

BAPTISM IN THE NT AND SALVATION IN ACTS

Glenn Giles

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I. SALVATION/CONVERSION IN THE BOOK OF ACTS: HISTORICAL EXAMPLES AND TEACHING

A. Hermeneutics: Acts as narrative and theological history.

Although some scholars such as Fee and Stuart, believe that, with respect to the interpretation of narratives such as Acts, “*Unless Scripture explicitly tells us we must do something, what is only narrated or described does not function in a normative (i.e., obligatory) way . . .*”¹, this does not seem a necessary assumption as the book of Acts is not just narrative history but theological history. God is the God of history (it is His Story) and has worked in and used history to teach about himself and his ways. Fee and Stuart’s assumption does not seem to take this well enough into account. Their assumption also seems to contradict 2 Tim. 3:16 (“*all Scripture is useful . . .*”). The Bible itself teaches that historical narratives contain normativity² for us today (for instance I Cor. 10:11 states, “These things happened as examples and were written down as warnings for us, on whom the fulfillment of the ages has come”, see also Rom. 15:4). Moreover, the book of Hebrews teaches that events and personal examples are major ways God speaks to us today (e.g., the person and historical event of Jesus speaks in Heb. 1:1ff, Moses speaks, the people hardening their hearts speak, the event of Melchizedek speaks, the Temple speaks, the acts of the people of faith speak (Heb. 11)) and all of these are understood to speak in a normative way by that author. The speeches in the book of Acts themselves seem to indicate that narrative Biblical history can be normative. Stephen uses narrative history to convince the Jews that they were a “stiff-necked people with uncircumcised hearts and ears” (Acts. 7:51). Peter uses an event of David’s death and burial and his statement in the Psalms as pointing without question to Jesus since David did not resurrect (Acts 2). The question therefore would seem not to be whether normativity exists in Biblical narratives but how to determine what aspect of those narrative accounts are normative. William W. Klein, Craig L. Blomberg, and Robert L. Hubbard, Jr. reject Fee and Stuart’s statement quoted above and state that one principle they feel should be used to determine normativity is

. . . to study the entire book to determine if specific events form a consistent pattern throughout or if the positive models Luke presents vary from one situation to another. The former will suggest that Luke was emphasizing a normative, consistent principle; the latter, that applications may change from one time and place to the next”.³

¹ Gordon D. Fee and Douglas Stuart, *How to read the Bible For All its Worth, 3rd ed* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2003), 118-119.

² I am defining “normativity” as principles or precedents that are to be followed in all times and in all cultures.

³ *Introduction to Biblical Interpretation* (Nashville: W. Publishing Group, 1993), 350.

In applying Klein, Blomberg, and Hubbard’s **“consistent pattern”** in Acts with respect to individual “conversion” descriptions, I see the following⁴:

Individual	Heard the word	Believed	Was Baptized	Rejoiced
Simon Acts 8:4-13	X	X	X	
Ethiopian Acts 8:34-39	X		X	X
Saul Acts 9:1-19	X		X	
Cornelius Acts 10	X		X	
Lydia Acts 16:11-15	X	X	X	
Phillipian Jailer Acts 16:25-36	X	X	X	X
Those of the Baptism of John Acts 19:1-7	X	X	X	

In using this criterion of consistency one sees that hearing the word and being baptized were included in all of the individual conversions⁵ and thus would be a normative aspect of conversion in the *narrative portions* of Acts. This normativity from the narrative portions would not exclude belief, repentance, or rejoicing⁶, but merely not positively affirm them. Preaching and baptism seem then to be the major events recorded normatively in a more consistent manner than the other aspects of conversion.⁷

I personally would add another criterion to what is normative in the Book of Acts. Since Acts is an inspired *theological* history of the work of the Holy Spirit, I would take the speeches and words of the Lord/God, an angel, the Apostles and other Christian leaders who were being led by the Spirit to be didactic in nature and normative in the principles those speeches teach. Assuming the accuracy of Luke’s record (as it is inspired) and his emphasis on the work of the Holy Spirit, their words would seem to

⁴ Here, I simply picked those things that seemed to be indicated more explicitly in the text. This is not to say that there were not other things present such as repentance, but only that it was not explicitly noted.

