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*Baptism in the Name of Jesus Christ:
The Truth of the Early Centuries*



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Vinogradsky N. A.

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Baptism is more than tradition — it's a path to Christ shown by the apostles. In *Baptism in the Name of Jesus Christ: Truth of the Early Centuries*, Nikolay Vinogradskiy explores Scripture: Why did early Christians baptize in Jesus' name? What lies behind familiar rites? With warmth and respect, he calls for a return to the simplicity and power of original faith, reflecting on how Jesus' name unites us with God.

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Baptism in the Name of Jesus Christ: The Truth of the Early Centuries

Introduction

Peace to you, dear reader. Baptism is a word we Christians often hear, yet we don't always pause to grasp its essence. It echoes in sermons, appears in the Gospels, and lives in church rituals – from quiet village gatherings to grand urban cathedrals. But what did it mean to those standing by the Jordan, listening to John the Baptist? How did Christ's first followers understand it? And what can it mean for us today, amid so many differing views? This book is my reflection on baptism, its place in faith, and an attempt to return to its roots. I want to understand what Scripture says and how the apostles taught about baptism tied to the name of Jesus Christ, who gave us new life.

When I began pondering this, I was struck by how much is hidden in a single word. Baptism isn't just a ritual we repeat out of habit. It's a link to those who first heard Christ and followed Him. Here lies a vital task: it's not enough for us Christians to merely know baptism exists. We must delve into how it was practiced in the early church, how the apostles – entrusted with Christ's teaching – understood it. They didn't leave us empty ceremonies; they passed down words and practices reflecting Jesus' will. "Whoever receives the one I send receives Me," He said (John 13:20). By listening to them, we listen to Him, and their teaching is an authority worth heeding.

In this crucial matter, I'd like everyone to examine it without prejudice. But I know it's not easy. The Reformation we cherish isn't just the joy of discoveries in Scripture – it's sometimes pain and stress. People often cling to the old and familiar, avoiding deep thought, distracting themselves to stay in that "comfort zone" where everything feels safe. I've felt this myself. There were moments when the Bible made me pause and ask: Am I understanding this right? It's not easy, but I believe truth is worth seeking – especially when it's about what the apostles handed down from Christ.

Humanly speaking, I respect the right of those who see baptism differently, following their traditions. Over centuries of church life, many approaches have emerged: some baptize infants, others wait for maturity; some immerse, others sprinkle; some use varied formulas, others hold to their customs. Each path has its history, and I value that experience. Yet I must say: sometimes we Christians too quickly dismiss what Scripture and the apostles' practice reveal, just because it resembles what "wrong" or "unspiritual" groups in our eyes have done. I've seen people reject ideas without delving in, simply due to bias. It makes me wonder: Are we losing something vital by rejecting what Christ gave through His disciples?

My aim isn't to condemn traditions but to return to the beginning, to what Scripture reveals about baptism. The word "baptism" comes from the Greek baptizō – "to immerse" or "to dip." In everyday life, it might refer to dyeing cloth or someone plunged into worries. But in the New Testament, it became special. John the Baptist called by the Jordan: "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand" (Matthew 3:2). He immersed people in water as a sign of cleansing, but said, "I baptize you with water for repentance, but He who comes after me... will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire" (Matthew 3:11). His baptism was a shadow of what Christ would bring.

Then Jesus came to the Jordan. John hesitated: “I need to be baptized by You, and You come to me?” (Matthew 3:14). But Jesus replied, “Permit it now, for thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness” (Matthew 3:15). He entered the water, the heavens opened, the Spirit descended like a dove, and a voice said, “This is My beloved Son” (Matthew 3:17). This moment showed that baptism is tied to Him, to His mission. Later, He commanded to preach the Gospel and baptize, and the apostles carried this word forward. They taught about baptism linked to Christ, and I wanted to understand how they did it and what they saw in this act.

The apostles unveiled baptism as more than a washing. Paul wrote of immersion into Christ’s death and resurrection (Romans 6:3—4), Peter spoke of salvation through Him (1 Peter 3:21). For them, it wasn’t just a ritual but a step of faith, uniting us with God through Jesus. For us Christians, it’s vital to explore this early church practice. The apostles heard Christ, saw Him, and their teaching is His voice. “Whoever hears you hears Me,” He said (Luke 10:16). We’re called not just to follow habits but to act as they taught, holding their words as authoritative. Together with my readers, I want to discern what they meant by baptism and how it’s tied to the name of Jesus, the center of apostolic faith.

We’re called to examine what the early church did, seeking not just a rite but the meaning the apostles poured into their words. They didn’t leave us confusion – they showed a path rooted in Christ. I believe that by studying this, we can find what He wanted to see in us. Baptism isn’t only a tradition but a call that began with John and continued through Jesus and His disciples. I don’t claim to have all the answers, but I want to trace Scripture’s footsteps, so together with those reading this book, we can see what it reveals to us today.

This book is my thoughts on what baptism meant in the days when faith began. I want to show how the first Christians practiced it, how John prepared the way, how Jesus sanctified it, and how the apostles carried it forward. I don’t reject those who think differently – I invite a look at Scripture and those at the source. As I wrote, I asked myself: What does baptism mean to me? To us all? I hope these pages help you reflect too.

