



**beyond belief**  
a study of salvation



## Beyond Belief A Biblical Study of Salvation

Welcome to *Beyond Belief: A Biblical Study of Salvation*. This study is simply an honest, open-minded look at what the scriptures say about salvation. This study is not designed to degrade any experience or relationship you may have with Jesus Christ. Many of you have accepted Jesus Christ as your savior and have given your heart to Him. No doubt, that was the most important decision of your life. God always responds when we make a sincere effort to draw closer to Him. The point of this study is simple. Was your salvation journey complete when you committed your life to Jesus Christ, or was it just the beginning? The road of religion takes us down many different paths, but this study is not about religion. If you disagree with this study, it has only cost you a few minutes of your time, but if you see where God has more for you, then your time will be well-invested.

Understand, man has taken the Bible and confused its simple message. By incorrectly dividing God's Word, and placing emphasis on certain scriptures while de-emphasizing others, man has made this road map say many different things. Although the Bible contains many mysteries, and some things we may never fully understand, the way of salvation is very clear. As you will see when we walk through the scriptures in **chronological** order, only one message of salvation is possible.

This study is an opportunity to look at what the scripture has to say about salvation. Open your mind and your heart as we study the teachings of Christ and then follow the actions of the disciples after His ascension.

## **Personal Responsibility**

When it comes to our salvation, the Bible has squarely placed the responsibility upon each individual. Second Peter 1:10 says “**give diligence** to make your calling and election sure; for if ye do these things ye shall never fall.” Whether you agree or disagree with this study, by taking the time to read this, you are giving diligence to the greatest need in your life, and that is your salvation.

Phillippians 2:12 tells us to work out **our own salvation** with fear and trembling. We, as individuals, must lay aside any denominational bias and personal preconceptions and study the Word of God with an open mind, and work out our salvation with the understanding that it is the single most important thing we will ever do in our lives.

I dare say most of us have never taken our salvation assurance to this level. Many of us have simply accepted what we have been taught and have never **objectively** explored the scriptures for ourselves. Others of us may have joined a church because we liked the pastor, enjoyed what we felt, and been encouraged by what we heard. Thus, we simply accepted what was presented as the plan of salvation. The problem is the Bible doesn't teach us to accept whatever we are taught or to embrace whatever feels good or sounds good. Proverbs tells us there is a way that seemeth right unto man, but the end thereof are the ways of death (16:25). We must make certain our salvation is completely scriptural and not just what seems right or feels good. Although it is not “religiously correct” to say it, the Bible teaches that narrow is the way that leads to life and few there be that find it (Matthew 7:14).

There is something about this salvation journey that takes us off the broad road and puts us on a narrow path. We cannot follow the crowd or worry about what others may do. We must work out our own salvation with fear and trembling. We must give diligence to the greatest calling in our lives, which is to know we are saved **according to His Word**.

## **A Plan**

First, we must understand God has always had **a plan**. His plan has always been very specific. He has never offered multiple ways to get to Him. We can go all the way back to the beginning of His Word to understand this. God accepted Abel's offering but rejected Cain's. Cain was a farmer, and as a farmer, he brought the fruit of the ground as a sacrifice. Cain was bringing something that was important to him and something he had worked to produce. Yet, God rejected it because it was not according to His divine plan. To our human reasoning, what Cain brought should have sufficed, but it was not what God had required. We must understand, we cannot rely on what seems right and what makes sense to us, since that would change with each individual. We must rely totally on what has never changed, and that is the Word of God.

When God told Noah He would destroy the world, He gave him exact specifications on how he was to build the ark. God did not offer Noah a general concept, but instead gave very specific and detailed instructions.

When we study the Tabernacle Plan in the Old Testament, we find there was a certain order and specific directions for what the priest must do in order for sins to be forgiven. The priest could not alter this in any way and live. He had to follow the specific and detailed plan as it was laid out for him by God.

The Bible clearly tells us He is the same yesterday, today and forever (Hebrews 13:8). We have not arrived at this dispensation to find that, all of a sudden, God is offering us a buffet line of whatever we choose for our salvation. God still has a **very clear** and **specific plan**.

## Foundation

Everything that endures is built on a solid foundation. The foundation we will use for this study are the very scriptures that teach us how to study the Word of God.

<sup>16</sup>**ALL scripture** is given by inspiration of God and is profitable for Doctrine....