⁵ Of course there were several other places in Acts in which people as a larger group(s) were said to have become believers and followers (note the people in Athens who became Christians, Acts 17). But we are here looking at specific examples that go into some detail about those individual conversions. This would seem to allow for the application of the criterion to specific individuals. Apollos is another possible conversion (there is debate on this as he was just taught more accurately and may not have undergone a conversion).

⁶ Of course these things might be assumed. Here however, we are only looking at things that are explicitly stated in the text.

⁷ One note of possible importance is the fact that two of these conversions explicitly mention rejoicing after baptism. It is kind of interesting to me that that might fit into the concept that they felt they were right with God at the point of baptism and their response was joy.

indicate normative *principles* from which we can determine normative practice⁸. This would, include but not be limited to, Peter's sermon on Pentecost (Acts 2), Stephen's speech (Acts 7), Peter's speech to the household of Cornelius (10:28ff); his explanation of it (11:5ff), the issues of salvation at the Jerusalem council (Acts 15), Paul's speech at Athens (17:16ff), etc.

From all the points above *questionable* historical precedent in the book of Acts would seem to include but not be limited to passages such as:

1. Acts 1:15-26, the choosing of another apostle to replace one who was no longer with them. Although this passage includes statements by Peter, the passage seems to be limited to a replacement for Judas, those who were eyewitnesses of Jesus and his resurrection, and were with him from John's Baptism on. It is also noteworthy that this event is not repeated after the death of apostle James in Acts 12:2.
2. Acts 2:42-47, where the believers were together every day in the Temple and were selling their possessions to help those in need. Although it would not be wrong to meet every day in the Temple, we do not see this pattern repeated throughout Acts. The Gospel was not tied to the Temple. Sharing possessions and being devoted to the apostle's teaching, fellowship, breaking of bread, and prayer could be supported by other passages with this passage as illustrative but normativity would not necessarily be established here. If so, then one would have to meet everyday in the Temple.
3. Acts 27, where Paul journeys to Rome. Surely we are not called to follow Paul in all his travels and do a pilgrimage to Rome or Macedonia. Paul's missionary journeys are repeated but not in exact fashion.

B. Using the above criteria, conversion would include:

1. Peter's words in Acts 2:14-40⁹: *hearing the Word of God, calling on the name of the Lord, people responding for direction with a cut heart, repentance and baptism for the forgiveness of sins, reception of the Holy Spirit, and personal decision to "save yourselves" (verse 40) were all necessary to be saved.* In addition the words of Peter, "The promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off—for all whom the Lord our God will call" (verse 39) seem to make this a universal cross-cultural normative principle.

2. Peter's words in Acts 3:11-26: we find hearing the word, repentance and turning to God for forgiveness of sins and times of refreshing to come. *Here hearing the word, repentance and turning to God was necessary.*

3. Acts 10:43: Peter tells Cornelius, "All the prophets testify about him that everyone who believes in him receives forgiveness of sins through his name". After receiving the special baptism of the Holy Spirit (just as happened to the

⁸ Here one would need to determine cultural and non-cultural aspects of those materials and sift out principles that are normative. For instance, one would not need to limit ones help to widows to be only Greek widows (Acts 6) but any widow in the church. Also, the manner of taking care of them listed in Acts 6 may not be the only way to do so, but the normative principle would be for the leaders of a church to set up a way to make it happen.

⁹ This passage is especially important as it is the time of Peter giving the Keys of the Kingdom for people to enter into God's kingdom as Jesus promised would happen in Matt. 16.

