. A necessary condition is a circumstance that must exist for an event to occur. For example having gas in one's car is a necessary condition for it to go. However, gas in the tank is not a sufficient condition for the car to run. The battery must be hooked and be charged, the wiring must be functioning, the ignition must be on, etc... A sufficient condition is a circumstance in whose presence a given event must occur. I am going to argue that faith is not only a necessary condition for salvation but that it is also a sufficient condition for salvation.
6. A solution to this apparent contradiction is to understand the context in which Jesus addressed the rich young ruler. What point was he trying to make? With regard to Jam. 2:14-26, James used "justify" in a different way that Paul did in Rom 4 when he talked about Abraham. Paul's justification was legal and based solely on Abraham's faith. James' use of "justify" would be similar to the word vindicate. James was talking about the nature of true faith (that saves) in contrast to false faith. James was arguing that true faith demonstrates itself in good works. It is in this sense that "faith without works" does not save.
7. The New Testament pattern also seems different from the practice of baptizing infants as practiced in many churches. As I mentioned earlier, however the mode of baptism is not crucial to this discussion. I recognize though that one who believes in baptism of infants might present slightly different arguments in favor of faith alone as a necessary and sufficient condition for salvation.
8. It is likely that someone who came to my church for the first time would be confused by this practice. They might mistakenly conclude by watching this process once that coming forward is in fact necessary to become a Christian. I believe this is similar to the problem we have when we look at Acts and see that baptism took place for many at the moment of faith. A Church of Christ representative might ask this question: Why then did Peter include water baptism in his call? This question is somewhat beyond the scope of this paper, however it probably related to John's baptism of repentance. Acts 19:1-10 is an interesting example of this because Paul rebaptized some individuals who were baptized by John.
9. This doesn't mean that everyone who became a Christian in the N.T. was baptized at the moment of faith. Consider the thief on the cross (Luke 23:39-43). He said to Jesus, "remember me when You come in Your kingdom!" In response Jesus didn't say, "Get baptized!" but rather (v. 43), "Truly I say to you, today you shall be with me in Paradise."

10. This would be somewhat anachronistic. Christian baptism has a different meaning than the baptism of John. Even if Jesus is alluding to water baptism it is not clearly teaching that baptism is necessary for salvation. At best this passage is unclear.

11. A different kind of argument could be made against this statement by Jesus. Some of the oldest Greek manuscripts do not contain verses 9-20. It could be argued that this longer ending of Mark was added later. This would resolve this problem verse in a different way by stating that it was not originally included in Mark's gospel and therefore irrelevant.

12. Validity in an argument has nothing to do with whether the premises of the argument are true or false but rather with the form of the argument. Thus the following argument is valid (in form) even though its major premise and conclusion are untrue.

Premise #1 If the sun shines then there are green men on the moon.

Premise #2 The sun is shining.

Conclusion There are green men on the moon.

If an argument can be shown to be valid in form it means that if the premises of the argument are true the conclusion will be true as well.

13. In response to this argument a Church of Christ representative might present the following syllogism to prove this argument doesn't work.

Premise #1: All who have faith in Christ will be saved.

Premise #2: Joe does not have faith in Christ.

Conclusion: Joe will not be saved.

The Church of Christ representative would point out that although this is an invalid argument form (a fallacy of negative inference) the conclusion is still true (i.e., Joe is not saved if he does not believe). In response I would point to Mark 16:16b ("but he who disbelieves will be condemned."). The text has given us an additional premise. Consider instead the following argument.

Premise #1: He who believes will be saved.

Premise #2: He who does not believe will not be saved (Mark 16:16b).

Premise #3: Joe does not believe.

Conclusion: Joe will not be saved.

The conclusion follows from the second premise. In a similar way therefore, for water baptism to be a necessary condition for salvation the Church of Christ must produce a passage that explicitly states (like premise #2) that a person who believes and is not baptized can not be saved. There are no such passages.