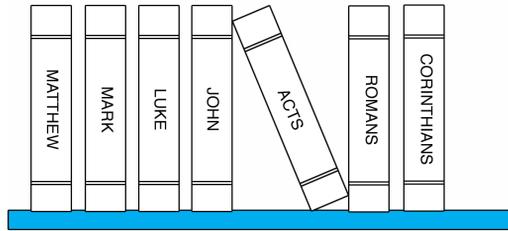
II Timothy 3:16

If we are to work out our salvation with fear and trembling, and if we are to make our calling and election sure, we must first be certain that we take **all** scriptures related to salvation and doctrine. We cannot pick and choose only the scriptures we are familiar with or select just the ones that fall within our comfort zone and still be assured of our salvation. Thus, the first step in an objective study of salvation is to take **all scripture**. The second step is that we must **rightly divide** the Word.

<sup>15</sup>Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, **rightly dividing the word of truth.**

II Timothy 2:15

In the above scripture, Paul was instructing Timothy on the importance of correctly dividing the Word. Since Paul spoke of a right way to divide the Word, there must, obviously, be a wrong way. Therefore, in order to rightly divide the Word, let's explore what the Bible says about salvation one book at a time and with an awareness of the **chronological order** in which the events of the New Testament occurred.



In this study we will start with the four gospels: Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, which all record the **words of Christ**. We will examine the things Jesus said in relation to salvation, and then we will go to the next book, the Book of Acts: the book where the **church first began**. In the Book of Acts, we will see where the things Christ taught during His ministry are totally fulfilled.

The final scripture we will use as part of our foundation is found in Hebrews.

<sup>3</sup>How shall we escape, if we neglect **so great salvation**; which at the first began to be **spoken by the Lord**, and was **confirmed unto us by them that heard him**;

Hebrews 2:3

Hebrews plainly lays out the formula for this great salvation:

1. Find what **was first spoken by the Lord**, which will take us to the four gospels.
2. Find out what was **confirmed by those that heard Him**. The only place where we can find this confirmation is in the book of Acts.

Following this formula, we will see an incredible picture of fulfillment and confirmation of this great salvation spoken of in Hebrews 2:3. Very simply put, we are about to see what the Lord spoke and then follow those that heard him and see what message they confirmed.

## **Summary of The Foundation**

What separates this salvation study from other studies is the obedience to these three foundational scriptures. When we look objectively at what was first spoken by the Lord, it is important that we take all scripture and not just John 3:16, which states that, “whosoever believeth in him should not perish....” While believing is very important, Christ speaks of much more. Once we have read and understood the words of Christ, we must then look to those that heard him. What do their words and actions confirm? This forces us to rightly divide the Word of God by going to the very next book, which is the book of Acts - no jigsaw puzzle to put together, no leaving out certain scriptures, no jumping around, no mystery to solve. We will simply let the **chronological events** unfold and reveal this “so great salvation.”

## **Teachings of Christ**

When beginning a study of salvation, the logical thing to do is to thoroughly examine the words of the One that will one day be our judge and to make sure we fulfilled everything He said. Don't take man's word for it, but study His teachings to show yourself approved unto God. The next four verses are taken directly from the four Gospels and are all words of Jesus Christ. These verses record Christ's directives and teachings that will lead us to make our calling and election sure. In addition to these four verses, more scriptures that reinforce and repeat Jesus's teachings are listed at the end of this study. Take your Bible and follow along as we work our way through the four gospels and see what each book records.

## HERE WE GO

<sup>18</sup>And I say also unto thee, That thou art **Peter**, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.

<sup>19</sup>And I will **give unto thee the keys of the kingdom** of heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.

Matthew 16:18-19

Here we find something that is very critical in our search for salvation. In verses 18 and 19, Jesus put an amazing amount of trust in Peter. Because **Peter** understood who Jesus was, he was given the **Keys to the Kingdom of Heaven**. These keys were not a literal set of keys; these keys are the words that Peter would speak. Whatever Peter binds and whatever he looses will be backed by the Kingdom of God. If we truly desire to be part of the Kingdom of Heaven, would it not make sense to follow the man who has the keys to unlock the door? Shouldn't Peter be the one we watch and listen to when it comes to our salvation? **Peter was the one Jesus trusted to show us the way.** Understand, Jesus is now bound by His word, and if Peter preaches anything that contradicts what Jesus has already taught, we have a problem. But as we will see, there is no contradiction only an incredible confirmation.