Jews on the Day of Pentecost), Peter ordered them to be baptized with water. *Here it would seem belief and baptism were necessary.*

3. The Apostles' and elder's words in Acts 15: *Circumcision is not necessary for salvation.*

4. Paul's words in Acts 16:31: Paul commands the Philippian jailor to "believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and you will be saved". *This indicates that belief is necessary.*

5. Ananias' command to Paul, "And now what are you waiting for? Get up, be baptized and wash your sins away, calling on his name" (Acts 22:16). *Here we see baptism and calling on his name as necessary.*

6. Paul spoke to King Agrippa saying, "I preached that they should repent and turn to God and prove their repentance by their deeds" (Acts 26:20). *Here we see preaching, repentance, turning to God and proof of repentance by deeds as necessary.*

All of these above come out of recorded words from the mouths of God's leaders of the early church and I see no reason to not see them as normative for us today as they are integral to the spread of Christianity into the Gentile world, which seems to be part of Luke's purpose in writing Acts. Without these conversions, the summary verses in the Book of Acts (6:7; 9:31; 12:24; 16:5; 19:20; 28:31 which speak of the word of the Lord growing and spreading) would not be possible nor would the work of the Holy Spirit. Hence true conversion would seem to me to be a necessary element in Luke's main theme of "the expansion of the Gospel from Jewish to Gentile territory"¹⁰. For Luke, conversion seems to be outlined on the Day of Pentecost and thereafter extensive or exhaustive details need not be stated at each conversion event. When the Gospel moved out of Judaism into the Gentile world indeed more teaching was needed on the nature of salvation and conversion. This is exactly what Luke does when he records chapter 15 which explains that salvation was by faith "through the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ" and not through circumcision and obedience to the Law (15:1-35). This is further buttressed in his extensive accounts of Peter's reception of Gentile converts who were not circumcised (Acts 10-11).

C. The Term "Salvation" in Acts:

- 1. Jesus is the only way** of salvation: Acts 4:12
- 2. Faith/belief is necessary** for salvation: Acts 16:31
- 3. Humans are involved in sharing the message** that leads to salvation: Acts. 11:14; 16:17.
- 4. Calling on the name of the Lord is necessary:** Acts 2:21.
- 5. A personal decision to save oneself** (contextually meaning a personal belief response to the message of Jesus, repentance, baptism, and reception of the Holy Spirit is necessary): Acts. 2:38-40
- 6. Circumcision is NOT involved:** Acts 15:1ff
- 7. Grace/mercy of God is involved:** Acts 15:1ff
- 8. The message is necessary:** Acts 11:14; 13:26

¹⁰ Klein, Blomberg, and Hubbard, 351.

In developing a “conversion theology” from the book of Acts then we would see at least the following as normative for Christianity in any age: A person hears the Gospel about Jesus (who is the only way of salvation) and God’s mercy, believes the Gospel, is convicted to make a personal decision to save himself after seeing the need to be saved, repents of sin (and makes a decision to prove his/her repentance by his/her deeds), turns to God, is baptized in water to wash away and receive the forgiveness of sins, calling on his name, and receives the gift of the Holy Spirit. There would seem to me to be no cultural aspect that would preclude these things being normative.

II. BAPTISM: A CLOSER LOOK

Since Baptism is the more debated aspect to conversion in “Christianity” today, I offer the following discussion:

A. Baptism categorized: The following are several categories I found:

- 1. Baptism of John the Baptist:** Mt. 3:1,6,7, 11, 13, 14; 11:11,12; 14:2, 8; 16:14; 17:13; 21:25; Mk. 1:4, 5, 8; 6:14, 24, 25; 11:30; Lk. 3:3, 7, 12,16,21; 7:20, 29, 30, 33; 9:19; 20:4; Jn. 1:25, 26, 28, 31, 33; 3:23; 10:40; Acts 1:5, 22; 10:37; 11:16; 13:24; 18:25; 19:3-4.
- 2. Baptism associated with people becoming Christians:** Matt. 28:19; Acts 2:38, 41; 8:12, 13, 16, 36, 38; 9:18; 10:47, 48; 16: 14, 33; 18:8; 19:5; Rom. 6:3-4; Eph. 4:5; Gal. 3:27; I Pet. 3:21; Col. 2:12.
- 3. Baptism associated with repentance:** Mt. 3:7, 11; Mk. 1:4; Lk. 3:3; Acts 2:38; 13:24; 19:4.
- 4. Baptism connected with confession of sins:** Mt. 3:6; Mk. 1:5.
- 5. Baptism connected with forgiveness of sins:** Mk. 1:5; Lk. 3:3; Acts 2:38; 22:16
- 6. Jesus’ own baptism:** Mt. 3:16; Mk. 1:9; Lk. 3:21
- 7. Baptism connected with death and/or burial:** Mt. 10:38-39; Lk. 12:50; Jn. 10:38-39; 12:50; Rom. 6:3-4; Col. 2:12
- 8. Baptism connected with ceremonial washing:** Mk. 7:4; Lk. 11:38; Heb. 9:10
- 9. Baptism of the Holy Spirit:** Mt. 3:11; Mk. 1:8; Lk. 3:16; Jn. 1:33; Acts 1:5; 11:16.

