

Q & A: Baptism in the name of Jesus

Jesus says in John 5:39, "You search the Scriptures, for in them you think you have eternal life; and these are they which testify of Me." I love searching the Scriptures to find the answers to my own questions. I'm so thankful that there are so many Bible helps available today that make finding answers in the Bible so much more accessible and with so much less time. I enjoy learning more about the Lord and learning more fully the Lord's will. All the while I keep in mind that there are questions that I will not have answered in this life. I try to remember what the Bible teaches in Deuteronomy 29:29, "The secret things belong to the LORD our God, but those things which are revealed belong to us and to our children forever, that we may do all the words of this law."

You have the same appetite for truth that we've been talking about; that's why you watch Let the Bible Speak. Jesus says in Matthew 5:6, "Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, For they shall be filled." The teaching on Let the Bible Speak is designed to address the most important and most relevant biblical issues, but periodically we address the questions that you ask us. Today's program is designed to do that. First, we have a song...

A viewer in California asks, "When someone is baptized, should they be baptized in the name of Jesus only?"

This question arises out of a fundamental misunderstanding about the Godhead that manifests itself by putting Scriptures on the topic of baptism at odds with one another.

Jesus Himself says in Matthew 28:19, "Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit..." Meanwhile, Peter preached in Acts 2:38, "Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit."

Up front, let me say that when I baptize someone, I say, "I baptize you in the name of Jesus Christ into the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit for the remission of sins." The bottom line answer to our viewer's question is that no Scripture ANYWHERE EVER tells us to say certain words when we immerse someone into Christ. We are told WHAT TO DO, but never told WHAT TO SAY.

Especially if you've never explored this topic, it may be helpful to order a free transcript of today's message so you can carefully review the relevant Scriptures so you can fully grasp where the misunderstanding arises and how Scripture and reason bring clarity. Meanwhile, try to stick with me.

Some folks, first of all, insist that the "NAME of the Father is Jesus, the name of the Son is Jesus, and the name of the Holy Spirit is Jesus. So, when Jesus speaks of baptism in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, they suggest that what Jesus really means is to baptize in the name of Jesus ONLY.

Some people suggest that the Father, Son, Holy Spirit are three titles and not names. And so, they suggest, if, when you were baptized, the person said, "I baptize you in the name of the Father, and of

the Son, and of the Holy Spirit,” then you were baptized with no name, but only titles. These folks insist that baptism must be done by saying I baptize you in the name of Jesus Christ ONLY.

One relevant issue that is often a part of this confusion is that some people cannot recognize the distinction among the members of the Godhead. We find, however, in Psalm 110:1, that “Jehovah [the first person] said unto my Lord [the second person], Sit thou at my right hand.” We know that both of those referred to are Deity because it is King David who issues the statement yet both of those referred to are of higher rank than him. The Apostle Peter actually uses this statement from the Psalms in presenting his argument in Acts 2:34 that the Jews crucified the Messiah.

Similarly, we find a clear distinction between Jesus and the Holy Spirit as separate members of the Godhead in Matthew 12:32, “And whosoever shall speak a word against the Son of man, it shall be forgiven him; but whosoever shall speak against the Holy Spirit, it shall not be forgiven him.” The contrast here between the Son and the Holy Spirit plainly shows that they are not identical in personality. These two arguments make it certain that Christ was neither the Father nor the Spirit.

The Apostle Paul further distinguishes between the members of the Godhead in 1 Corinthians 11:3, “[T]he head of Christ is God.” Edward Robinson noted the use of “head” (Greek kephale) refers to “one to whom others are subordinate.” Wouldn’t it be nonsense to speak of one being head of himself?

The Hebrew writer speaks of Jesus as “the very image” of the Father’s substance (Hebrews 1:3). Of the word “image” (Greek charakter), W. E. Vine observed:

In the New Testament it is used metaphorically in Hebrew 1:3, of the Son of God as ‘the very image (or impress) of His substance,’ RV. The phrase expresses the fact that the Son is both personally distinct from, and yet literally equal to Him of whose essence He is the adequate imprint.

Other Scriptures that show the distinction between the Father and the Son:

Jesus said in John 5:22, “For the Father judges no one, but has committed all judgment to the Son” and in John 5:30, I do not seek My own will but the will of the Father who sent Me.”

Again in John 5:37, Jesus says, “And the Father Himself, who sent Me, has testified of Me. You have neither heard His voice at any time, nor seen His form.” Of course, they were looking at Jesus and listening to his voice so clearly He was not the same person as the Father.

John 7:16, “Jesus answered them and said, ‘My doctrine is not Mine, but His who sent Me.’”

Jesus said in John 7:28, “I have not come of Myself, but He who sent Me is true, whom you do not know.” Over and over the Scriptures refute the idea that Jesus is the Father and refute the idea that the Father was Jesus.

Now let’s look at the idea of a certain formula or specific words being required when one is baptized. If we must utter specific words at a baptism, what words, exactly, must be spoken? A brief look at the New Testament shows that a number of different biblical descriptions are presented when the Holy Spirit unites the terms “baptize” and “name” are connected. The variations are highlighted in all caps below.

“... baptizing them INTO (eis) the name of THE FATHER AND OF THE SON AND OF THE HOLY SPIRIT” (Matthew 28:19).

“... be baptized ... IN (epi) the name of Jesus CHRIST” (Acts 2:38).