Many people turn to the writings of Paul to explain salvation. While Paul was a great man of God and an apostle, and while he wrote many powerful things in his letters, he did not arrive on the scene until **after** the plan of salvation had been clearly established. Paul was never given the keys to the Kingdom of Heaven as was Peter, so why would we dismiss or explain away what Peter preached and rely solely upon Paul's writings to define salvation? Besides, if we study all the teachings of Paul, we will find that he actually obeyed and confirmed what Peter preached. Again, we must rightly divide the Word of God.

Now that we have established that Christ entrusted Peter with the keys to the Kingdom of Heaven, let's continue our study of what Christ taught His disciples about salvation.

<sup>16</sup>He that **believeth** and is **baptized** shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned.

Mark 16:16

Here Jesus ties two things to being saved: we must **believe** and we must be **baptized**. He didn't say, "...he that believeth shall be saved." His statement in Mark 16:16 is, "He that believeth **and** is baptized shall be saved." Since Jesus used the conjunction **and**, can we just pick one of the two and say, "I just choose to believe," and negate the necessity of baptism? Jesus presents believing and baptism as equally important? Many have said baptism is a good thing, but it is not necessary for salvation. As we will see, not only is it absolutely necessary for salvation, but a specific formula as well as a specific purpose for baptism are clearly recorded in scripture.

Along with **believing** and **baptism**, Jesus points us to **Jerusalem** where two very important elements of our salvation would be preached: **repentance** and **remission of sins**. In the verse below, Jesus references Old Testament scriptures that were written about the Messiah and explains to His disciples that these scriptures are referring to Him.

<sup>47</sup>And that **repentance** and **remission of sins** should be preached in **his name** among all nations, **beginning at Jerusalem**.

Luke 24:47

At the very core of our salvation experience our sins must be dealt with: to repent and have our sins totally remitted through His name is a critical message. The fact that Jesus tells us these things will be preached beginning at Jerusalem should not be overlooked.

In the following scripture, Jesus tells us twthat will happen when we believe as the scriptures direct us to believe.

<sup>38</sup>He that believeth on me, **as the scripture hath said**, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water.

<sup>39</sup>(But this spake he of the Spirit, which they that believe on him should receive: for the **Holy Ghost** was not yet given; because that Jesus was not yet glorified.)

John 7:38-39

In these verses Jesus teaches that when we believe according to scripture, we should receive the **Holy Ghost**. The problem with a common but faulty interpretation of salvation lies in the fact that many people believe, but have negated the necessity of the Holy Ghost. They align their belief with only certain select scriptures. Remember, 2 Timothy 3:16 instructs us that **all** scripture is profitable for doctrine. As we will see, when we incorporate all scripture and “believe on Him as the scripture hath said,” the Holy Ghost is something promised to us and is a sign of our true belief.

### Summary of Jesus Christ’s Teachings

We have just taken a walk through the gospels and studied what Jesus taught during His ministry. Let’s quickly summarize.

1. The salvation message would begin at **Jerusalem** - Luke 24:47
2. **Peter** has the keys - Matthew 16:18-19
3. We must **believe** - Mark 16:16, John 7:38
4. We must **repent** - Luke 24:47
5. We must be **baptized** - Mark 16:16
6. **Remission of sins** would be **in His name** - Luke 24:47
7. Believers should receive the **Holy Ghost** - John 7:38

More scriptures are included at the end of this study that confirm those mentioned here.

## The Confirmation

Now that we have seen what was “first spoken by the Lord,” we will find in the scriptures where those who heard him confirmed His teachings. Let us continue to **rightly divide** the Word and follow it in the order the events occurred and not jump from book to book as if this were a puzzle to be put together. We will now go to the very next book, the book of Acts, where the Church begins. Watch, as through the next several verses how this confirmation is revealed.

A few things to note in the beginning of Acts:

**<sup>3</sup>To whom also he shewed himself alive after his passion by many infallible proofs, being seen of them forty days, and speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God:**

Acts 1:3

Jesus has just spent forty days after His resurrection speaking to His disciples of things pertaining to the kingdom of God. After forty days of intense teaching with the resurrected savior, I doubt they were confused about what He wanted them to do. Therefore, what happens in the next few chapters is exactly what God had in mind. Remember, this great salvation would be **confirmed “by them that heard him”** (Hebrews 2:3). We must understand that these disciples were the very ones that had heard Him.

In verse nine, after His final words to His disciples, Jesus ascends.