- 10. Baptism for the Dead:** I Cor. 1:29
- 11. Baptism as a putting on of Christ:** Gal. 3:27
- 12. Baptism explicitly stated as connected with salvation:** Mk. 16:16; Acts 2:38; I Pet. 3:21
- 13. Baptism in other names:** I Cor. 1:13-17
- 14. Baptism into Moses:** I Cor. 10:2
- 15. Baptism into the body of the church by the Spirit:** I Cor. 12:13.
- 16. Baptism as unique:** There is only one baptism, Eph. 4:5
- 17. Baptism (John's) when received associated with acknowledging God's way is right, but when rejected with rejecting God's purpose for oneself,** Lk. 7:29, 30.
- 18. Jesus and his disciples baptizing disciples in the Gospel of John:** John 3:22, 26; 4:1-2.
- 19. Baptism explicitly associated with water:** Mt. 3:13-16; Mk. 1:8-9; Jn. 1:28-31; 3:23; Acts 1:5; 8:36-38; 10:47-48; 11:16

As one can see, there are a variety of things connected with baptism. I am struck with how often the word is used in connection with John the Baptist and then how often it is associated with people becoming Christians. It seems to be a central point to both ministries. John the Baptist as the forerunner of Jesus seems to have paved the way concerning baptism in its connection with repentance, confession of sin, forgiveness of sin, and its being a way of acknowledging God's way as right and accepting God's purpose for oneself.

Jewish proselyte baptism may also may have contributed to the culture and background from which New Testament baptism was understood. In fact, David Daube in his book: *The New Testament and Rabbinic Judaism* (Peabody, Mass: Hendrickson Publishers, 1956, 1998, pp 106-140) in his chapter on "Baptismal Catechism" connects New Testament Baptism to Jewish proselyte baptism (of this G. R. Beasley-Murray is not as convinced)¹¹. I have summarized his chapter as follows:

¹¹G. R. Beasley-Murray, *Baptism in the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1962, 1994, 18-44) is not convinced that Christian baptism or John the Baptist's baptism can be closely associated with or came out of Jewish proselyte baptism as Daube seems to believe. Never-the-less, it would seem to me that the similarities that Daube points out with Christian baptism helps us today understand more of the culture and mileau of the First Century with respect to the concept of baptism. Note the connection of baptism with passing from death to life, its association with resurrection and life, and the concept of "new birth".

In this chapter Daube discusses the background, purpose, and pattern of instruction of Jewish proselytes in connection with their baptism or conversion into Judaism. For the Jews, baptism of a proselyte had several meanings. It was the time when a person passed from “death to life” (p. 110). It was at that time he received forgiveness of sins (p. 113). The Jews considered a convert “fully Jewish as soon as he was baptized” (p. 109). In this connection the Rabbis had a maxim which stated, “he who separates himself from the uncircumcision is like him who separates himself from the grave” (p. 110). From this, Daube explains how baptism was like one who rises from the dead. He also shows that the “decisive moment in proselyte baptism was the ‘going up’ or ‘coming up’” out of the water. The Tannaitic provision reads, “when he has undergone baptism and come up . . . he is like an Israelite in all respects” (p. 111). It was this “coming up” in association with the Gospels (Matt. 3:16, Mk. 1:10) that caused Daube to conclude (p. 112) that “Christian baptism originated in Jewish proselyte baptism.” He goes on to say that baptism was not merely a purificatory act but that a convert “had the status of a new-born child” (quoted from 1st and 2nd century Rabbis). All of these references shed light on the baptism passages in the New Testament (such as Romans 6 of the resurrection and the passing from death to life, John 3 of the new birth, becoming a real Jew in Col. 2:12, etc). Daube reflects,