“... baptized INTO (eis) the name of the LORD Jesus” (Acts 8:16).

“... baptized IN (en) the name of Jesus CHRIST” (Acts 10:48).

“... baptized INTO (eis) the name of the LORD Jesus” (Acts 19:5).

Let's apply the same reasoning to Colossians 3:17. If the words “in the name of Christ” demand that those words must be verbalized with the action they are connected to, then how would that look in Colossians 3:17 “And the Father Himself, who sent Me, has testified of Me. You have neither heard His voice at any time, nor seen His form.” Using the logic these Bible students use with baptism to this verse, one would have to say “in the name of the Lord Jesus” before everything they did.

A viewer from California writes: “The Bible says eight souls were saved in the flood of Noah’s day. Do you interpret “saved” to be in the physical sense or both physical and eternal sense with all others damned for eternity?”

The salvation of Noah’s family of eight appears to refer to both physical and spiritual salvation. Hebrews 11:7, “By faith Noah, being divinely warned of things not yet seen, moved with godly fear, prepared an ark for the saving of his household, by which he condemned the world and became heir of the righteousness which is according to faith.” This passage is sufficient in establishing that both physical and spiritual salvation was provided for Noah’s family, but further confirmation is seen in 2 Peter 2:4-5, 9, “For if God did not spare the angels who sinned, but cast them down to hell and delivered them into chains of darkness, to be reserved for judgment; and did not spare the ancient world, but saved Noah, one of eight people, a preacher of righteousness, bringing in the flood on the world of the ungodly...then the Lord knows how to deliver the godly out of temptations and to reserve the unjust under punishment for the day of judgment...”

Of course, while all but Noah’s family of eight perished physically in the flood, those who had not reached the age of accountability would not be condemned spiritually.

A viewer from Missouri commented: Would those who speak of themselves as promoters of Intelligent Design think that an intelligence has been needed to "create" simple molecules such as H2O (water) or O2 (oxygen)?

I'm not an expert on Intelligent Design, but from what I've read I think Intelligent Design folks would be more focused on the over 120 anthropic constants on earth like the availability of oxygen and water (http://www.inplainsite.org/html/anthropic_principles.html).

The planet Mars, I believe, is thought to be the most habitable planet. After the latest freeze in TX, I've decided against signing up for colonization. I've read that temperatures range from -220 to 70 degrees Fahrenheit. 70 degrees F sounds pretty nice, but that's the high in the hottest part of Mars in the hottest part of summer. No camping out because the SUMMER temp then can drop to -100 F.

I understand that for life to be possible, the oxygen level would need to be between 15-25%. Remarkably, the oxygen level on earth is 20% while Mars, I understand is at 0.1% and carbon dioxide 95%. 1 minute where a CO2 concentration is between 17-30 %, the result is "Loss of controlled and

Anthropic Constant 7: Rate Of Expansion. If the universe had expanded at a rate one millionth more slowly than it did, expansion would have stopped and the universe would have collapsed on itself before any stars had formed. If it had expanded faster, then no galaxies would have formed. The psalmist wrote in Psalm 8:3-4, "When I consider Your heavens, the work of Your fingers, The moon and the stars, which You have ordained, What is man that You are mindful of him, And the son of man that You visit him?"

Anthropic Constant 8: Speed Of Light. Any of the laws of physics can be described as a function of the velocity of light (of almost 3 million meters per second). Even a slight variation in the speed of light would alter the other constants and [eliminate] the possibility of life on earth.

Anthropic Constant 9: Water Vapor Levels. If water vapor levels in the atmosphere were greater than they are now, a runaway greenhouse effect would cause temperatures to rise too high for human life. If they were less, an insufficient greenhouse effect would make the earth too cold to support human life.

Anthropic Constant 10: Jupiter. If Jupiter were not in its current orbit, the earth would be bombarded with space material. Jupiter's gravitational field acts as a cosmic vacuum cleaner, attracting asteroids and comets that might otherwise strike earth.

Anthropic Constant 11: The Earth's Crust. If the thickness of the earth's crust were greater, too much oxygen would be transferred to the crust to support life. If it were thinner, volcanic and tectonic activity would make life impossible.

Anthropic Constant 12: The Earth's Rotation. If the rotation of the earth took longer than 24 hours, temperature differences would be too great between night and day. If the rotation period were shorter, atmospheric wind velocities would be too great. The disciples said of Jesus in Luke 8:25, "Who can this be? For He commands even the winds and water, and they obey Him!"

Anthropic Constant 13: Axis Tilt. The 23-degree axis tilt of the earth is just right. If the tilt were altered slightly, surface temperatures would be too extreme on earth.
http://www.inplainsite.org/html/anthropic_principles.html

This list includes only 13 of over 120 anthropic constants or about 10% of them. Every time I read some of these, I'm in awe of the power and wisdom of God. The numerical probabilities of all of these variables converging with such precision in one place to support life have been described by skeptics as Earth's Lucky Break. Give me a break! They clearly point to the incomparable design of the Creator of the book of Genesis.

If this is insufficient evidence for a Creator then no amount of evidence would convince you. I appreciate the frankness of Friedrich Nietzsche who said, "If one were to prove this God of the Christians to us, we should be even less able to believe in him"; and "It is our preference that decides against Christianity, not arguments."

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Paul when he wrote in Romans 16:16, "the churches of Christ salute you." Until next week, goodbye and God bless.

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