**<sup>9</sup>And when he had spoken these things, while they beheld, he was taken up; and a cloud received him out of their sight.**

Acts 1:9

**Now for the first time, everything He lived and died for is ready to be put into action.**

Watch what happens as we simply walk through the scriptures and view the events just as they occurred:

<sup>12</sup>**Then returned they unto Jerusalem from the mount called Olivet, which is from Jerusalem a sabbath day's journey.**

Acts 1:12

They returned unto **Jerusalem**. Remember, in Luke 24:47 Jesus directed us to Jerusalem. If we are wanting to make sure we are following the message correctly, we must start at the beginning and not somewhere in the middle. We are now at the **right place** where Jesus said this message of repentance and remission of sins would be preached for the first time.

Now, let's go to the next chapter. They returned to Jerusalem and gathered in the upper room to wait for the promise Jesus told them was coming. The Holy Ghost falls on them and they begin to speak in other tongues (Acts 2:1-4). Focus on what happens next: a multitude gathers. Notice what the bible says in verses 12-13.

<sup>12</sup>**And they were all amazed, and were in doubt, saying one to another, What meaneth this?**

<sup>13</sup>Others **mocking** said, These men are full of new wine.

Acts 2:12-13

At this point, these people who are in doubt and are mocking them are not believers. Remember what Jesus taught - we must believe in order to be saved. So, let's review the elements to make sure we have the entire picture: after His resurrection, Jesus had just spent an additional forty days teaching and training His disciples. He then ascended, after which, they returned to Jerusalem, and now, for the first time since they have fulfilled what Jesus told them to do, unbelievers are present. Watch what happens.

<sup>14</sup>**But Peter, standing up with the eleven, lifted up his voice, and said unto them, Ye men of Judaea, and all ye that dwell at Jerusalem, be this known unto you, and hearken to my words:**

Acts 2:14

Who responds to the doubters and the mockers or unbelievers? Peter. Remember in Matthew 16:19 it was Peter that was given the keys to the kingdom of heaven. Notice what comes together in just a few verses: they are in the right place with the right man preaching and unbelievers are present. Let's see what occurs:

Peter begins to preach to them (verses 14-36). Observe what happens in verse 37 after Peter finished preaching.

<sup>37</sup>Now when they heard this they were pricked in their heart and said unto Peter and the rest of the apostles, Men and brethren **what shall we do?**

Acts 2:37

Peter has now taken the doubters and mockers from unbelief to where they now believe. They are no longer mocking but, instead, are asking what they need to do. Also, remember, this "great salvation" would be confirmed by them that heard him. This question by unbelievers of "what shall we do" is asked to Peter and the rest of the apostles, the ones that just spent forty days with the Master.

Understand what has happened up to this point:

1. They are at the right place - **Jerusalem**.
2. They have the right man - **Peter**.
3. Unbelievers have been taken to the point where they now believe and are asking, “...**what shall we do?**”
4. For the **first time** since Jesus’s ascension, salvation is about to be taught to a lost world. To skip this next verse and to go to any other scripture is not rightly dividing the Word of God.

In answer to the question what shall we do, Peter, the man that is about to open up to us the kingdom of Heaven, presents a plan that will either **confirm** or **contradict** the teachings of Christ. As we are about to see, there is no contradiction, but an amazing picture of fulfillment. Notice Peter’s response.

<sup>38</sup>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 verse 38, Peter gives a specific answer of what they must do after they have believed. These three things **fulfill** exactly what Jesus taught.

1. **Repentance** (Luke 24:47)
2. **Baptism** (Mark 16:16)  
**In Jesus Name for the remission of sins** (Luke 24:47)
3. **Receiving the Holy Ghost** (John 7:38)

Let us recall what Hebrews 2:3 states.

<sup>3</sup>How shall we escape, if we neglect **so great salvation**; which at the first began to be **spoken by the Lord**, and was **confirmed unto us by them that heard him**;

Hebrews 2:3

The table below provides an overview of what was **spoken by the Lord** and the corresponding **confirmation** by Peter and the apostles (**them that heard him**).

<b>Spoken by the Lord</b>	<b>Confirmed by Peter and the apostles</b>
Repentance <i>Luke 24:47</i>	Repentance <i>Acts 2:38</i>
Baptism <i>Mark 16:16</i>	Baptism <i>Acts 2:38</i>
Remission of sins in his name <i>Luke 24:47</i>	In the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins <i>Acts 2:38</i>
Believers receive the Holy Ghost <i>John 7:38</i>	Shall receive the Holy Ghost <i>Acts 2:38</i>

## Summary of The Confirmation

In just a few verses, Peter, the man with the keys, fulfills everything Jesus taught in His ministry regarding salvation and what it takes in order to be part of the Kingdom of Heaven. When we take all scripture, rightly divide the Word of God, study what was taught by the Lord and what was confirmed by them that heard him, the logical conclusion is that Acts 2:38 is the only possible method of salvation.