It is obvious that the notion of a new birth was taken seriously; more seriously (a strange thought) than it seems to be taken by modern Christianity. And we may note again that the majority of conversions—namely, in conversions of women—the new birth was affected by baptism alone (i.e., without circumcision) (p. 113).

Note how similar the understanding of proselyte baptism is to the New Testament teaching on baptism.

For the Christian, one can glean from the New Testament that there is only one baptism, it is to be in the name of Jesus (or in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit), it is for the forgiveness of sins, repentance is closely associated with it, it is the time one puts on Jesus, when one is buried with Jesus so that he might be raised with him, when one is saved, when one becomes part of the body of Christ, and when one receives the Holy Spirit.

B. The Connection of Baptism with the forgiveness of sins, faith, and salvation.

1. Acts 2:38: The Greek Preposition *εις* (*eis*) means “into, in, toward, to” “indicating motion into a thing or into its immediate vicinity”¹². It is translated “so that” here by Bauer¹³. Baptists and others have attempted to make the word mean “because of” based on Mt. 12:41; Lk. 11:32; Rom. 4:20; and Mt. 3:11, but

¹² Walter Bauer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, translated by William F. Arndt and F. Wilbur Gingrich, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1957) 227.

¹³ 228.

the possibility of this translation is stated by Bauer as “controversial”. In fact, when one looks up those passages, the translation “unto” fits very well. Hence there is not need to create a new meaning for the word when the already established semantic range fits the contexts well. Acts 2:38 thus teaches that baptism is for the purpose of or so that one might receive forgiveness of sins.

2. Baptism historically for the first 1500 years after Christ was considered necessary for salvation and was connected with the forgiveness of sins. In the New Testament day, one could not conceive of a non-baptized Christian. Many passages show this was the case. (e.g., Acts 22:16; 2:38; Romans 6:1-6; I Pet. 3:21; Gal. 3:27; and the examples of conversions in Acts (note how they are said to “rejoice” after baptism not before)). The separation of baptism from faith and thus baptism from salvation can be traced back to Zwingli (one of the Reformation leaders) in the 1500’s AD¹⁴. (Before this time, baptism was an act of faith (even the Luther’s catechism seems to say this) and one had to be baptized to be saved). Contrary to what many Baptists and others (consciously or unconsciously following Zwingli’s lead) say, baptism is not a work of man but a work of God. It is an act of faith. Because of that faith act, God works on that person to cleanse him of sin, make him a new creation and bring him into the body of Christ. Baptism is a time when one surrenders to God and lets God work on him. It is the point when one, by his faith, is joined with Christ, puts Christ on, is saved, where one’s sins are washed away, and where one receives the Spirit. And, since it is dependent on the active faith of the individual giving their life to God at that point in time, a previous baptism, if not accompanied by faith that one’s sins were being washed away at that point, is not a saving baptism. There is no such thing in the New Testament as retroactive baptism (See Acts 19:1-10). To make baptism valid one must have faith that in submitting to him at the point of baptism that his sins are being washed away by the blood of Christ (Col. 2:12).

