
A QUESTION ABOUT BAPTISM

My husband has raised a question concerning our baptism. Here is the point: Instead of the usual form or ceremony or words used by the preacher before baptizing the candidate—i.e., "in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost"—he should say, "in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins."

Matt. 28:19 uses the singular form of "name"—"name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost"; therefore, he concludes, there should be one name which will designate or apply to the three relationships.

Acts 4:12, speaking of Jesus Christ, says: "There is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved." Then Jesus Christ must be the one name referred to in Matt. 28: 19.

Peter used that name in his memorable sermon on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2:38): "Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins." Surely the Holy Ghost directed him to use the correct phrase.

Certainly we all agree that we are baptized in the name of Jesus Christ, and that it is done for the remission of sins; but why, he asks, would it not be better to say so at the time of baptism in the same words the apostles used?

R. L. WHITESIDE'S ANSWER

Any one who reads the Bible should know that the power of life and death is not in the mouth of the administrator of baptism, and yet that is certainly assumed in the notion advanced by the querist. The one who is being baptized may be thoroughly prepared in heart to render acceptable obedience; but if the preacher does not say the right words, the baptism is useless! Can any thoughtful person believe it? It is putting as much power in the preacher as any Roman Catholic ever placed in his priests. If the person being baptized is obeying God from the heart, his acceptance with God does not depend upon what the preacher says, or whether he says anything. A person without the power of speech can administer baptism.

Have we got to the point where we think there is magic in pronouncing a certain formula of words? Do we think that a preacher by the use of words can make another person's obedience valid or invalid? Is there enough magic in pronouncing words to drive the devil out of folks? (Emp. Mine, w.d.) (REFLECTIONS, pp. 244. 245).