

Q & A—IS THERE A BAPTISMAL FORMULA?

Many apostolic groups believe a specific formula must be said as one is baptized in water for the remission of sins. The foundational passages they use for such a belief are...

Acts 2:38, *“let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins.”*

Acts 8:16, *“...baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus.”*

Acts 19:5, *“...they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus.”*

The common phrase such religious groups focus upon in these passages is *“in the name of Jesus.”* In their minds, this specific phrase, or formula, must be said as one is baptized for the remission of their sins.

Similarly, there are a few Christians who demand the preacher say *“...in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit”* (Matthew 28:19). Must either one of these formulas be said as one is baptized?

Often, our biggest problem is a misunderstanding of the word “name” in these passages. Many act like the literal name of Jesus must be said over one as they are baptized. Yet, being baptized “in the name of” does not necessarily refer to the literal name of Jesus.

Strong’s defines the Greek word “onoma” from which we get the English “name” as, “a “name” (literally or figuratively), (*authority, character*)...”

Thayer’s offers this definition, “the name is used for everything which the name covers, everything the thought or feeling of which is aroused in the mind by mentioning, hearing, remembering, the name, i.e. for one’s rank, authority, interests, pleasure, command, excellences, deeds etc.”

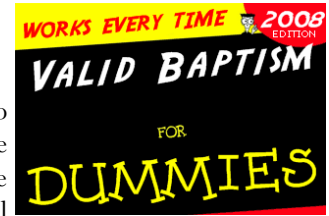
In both definitions, notice the word “name” can reflect the “authority” or “rank” of one. Ultimately, Peter was trying to teach the Jews “Jesus is both Lord and Christ” (2:36). Once they trusted in Him as “Lord and Christ” they

were to obey the one with all authority. This relationship begins as we surrender to God’s will at baptism (see also Galatians 3:27). Thus, being baptized “in the name of...” does not refer to a specific formula, but an act. It is in the act of baptism that we recognize the authority of the Godhead in our lives.

Interestingly, though you may search every case of conversion in the book of Acts you will never find any set formula or any exact wording of a formula said at baptism. The important factor in baptism is what is being done, not said!

If “in the name of the Lord Jesus” is a formula, then must we say it before every deed (see Colossians 3:17)? Apply both lines of logic to this passage and see which one God intended.

Joshua R. Welch



“FRUIT OF THE SPIRIT” GOODNESS

“Goodness,” a “fruit of the spirit” is defined as “uprightness of heart and life” (Thayer). Strong adds that the term refers to “kindness, beneficence.” *Vine’s Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words* defines the root of this word as, “...that which, being good in its character or constitution, is beneficial in its effect.”

It may be easy for us to think a person practicing “goodness” does so through compliments and monetary gifts. Yet, the word is not restricted to these things. In

fact, Trench mentions that Jesus practiced “goodness” as he threw the money changers out of the temple and denounced the scribes and Pharisees (Matthew 21:12-13; 23:13-29).

Therefore, this teaches us “goodness” is not being politically correct. It is not compromising the truth with others for the sake of friendship. In fact, the very opposite is true. Someone who truly practices “goodness” is willing to point out the moral and religious errors of their friends.

Now, this is not all there is to the word. Yet, it is probably a sterner aspect of “goodness” few realize.

Interestingly, Barnabas is called a “good man” in Acts 11:24. Now, his “goodness” may have something to do with his generosity (see Acts 4:34-37). Yet, in Acts 11, it primarily deals with Barnabas and his preaching. He proved his “goodness” by caring enough about lost souls to teach them the truth and encourage them to stick with it! That’s being beneficent! *Joshua R. Welch*

**“BUT THE
FRUIT OF THE
SPIRIT IS...”
(GALATIANS
5:22-23).**