C. The Mode of Baptism

1. The mode of immerse, pour, or sprinkle must be determined, as all other words are, by its meaning and context. Bauer gives the basic meaning as “*to immerse, dip . . .* (in non-Christian lit. also ‘plunge, sink, drench, overwhelm’, etc.)”¹⁵
 - a. The meaning of “immerse” had not changed even up until the 4th century AD. See Moulton and Milligan, *The Vocabulary of the New Testament*¹⁶ where it is used to describe a ship that has sunk. The verb is never used to mean “sprinkle” or “pour” in NT times. Even the NT uses of it show what was meant. The following chart¹⁷ illustrates the how baptism in the NT supports the definition of immersion. This is some of what lexicographers would look at to help determine a word meaning:

¹⁴ On this point, see Jack Cottrell’s unpublished Princeton doctoral dissertation, *Covenant and Baptism in the Theology of Huldreich Zwingli* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton Theological Seminary, 1971). See also Dr. Cottrell’s excellent study *Baptism: A Biblical Study* (Joplin, MO: College Press, sixth printing, 2002), especially pages 165-68.

¹⁵ Bauer, 131.

¹⁶ Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1976, 102.

<u>Baptism illustrated</u>	<u>Sprinkling Requires</u>	<u>Pouring Requires</u>	<u>Immersion Requires</u>
Water	X	X	X
Plenty of Water John 3:23		(X?)	X
Done in water (the Jordan) Mk. 1:9			X
Going down into water Acts 8:38			X
Coming out of water Acts 8:39; Mt. 3:16			X
A burial, Rom 6:4; Col. 2:12			X
A resurrection Col. 2:12; Rom. 6:4			X
Washing the Body Heb. 10:22		(X?)	X

b. From the above, it should be fairly clear that baptism in the New Testament was immersion. It is only later that the noun “baptism” began to expand its meaning to include “pouring”. The first time something other than immerse is suggested to be done in its place is found in Didache 7, dated 70-100 AD. (See handout and below). Here *χεω* (*cheo*, “pour”) is to be done instead of *βαπτίζω* (*baptizo*, “to baptize/immerse”) in the case where there was a shortage of water. In the context both are evidently to be understood under the noun *baptisma* but for the verb “*baptizo*” one does not see a change in meaning. Although the Didache allows (but does not prefer) pouring as valid baptism, the New Testament does not command to pour but to immerse. Note how the Ethiopian Eunuch saw that there was water, and Philip and the Eunuch both went down into the water and came up out of the water (Acts 8). It is important to note that in this passage in the Didache the word *εκχεω* (*ekcheo*, “pour out”) is not considered part of the idea of *βαπτίζω* (*baptizo*, “to baptize/immerse”), or the idea that one could pour would not have had to be explained. (See my paper, *The Contribution of the Didache and Justin Martyr to the History of Baptism*, done at Marquette University, 1987, available upon request). The concept of “sprinkle” comes along in later centuries.

¹⁷ This chart was adapted from Gareth L. Reese, *New Testament History: A Critical and Exegetical Commentar on the Book of Acts* (Ann Arbor, MI: Braun-Brumfield, 1966), 62.

THE DIDACHE: CHAPTER 7

7:1 But concerning baptism, thus baptize ye: having first recited all these precepts, baptize in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, in running water;

7:2 but if thou hast not running water, baptize in some other water, and if thou canst not baptize in cold, in warm water;

7:3 but if thou hast neither, pour (*χεω, cheo*) water three times on the head, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

7:4 But before the baptism, let him who baptizeth and him who is baptized fast previously, and any others who may be able. And thou shalt command him who is baptized to fast one or two days before¹⁸.

c. The question of the impossibility of immersion because of lack of water. Was there enough water and places to immerse? There were many baptisteries in Jerusalem in that day as the Jews baptized Gentile converts to Judaism as part of their becoming Jews. There were many Jewish baptisteries in various places, e.g., see hand out concerning the ones at Sepphoris from *Biblical Archaeology Review*, March/April, 2002, pp. 50-55 (see handout). The idea that there would not have been enough water or places to baptize (immerse) the first 3000 on the day of Pentecost is just not true.

d. The question as to whether to baptize with **THREE** immersions, as the Greek Orthodox Church does (once on the name of the Father, and once in the name of the Son, and once in the name of the Holy Spirit), or just one immersion has been debated based on the command in Matthew 28:19-20. However, since the verse only uses one preposition, *εις (eis)*, governing one noun which is singular, *ονομα* (name), it would seem there is only one immersion to be done in one name. Since all three names are naming the same God, the singular term “name” is used. It did not say “baptize in the names . . .”