14. Logicians use the terms necessary and sufficient to describe conditions that must exist for a given event to occur. A necessary condition is a circumstance that must exist for an event to occur. For example having gas in one's car is a necessary condition for it to go. However, gas in the tank is not a sufficient condition for the car to run. The battery must be hooked and be charged, the wiring must be functioning, the ignition must be on, etc... A sufficient condition is a circumstance in whose presence a given event must occur. Returning to my example of a Northwestern student, neither being enrolled at Northwestern nor living in a dorm is a necessary condition to be a college student. This raises a question. What is the necessary and sufficient condition for being a college student? Consider this argument:

Premise #1: If one is enrolled at a university, then one is a college student.

Premise #2: Joe is enrolled at Northwestern (and N.U. is a university).

Conclusion: Joe is a college student.

Being enrolled at a university is therefore both a necessary and sufficient condition for being a college student. I would argue in a similar way that faith is both a necessary and sufficient condition for salvation.

15. By "faith alone" I do not mean intellectual assent. Saving faith involves the mind, will, and heart. There is a debate in Evangelicalism over the question, "What is the true nature of saving faith?" One side argues that it is trusting Christ as Savior while another side says that it is trust in Christ as Savior and submission to Christ as Lord. When I refer to "faith" I am referring to saving faith. In this sense both camps in the Lordship/Grace discussion could be comfortable with my terminology.

16. Therefore this verse would not support the doctrine for baptismal regeneration. There are no verses in Scripture that say that baptism apart from faith saves (brings regeneration).

17. The Living Bible translates I Pet. 3:21, "That by the way, is what baptism pictures for us; in baptism we show that we have been saved from death and doom by the resurrection of Christ." This paraphrase catches the sense of baptism rescuing us from God's judgment--namely, death.

18. This is a weaker argument than others presented previously because it is an argument from analogy. I am suggesting that in the same way some in the early church mistakenly thought (cf. Acts 15:1) that circumcision was necessary for salvation, the Church of Christ mistakenly believes that baptism is a necessary condition for salvation. There is no scripture that directly compares baptism to circumcision. However, in Col 2:11 Paul said, "And in Him you were also circumcised with a circumcision made without hands, in the removal of the body of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ"; Paul was not talking about a physical circumcision but a spiritual one ("made without hands"). Then in the next verse Paul wrote (v. 12), "having been buried with him in baptism, in which you were also raised up with Him through faith in the working of God..." Paul was talking about what it means to be complete in Christ (2:10). Paul seemed to loosely link circumcision and baptism. Why would Paul's readers think that water baptism is a necessary condition for salvation? Paul was describing what God did to them when they placed their faith in Christ (which may have been at the same time they were baptized). Circumcision pictures removing (disabling) of their sin nature. Baptism (v. 12) pictures being joined to Christ and participating in his death, burial, and resurrection.

Comments and Observations by Trevor Mander

Under point 1 (rebuttal) Matt 3:11 is distinguishing between three types of baptism not just between water and fire. The baptism in Acts 1:5 and 2:1-13 are the baptism of the Holy Spirit, they do not say it is the baptism of fire. In Matt 3:11 there is a clear distinction between the Holy Spirit baptism and the baptism of fire, this is especially evident in the Greek text. The baptism of fire in Matt. refers, of course, to the judgment that Christ will send upon the unbelievers at the end of the age. (see the context in Matt 3:12, and it's Old Testament prophecy in Malachi 4:1, and the parallel passage speaking of judgment in Luke 3:16,17.) Thus the baptism of fire is definitely not a figurative use, it is a literal baptism of fire.