But let us assume, just for a moment, that we are not yet convinced of the three obvious steps listed above and that Acts 2:38 was more of a suggestion rather than the actual plan of salvation. If we take a second look at what Christ not only taught but what He exemplified, we will see the beauty of truth and how God's salvation plan is repeated and confirmed throughout scripture.

## Additional Evidence

Most Christian denominations agree on the fact that we must believe and that repentance is necessary, but then they attempt to explain away the necessity of being baptized in Jesus name and receiving the Holy Ghost. At this point we must not rely on human reasoning or any religious teachings that are formed from man's opinions. When it comes to our eternal salvation, we must follow exactly what the Word of God so plainly reveals. With that in mind, let's take a second look at what Jesus exemplified.

<sup>16</sup>**And Jesus**, when he was **baptized**, went up straightway out of the water: and, lo, the heavens were opened unto him, and he saw the **Spirit of God** descending like a dove, and lighting upon him:  
Matthew 3:16

Here we find Jesus showing us two very important things. First, we find the creator of the world being **baptized**, and second, the **Spirit** descending upon him. At this point, we may not fully understand the significance of the Spirit descending and how that applies to us. This will become clear as we proceed. However, after reading this

scripture, the debate over the necessity of baptism should be over. Some have erroneously relegated baptism to an act separate and apart from salvation in an attempt to negate its necessity. We have the man without any sin in the Jordan River being baptized, so how can we, who are born in sin, even question whether or not baptism is essential for our salvation? His example aligns with what He stated in Mark 16:16, "...he that believeth and is baptized shall be saved." Peter also states in I Peter 3:21, "...baptism doth also now save us."

Two important truths to take from what Jesus exemplified:

1. He goes down into the water in **baptism**.  
(Note that His baptism was by immersion.)
2. The **Spirit** descends.

The next verse is one of the most powerful in the Word of God. Jesus is very clear about what it takes to enter the Kingdom of God.

<sup>5</sup>Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be **born of water** and **of the Spirit**, he **cannot** enter into the kingdom of God.

John 3:5

In John 3:5, when Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews, came to Jesus and spoke with Him face to face, Jesus answers him very directly. He states that you cannot enter into the Kingdom of God unless born of the water and the Spirit. This is not some religious system trying to make it difficult. No, it is Jesus Himself saying two things must happen before a man can be part of that kingdom. Jesus clearly states that somewhere in our salvation experience we must have a **water birth** and a **Spirit birth**, or we will not enter the Kingdom of God.

Many have argued that Jesus is not speaking of baptism or the Holy Ghost and have tried to explain away this scripture. However, we know we cannot rely on a theory or a personal interpretation. We must follow what is validated by the scriptures. Let us watch as the scriptures give four different accounts of the importance and necessity of baptism (water birth) and the in filling of the Holy Ghost (Spirit birth).

<sup>14</sup>Now when the apostles which were at Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the word of God, they sent unto them Peter and John:

<sup>15</sup>Who, when they were come down, prayed for them, that they might receive the Holy Ghost:

<sup>16</sup>(For as yet he was fallen upon none of them: only **they were baptized** in the name of the Lord Jesus.)

<sup>17</sup>Then laid they their hands on them, and they **received the Holy Ghost**.

Acts 8:14-17

In these verses we see lost people that believed Phillip's preaching. When they believed, they obeyed Phillip and did two things:

1. They were **baptized** (**born of water**)
2. They received the **Holy Ghost** (**born of Spirit**).

In Acts 9:1-6 we find the story of the conversion of Paul who wrote the majority of the New Testament. God stops him on the way to Damascus and tells him to go into the city where he will be told what he **must do**. Obviously, when he is blinded and hears a voice from heaven, he quickly becomes a believer, but what is it that he **must do** from that point onward?

<sup>17</sup>And Ananias went his way, and entered into the house; and putting his hands on him said, Brother Saul, the Lord, even Jesus, that appeared unto thee in the way as thou camest, hath sent me, that thou mightest receive thy sight, and **be filled with the Holy Ghost**.