Chapter 1. The Biblical Teaching on Baptism

“Then Peter said, “Repent, and let each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of sins...” (Acts 2:38).

The Book of Acts is not just a narrative of the church’s beginnings – it’s a testimony of how the first Christians lived and what they followed. Amid the many events described there, a clear pattern emerges: baptism in the name of Jesus Christ is mentioned time and again. Five times Acts directly speaks of people receiving this baptism, with a sixth confirmation found in Paul’s words to the Corinthians. Yet today, looking around, I notice many teachings propose other names and formulas for baptism that lack support in Scripture. These ideas may sound convincing, but when I open the Bible, I see the apostles taught one thing: baptism in the name of Jesus Christ. Let’s examine six undeniable examples from Scripture that show how it was.

The first instance is the birth of the New Testament church. After Peter’s first sermon, standing with the other apostles before the crowd in Jerusalem, he spoke of Christ, crucified and risen (Acts 2:14). Moved by his words, the people asked, “What shall we do?” (Acts 2:37). Peter’s answer was direct: “Repent, and let each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of sins” (Acts 2:38). This wasn’t a suggestion or one option among many – it was a command given with apostolic authority. Those who accepted his word didn’t hesitate: about three thousand were baptized that day (Acts 2:41). They didn’t seek other ways – they did as Peter said, entering the church through water baptism in the name of Jesus.

The second example is in Samaria. Philip came there preaching about the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ (Acts 8:12). The Samaritans, a people often seen as outsiders by Jews, believed this message. What happened next? They were baptized “in the name of the Lord Jesus” (Acts 8:16). There’s no hint of another formula or name. Philip, a disciple of the apostles, followed the same practice as Peter, and the Samaritans received baptism tied to Christ’s name. This shows the message of baptism remained consistent, no matter who received it.

The third case is the household of Cornelius, the first Gentile welcomed into the church. As Peter preached to him and his family, the Holy Spirit fell on them during his words – a sign God had accepted them (Acts 10:44—47). What did Peter do next? He “commanded them to be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ” (Acts 10:48). Even for Gentiles, unfamiliar with Moses’ law, baptism was linked to Jesus’ name. Peter didn’t invent something new – he echoed the same command from Jerusalem, showing Christ unites all believers through His name.

The fourth example takes us to Ephesus, where Paul met disciples of John the Baptist. He asked, “Into what then were you baptized?” (Acts 19:3). Learning they knew only John’s baptism of repentance, not Christ’s, Paul told them about Jesus. What followed? “They were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus” (Acts 19:5). Paul didn’t leave them with their prior baptism, as it wasn’t complete without Christ. He brought them to the same practice all apostles taught – baptism in the name of Jesus.

The fifth instance is Paul’s own baptism. After meeting Christ on the road to Damascus, he was blinded and waited three days in prayer. Ananias, a disciple of the Lord, came and said, “Arise, be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on the name of the Lord Jesus” (Acts 22:16). Paul, the great apostle, underwent this baptism himself. His experience wasn’t an exception – it was part of the same practice he later brought to others. The name of Jesus washed away his sins, called upon by Paul at Ananias’ instruction, showing how deeply the first Christians trusted its power.

To these five examples, a sixth is added from the letter to the Corinthians. The church there was rife with divisions: some said they followed Paul, others Peter, others Apollos, and some Christ (1 Corinthians 1:12). Paul, hearing this, was indignant and asked, “Is Christ divided? Was Paul crucified for you? Or were you baptized in the name of Paul?” (1 Corinthians 1:13). The answer is obvious: no, they weren’t baptized in Paul’s name. They were baptized in the name of Jesus Christ. Paul uses this as an argument: since they were baptized in Jesus’ name, not anyone else’s, they belong to Christ, not men. His words lose meaning if the Corinthians weren’t baptized in Jesus’ name. It’s as if he’s saying: Jesus died for you, in His name you were baptized – so why divide His church? This is further proof the apostolic practice was clear and uniform.

From these six passages, I see one picture: the apostolic church always baptized in the name of Jesus. Jews in Jerusalem, Samaritans, Gentiles in Cornelius’ house, disciples in Ephesus, Paul himself, and the Corinthians – all, regardless of background, received baptism in the name of Jesus Christ. This isn’t a coincidence or one option among many. When I read Acts, I find no other names or formulas the apostles used for baptism. They preached Christ, and their baptism was tied to Him. Scripture shows this wasn’t just tradition but the foundation of their faith – a faith uniting all who came to God through Jesus.

I can’t overlook that today many teachings offer other paths: different names, words, and rites. But looking at the apostles, I see they didn’t give us such freedom of choice. They baptized in the name of Jesus, a sign of belonging to Christ. These six examples from Scripture aren’t just stories – they’re testimonies calling us back to what the early church did. They show the apostles knew what they believed and passed that knowledge to us. I believe that by delving into their words, we can find the same clarity they had.

Chapter 2. Burial with Jesus

Baptism is not merely a ritual we perform for the sake of tradition. It is a burial with Christ, a moment when we identify with His death and burial. As I read Scripture, I see that baptism is not a superficial act but a profound participation in what Jesus accomplished. Only He died for us – not God the Father, not His Spirit, but Jesus, the Son of Man, took on death and was buried for our sins. If we unite with Him in this, then baptism must be in His name. This isn't a random choice – it reflects who He is to us and what He has done.

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