Under point V. Just curious, I take it that Keith takes the Acts 8:37 reading that Augustine agrees with. I don't think the longer reading is the original one, just one probably added later by scribes seeing the possibility for misunderstanding and thus wanting to insert a clarifying verse. But you don't put too much stress on the verse anyway so don't bother changing it. :)

VIII The Bible is not using βαπτίζω figuratively just because it uses it in passages not related to water baptism. The literal meaning of βαπτίζω can and is applied to different referents in an equally literal way (water, Holy Spirit, Fire). It does not have a Platonic relationship of meaning to water. The point is that it is only giving in to the modern regeneration people to imply that the *real* meaning is only associated with water, and only *figurative* meaning with anything else. Perhaps just a confusion about what is figurative and what is literal. Literal use of Baptism of Fire would be if I really got blasted (or washed) by fire, figurative use would be if I went through a difficult time.

1 Peter 3:21. What was Noah saved from? Not his sins, but physically. In the same way water baptism does not save us from our sins but is a physical mark of already present spiritual separation from an evil world. You can be literally "saved" from more things than just hell. The act of baptism publicly shows that we are joined with Christ and that we shall not join in the sinful behaviour around us. The entire context of the passage (2:11-4:19) confirms this understanding - the conduct of God's people in the midst of suffering. This passage is *not* talking about being saved from judgment, it is specially addressing believers and giving them strength of their convictions in order to lead holy lives.

X. second paragraph. "It is unfortunate that those who teach this doctrine often rob.." The words "this doctrine" appear to be referring back to what you just said which is that "faith in the Lord Jesus Christ is the necessary and sufficient condition for salvation." It would thus read better to restate the incorrect doctrine rather than using the words "this doctrine". Perhaps, "those who teach baptismal regeneration..." or "who teach that baptism is a necessary condition for salvation..."

Footnote 6. A thought for you. You mention true vs. false faith in James. Does not the Scripture speak rather about living vs. dead faith? Now the question is, are those terms synonymous or are they different. I am thinking that they are not the same. I don't think the context is speaking of non-believers at all. A body without the spirit is not useful for anything but it is still a body, faith without deeds isn't useful for the people around you but it is still faith. Isn't the context believers? You mention vindication, this would be right. Vindication would be before men, justification is before God. Reading through James I don't think it is

speaking of an evangelical message of salvation, I think it's talking about sanctification. Strong language for sanctification? Well, the Bible describes how God gets so sick to the stomach about useless (groups of) believers that he would throw up (Rev.3:16).

Footnote 8. Acts 19:5 is talking about baptism of the Holy Spirit which is specifically contrasted with baptism with water (Matt 3:11). In addition, water is not mentioned in this verse. It appears that the only physical thing that Paul does is to lay his hands on them. They trust in the name of Jesus and God confirms that the *Gentiles* have also received God's salvation by giving them the ability to speak in other tongues/languages.

The first point that Paul was interested in (19:2) was receiving the Holy Spirit, not a different type of water baptism. If he was first talking about a different type of water baptism then that's exactly the argument of baptismal regeneration and reduces the concept of receiving the Holy Spirit as a divine gift related to belief to a concept of receiving the Holy Spirit on the basis of belief plus a particular set of works. You make this very point in footnote 10.

Footnote 16. Baptismal regeneration does not assert that baptism can bring salvation apart from faith. It asserts that baptism is part of real faith. In the same way those who advocate lordship salvation see works as part of real faith and consequently not really works in the Eph 2:8 sense. Thus both baptismal regeneration and lordship salvation *add* a crass system of works onto the true gospel of grace through faith, without seeking to *replace* faith with works (although that is what they are doing).

Footnote 17. Misunderstands 1 Peter. Please read my reference to the verse in my article *Water Works?* The Living Bible is a paraphrase or commentary at this point and gets it completely wrong. A pledge of a good conscience is what it says (relates to doing good works) and not cleansing the heart from sin (1 Peter 3:21 Living). συνειδησεως αγαθης επρωτημα εις θεον

Footnote 18. See my article on Col. 2:12. Yes the circumcision mentioned is spiritual, but so is the baptism (as in Acts 11:16), complementing the message not to rely on human traditions (Col 2:8) Also to quote myself, "It is not 'faith in God that he will forgive sins at the time of being baptized' that is mentioned in this passage but it is 'faith in the power of God, who raised him from the dead.'"