Acts 9:17

<sup>18</sup> And immediately there fell from his eyes as it had been scales: and he received sight forthwith, and arose, and **was baptized**.

Acts 9:18

In verses 17 and 18, again we find two things that occur.

1. He is told, be filled with the **Holy Ghost** (born of Spirit).
2. He arose and was **baptized** (born of water).

Acts 10:1-5 tells the story of Cornelius, who was a devout, God-fearing man who had a sincere relationship with God. Yet, we find God has Cornelius send for Peter to tell him what he needed to do in order **to be saved** (Acts 11:14). This means that there was still more required of him than just being a good person and believing in God. Acts 10:44-48 tells what happens during Peter's visit to Cornelius.

<sup>44</sup>While Peter yet spake these words, the Holy Ghost fell on all them which heard the word.

<sup>45</sup>And they of the circumcision which believed were astonished, as many as came with Peter, because that on the Gentiles also was poured out the gift of the Holy Ghost.

<sup>46</sup>For they heard them speak with tongues, and magnify God. Then answered Peter,

<sup>47</sup>Can any man forbid water, that these should not be baptized, which have **received the Holy Ghost** as well as we?

<sup>48</sup>And he **commanded them to be baptized** in the name of the Lord. Then prayed they him to tarry certain days.

Acts 10:44-48

Notice there are only two things that change for Cornelius and his household in Acts chapter 10:

1. They receive the **Holy Ghost** (born of Spirit)
2. They are **baptized** (born of water).

In our last scripture text we find Paul, the writer of the majority of the New Testament, focused on two things.

<sup>1</sup>And it came to pass, that, while Apollos was at Corinth, Paul having passed through the upper coasts came to Ephesus: and finding certain disciples,

<sup>2</sup>He said unto them, **Have ye received the Holy Ghost since ye believed?** And they said unto him, We have not so much as heard whether there be any Holy Ghost.

<sup>3</sup>And he said unto them, **Unto what then were ye baptized?** And they said, Unto John's baptism.

<sup>4</sup>Then said Paul, John verily baptized with the baptism of repentance, saying unto the people, that they should believe on him which should come after him, that is, on Christ Jesus.

<sup>5</sup>When they heard this, **they were baptized** in the name of the Lord Jesus.

<sup>6</sup>And when Paul had laid his hands upon them, the **Holy Ghost came on them**; and they spake with tongues, and prophesied.

Acts 19:1-6

These scriptures record Paul “finding certain disciples” and he asks only two questions:

1. Have ye received the **Holy Ghost** (born of Spirit)?
2. How were you **baptized** (born of water)?

Why these two questions? Because Paul understood that Jesus had put two things into motion that were absolutely essential – we must be born of water and of Spirit.

## Summary of Water and Spirit

A common theme that runs through these four chapters is the ultimate importance of being **baptized** and being filled with the **Holy Ghost**, thus fulfilling John 3:5 - a water and a Spirit birth. In verse 7 of John 3 we see where Jesus says, "Marvel not that I said unto thee, **Ye MUST be born again.**" When Saul (later renamed Paul) had his encounter with Jesus in Acts 9, we find that Jesus uses this same word *must* again. He tells Saul to "Arise and go into the city, and it shall be told thee what thou **MUST** do."

Is it simply a coincidence that the two things that Saul is required to do are be **baptized** and receive the **Holy Ghost**? These two things just so happen to fulfill the *must* from John 3:5 - a water and spirit birth.

Is it a coincidence when Paul finds certain disciples in Acts 19 that his only concern is their **baptism** and if they have received the **Holy Ghost**? Obviously, what was a *must* for him was also a *must* for them.

Is it a coincidence in Acts 10 that the only thing recorded in this chapter that took Cornelius from unsaved to saved is **baptism** and the **Holy Ghost**?

Is it a coincidence that Peter, the man with the keys to the kingdom, in his message on the day of Pentecost included **baptism** and **Holy Ghost** when unbelievers asked, "...what shall we do?"

The beauty of truth is how this simple message is repeated over and over. In the Word of God there are no coincidences.