On another note, there are those who claim that the only valid baptism is in the name of Jesus (the way Acts shows they were baptized). This, however, I believe is a misunderstanding of the fact that the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are YHWH and so is Jesus. To baptize in the name of Jesus (which means “YHWH is salvation”) is the same as baptizing in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

D. The Candidate for Baptism. Should it be an infant or adult?

1. Infant baptism: There is no express instance of infant baptism in the NT. Those who practice it appeal to the household baptisms of passages in Acts such as Acts 10:47, 48; 16:15, 29-34; I Cor. 1:16; and I Cor. 16:15. Even though the term for “household” can include infants, it is not a necessity, especially if there were no infants in that household. The first explicit reference to infant baptism in Christian history is found in Irenaeus about 180AD (*Adv. Haer.*, 2:22,4).

¹⁸ From <http://www.earlychristianwritings.com/text/didache-hoole.html>.

2. Adult baptism. The Bible teaches, however, that one is to make a decision to believe in Jesus, repent of his sin, confess his sin, and choose to be baptized for the forgiveness of his sin. Baptism is made effective through one's faith (Col. 2:12). If one cannot express that faith, there would not seem to be any purpose in baptizing that person. The ability to see one's sin, then choose to repent and surrender oneself to God are prerequisites to baptism and would seem to rule out infants as candidates. Indeed, the command in Matthew 28:19-20 is to make disciples and baptize them. Thus, it is one who makes the decision to become a disciple that is the one we are to baptize. Infants cannot do this. And are therefore excluded. This was how the early Christians, before Irenaeus, understood it. Justin Martyr (150AD) taught (*Apology* 61) that a candidate had to (1) understand that baptism was the point where one dedicated *himself* (not someone else) to God, (2) it was the point one was made new in Christ, (3) only those who were persuaded and believed in the things Christians say and teach could be baptized, (4) one had to count the cost to determine if he is able to live the Christian life before being baptized, (5) he must make a commitment to live that life, (6) he must have repented of his sins, (7) he had to *choose* to be born again (it was a decision on that person's part), and (8) the candidate had to "pray and beseech God with fasting for the remission of their past sins". (On this, see my paper on *The Contribution of the Didache and Justin Martyr to the History of Baptism*, noted above).

E. The Baptism of the Spirit. Some today are attempting to interpret baptism in the New Testament as "Baptism of the Spirit" instead of water baptism. Hence, there is no need to be baptized in water. All you need is a Spirit baptism. There are only a few passages that speak of the Spirit Baptism, including those of John the Baptist, the Day of Pentecost (Acts 2) and the conversion of Cornelius (Acts 10). All the other times "baptism" is spoken of it is talking about baptism in water (see for example the Ethiopian Eunuch who found water to be baptized). Historically, Christian baptism has always been understood as baptism in water. The early church fathers understood it that way (see Rex Geisler's book on baptism called *Born of Water*). The burden of proof to understand the vast majority of the scriptures that mention "baptism" as Spirit baptism is on the shoulders of those who make that claim. *In the final analysis their argument is found wanting because it has never been understood that way historically until recently by some. Nor is it naturally understood that way in the New Testament. In the New Testament, it is when baptism is **not** meant to be water baptism that it is qualified by other terms, not visa versa as some would argue. Otherwise, when there are **no** qualifiers, it is assumed to be in water. Their idea is a new idea brought to the text by those who wish to see it there and do away with baptism in water.*

F. In summary, baptism is a *faith-act* of an *adult* who *believes* in Christ, has *repented* of his sins, made a *decision* to be a disciple of Christ and surrender his life to God. It is a *faith-act* of *immersion once* in *water* in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit (or in the name of Jesus), so that one might receive forgiveness of sins through the blood of Christ, and be joined with Christ and his Body the Church.