Man has devised many theories to explain away John 3:5 in an attempt to negate the necessity of baptism (water birth) and being filled with the Holy Ghost (spirit birth) but, as stated in the beginning of this book, we cannot rely on man nor can we base our eternal salvation on clever theories; we must follow what His Word has revealed. Simply put, **John 3:5 is the verbal expression of Jesus' actions (Matthew 3:16).**

## **Conclusion**

Not only did Christ teach baptism and the Holy Ghost during His ministry, but also in the book of Acts we find overwhelming evidence of this teaching being fulfilled. Whether it was to believers or to unbelievers, the message was the same: they were baptized (born of water) and received the Holy Ghost (born of Spirit). Confessing and accepting Christ and saying a sinner's prayer are all positive steps toward God, and they bring us into a relationship with Him. Yet, to stop at this point would not fulfill the scriptural plan of salvation. We must have more than a relationship with God, we must be born again. We cannot get caught up in what religion teaches or what man thinks or theorizes. We must follow to the letter what has stood the test of time: the rightly divided Word of God

If we could have been in Jerusalem when Peter preached his first message after Christ's ascension, we would have heard him confirm the message of repentance, baptism, and the Holy Ghost that was first spoken by the Lord.

If we could have been there that night when Jesus spoke to Nicodemus, we would understand the essentiality of a water and Spirit birth. The beauty of truth is how His words to Nicodemus so perfectly align with Peter's message in Acts 2:38 - a message of baptism (water birth) and the Holy Ghost (spirit birth).

One simple question every Christian believer must answer is, "Do I know for certain that I have been born of the water and of the Spirit?" We must understand that there is no room for an incorrect or faulty interpretation. Jesus was very clear. Without these two elements, we will never enter the kingdom of God.

The story of Cornelius in Acts Chapter 10 proves more is required of us than just living a good life and believing in God. Whether you are an unbeliever, a Cornelius, or a disciple, ask yourself, what would God have me do? The answer is simple, it is what each of them did, and that is fulfill John 3:5 and Acts 2:38. They were born of water (baptized) and born of Spirit (received the Holy Ghost).

## So What Next?

**1. Repent.** The Bible says all have sinned and come short of the glory of God. Whether saint or sinner, we all need repentance. When we sincerely ask Him for forgiveness, the Bible says He is faithful and just to forgive us of all our sins.

**2. Be baptized in Jesus name.** Find a church that will baptize you in the only formula recorded in scripture: in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ.

In all scripture, there is only one way anyone was ever baptized, and that was in the name of the Lord or the Lord Jesus. Nowhere in the Bible is anyone baptized in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost. So, in Acts 2:38 when Peter instructed the crowd to be baptized in the **name of Jesus**, did he disregard what Jesus said in Matthew 28:19? Absolutely not. We must remember that Matthew 28:16 says eleven men went with Jesus to Galilee (One of those eleven was Peter.). Thus, only eleven men heard Jesus's expression in verse 19. Therefore, they were the ones best qualified to interpret what He meant. That is why Peter said, on the Day of Pentecost, "...in the name of Jesus Christ." With those words Peter fulfilled what Jesus said and that was to Baptize in the **name** of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost, and that **name is Jesus**.

Jesus is the redemptive New Testament name of the eternal Godhead. The angel told Mary in Luke 1:31, "behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a **son**, and shalt call his name JESUS." Jesus himself said in John 5:43, "I am come in my **Father's** name...." He said in John 14:26, "The **Holy Ghost** is sent in his name...." Consequently, the valid expression of the Father/Son/Holy Ghost in name is **Jesus**.

One principle that runs throughout the New Testament is the **power of the name of Jesus**.

- Healings were commanded in the name of Jesus (Acts 3:6)
- Signs and wonders were performed in the name of Jesus (Acts 4:30).
- The disciples preached in the name of Jesus (Acts 8:25).
- They were persecuted because of the name of Jesus (Acts 4:18).

- Spirits were subject to the name of Jesus (Luke 10:17)
- New believers and disciples were baptized in the name of Jesus (Acts 8:12, Acts 19:5).
- We are directed in whatever we do, in word or deed, to do all in the name of the Lord Jesus (Colossians 3:17).
- Salvation is in the name of Jesus (Acts 4:12).

In light of all these scriptural directives and examples, why would we be baptized any other way, but in the name of Jesus?

**3. Ask God to fill you with His Holy Spirit.** First, we must understand this is a gift that is promised to everyone. We will notice in scripture that there is a sound that accompanies this born-again experience of receiving the Holy Ghost. John 3:8 lets us know that when we are born of Spirit, it will be like the wind. We will not see where it comes from or where it goes, but we will hear a sound. The only sound that is mentioned in scripture associated with the Holy Ghost is the sound of speaking in other tongues.

Remember Acts 2:38 refers to the Holy Spirit as a gift. It is the Father's good pleasure to give us that gift. Open yourself up to whatever God wants to do. Although this can occur anywhere at any time, scripture records it often occurred when Spirit-filled believers laid their hands upon those who were seeking salvation. Find a Spirit-filled church that can provide a greater understanding of this great gift. For more information or assistance in finding a Spirit-filled church that will baptize you in Jesus name, e-mail us at:

[info@thepentecostals.org](mailto:info@thepentecostals.org).

## **A personal note from the author...**

For some who read this I understand that this study may be a little overwhelming as it may contradict what you have always believed or been taught. Again, this study is not intended to discredit anything you have done to this point in your Christian journey. Without a doubt, many are like Cornelius and have an incredible walk with God. Please, notice it was because of his prayers and his relationship with God that caused God to put someone in his life to make sure his salvation journey was complete.

In Acts 19, the disciples who were following Christ in all the knowledge they had did not debate Paul when he shared with them further revelation. Instead, they were open to whatever God had for them. How would you respond if you, a follower and disciple of Christ, were asked the same two questions by Paul, “Have you received the Holy Ghost since you believed?” and, “How were you baptized?”?

Two of the greatest events that can occur in our lives is when we are baptized in His name and then are filled with His Spirit. To have every sin wiped away in baptism and to speak in a heavenly language when we yield ourselves totally to Him is truly beyond belief. There is no greater experience and confirmation when you know you are truly born again just like they were in the book of Acts.

Before you conclude this study, I humbly ask that you pray and ask God His opinion. If we can be open and honest-hearted, God will lead us. We are His children and He is willing that none should perish.

## **Additional scriptures for study**

### **Necessity of Baptism**

John 3:5

Except a man be born of water...he cannot enter the kingdom of God.

Mark 16:16

He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved.

1 Peter 3:21

... baptism doth also now save us.

Acts 2:38

Repent and be baptized....

Matt 3:16

*Jesus is baptized.*

Acts 8:12

*New believers baptized.*

Acts 9:6,18

*Paul is baptized – a must.*

Acts 10:48

*Peter commanded Cornelius to be baptized.*

### **Baptism by Immersion**

Matthew 3:16

And Jesus when he was baptized went up straightway out of the water.....

John 3:23

*John was baptizing at Aenon because there was much water.*

Acts 8:38

“...they went down both into the water.”

Acts 8:39

“And when they were come up out fo the water....”

Romans 6:4

“Therefore we are buried with him by baptism....”

Romans 6:5

“...we have been planted together....”

Colossians 2:12

“Buried with him in baptism....”

## **Purpose of Baptism**

Luke 24:47

*Remission of sins in his name*

Acts 2:38

*Baptism in the name of Jesus Christ for remission of sins*

Acts 10:43

*Remission of sins through His name*

Acts 22:16

“...be baptized and wash away thy sins calling on the name of the Lord.”

## **Baptismal Formula**

Acts 4:12

*Salvation is in the Name*

Matt 1:21

*His name is Jesus.*

Acts 2:38

“...be baptized every one of you in the Name of Jesus Christ...”

Acts 8:12

“...they believed Philip preaching the things concerning the kingdom of God, and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized....”

Acts 10:48

*They were baptized in the name of the Lord.*

Acts 19:5:

“...they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus.”

Col 3:17

“...and whatsoever ye do in word or deed, [do] all in the name of the Lord Jesus,....”

## **Necessity of the Holy Ghost**

John 3:5

*You must be born of the Spirit.*

John 7:38-39

*Believers should receive the Holy Ghost.*

Rom 8:9-11

*The Spirit of Christ in us is a necessity.*

## **Promise of the Holy Ghost**

Matt 3:11

“...He shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost.”

Acts 2:38

“...and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.”

Acts 8:17

“...they received the Holy Ghost.”

## **Purpose of the Holy Ghost**

Luke 24:49/Acts 1:8

*The promise of power from the Holy Ghost*

John 14:16-26

*The comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, shall be in us and teach us.*

Col 1:27

“...Christ in you, the hope of glory...”

John 16:7-13

*The Spirit will guide you into all truth.*

## **Evidence of the Holy Ghost**

Mark 16:17

“And these signs shall follow them that believe...they shall speak with new tongues;...”

John 3:8

*There will be a sound that accompanies Spirit birth.*

Acts 2:4

“...and they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues...”

Acts 10:44-46

*The Holy Ghost fell and they spoke in tongues.*

Acts 19:6

*The Holy Ghost came and they spoke with tongues.*

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