

Which saves: faith or baptism?

How did the churches evolve after the apostolic period? – Early Church Fathers – Where did they go wrong? – Baptismal practices began to differ from Bible teaching – Who was baptized? – Infant Baptism – Baptism of adults or Anabaptists – Which saves faith or baptism? – How do the children get saved? – Baptismal Milestones – Augsburg Confession Defense Section IX – Water and Spirit – Water of Life – What does ‘water’ mean in the Bible? – What about the blood of Christ? – Do deeds matter?

The central content of this article addresses the question of which is more important to salvation, **faith, or baptism**. The second theme is why the apostolic faith and teaching were replaced by ecclesiastical organization and why a simple form of worship became controlled by officials. Christian love disappeared and was replaced by the persecution of dissidents; the leaders of the Reformation sent their opponents to be tortured, burned at stake, or be drowned. I also wonder if Christianity has understood that the Bible uses figurative expressions like ‘water and spirit’ and ‘water of life’ etc.

The Christian life on earth has become so confused and controversial that one can ask like Christ did, in Luke 18:8 “When the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on the earth?”

How did the churches evolve after the apostolic period?

There were no churches at the time of Christ. After him, at the time of the apostles, they began to appear. In particular, Paul, the apostle of the nations, was diligent in visiting the

local congregations and writing letters to them. Christians often gathered in families or small gatherings. There was no organized church with deacons, priests, and **bishops** (ἐπίσκοπος Episkopos, overseers, 'district leaders') and then there was the 'Holy Father' Pope.

When someone became a believer, he was baptized by the person who directed him. We see how the church was formed and its officials. You could not get baptized simply by asking for and affirming your faith. You had to get permission from the bishop! It took years to prepare. Baptism was the door that led the little man to church. The church itself became an organization with many different levels of leadership.

Over the centuries, the organization of the Church strengthened. The Church was the Catholic (meaning general) church, led by Pope, the Holy Father, one of whose titles is even today Vicarius Filii Dei, the substitute of the Son of God.

When in the early centuries of Christianity, it was believed that the Holy Spirit would come to man when he believed. Now the Church taught that in baptism, the infant child is saved when the Holy Spirit comes to him with the baptismal water. At the time of Luther, this Reformer had become a monster; if someone as an adult considered his conscience demanding confirmation of the baptism he had received as a baby and wanted to be baptized on the basis of his new religious beliefs, he and many his kind were required to die as an 'anabaptist'. The church's grip on man was even firm as iron. There were fierce religious wars. Balefires were lit. Witches were persecuted, and hundreds of them were burned.

It was only now that vernacular Bibles were printed. By this time, the priests had preached in Latin. Latin was 'God's language,' and it was believed that God understood it, unlike ordinary people. John Wycliffe (Bible translation of the late 14th century) and William Tyndale (the first complete New

Testament) and many others, as well as printing itself, brought about a change for the better. The difference was not immediately great. After all, most people were illiterate. Tyndale, for example, translated the Greek word πρεσβύτερος (presbuteros) into "elder" instead of the priest, which is still used in many free directions.

Even today, we still live in darkness. The Catholic Church is the largest Christian church. Protestants with their numerous denominations follow. If you cannot find a home for yourselves, you can try free directions and churches that others refuse to consider even Christian (e.g. Jehovah's Witnesses) because they do not recognize the triune God.

In these writings, I have written my opinion on Biblical matters, which I have formed after studying the Bible Word. I am not a member of any church. I believe in God, Jesus Christ, and also believe in the existence of the Holy Ghost as God the Father and his Son Jesus Christ send God's Holy Spirit (see 1 Pet 1:12... those who preached the gospel to you by the Holy Spirit sent out from heaven;...) to perform the tasks assigned by God or Christ. The Father gave His Son all power in heaven and on earth after the resurrection of Jesus. However, the Son is not God like the Father, who alone is true God (1 Cor 8:6 "yet to us, there is one God, the Father, ...).

As you read this and my other writings, please, keep the above in mind. I only seek the truth. I have no other purposes and no hidden agendas from any religious community. I confess I am an adherent and admirer of the apostolic faith.

What were the apostolic churches like?

The apostolic period ended with John. His book of Revelation is the last of the books of the Bible and was written on the island of Patmos near the end of the first century. During the Apostles, Christianity was forbidden, and Christians were

persecuted. For this reason, too, the churches were small, and gatherings were held in private homes.

Apostolic faith was manifested as follows:

Act 2:44 All **who believed** were together and **had all things in common**.

45 They **sold their possessions and goods**, and distributed them to all, according as anyone had need.

46 They had a single purpose and **went to the temple every day**. They ate at **each other's homes** and **shared their food with glad and humble hearts**,

47 praising God, and **having favor with all the people**. The Lord added to the assembly day by day those who were being saved.

Mar 16:16 He that **believes and is baptized** shall be saved, and **he that disbelieves shall be condemned**.

As the apostles left the churches, little by little, the same happened to their students. In the history of the Church began what might be called the time of the Church Fathers.

Early Church fathers

Their work was certainly hampered by the fact that there was no complete work available of the New Testament. Instead, there were letters from the apostles that the apostles had sent to the churches around the Mediterranean, and the receivers had sent copies to other churches. The New Testament was scattered throughout many different letters and documents. It was not until the third and fourth centuries that it was assembled into a single work and was available as it is today. If they did not have the united word of God, they had even more faith and zeal even though they were forbidden and persecuted. There were very few Christians compared to the

surrounding pagan society. The pagan doctrines and their influences seek to shape the faith of the churches. Nowadays, with everyone having Bible translations, both book and computer, no one can blame the lack of knowledge. Yet, Christianity in the world is divided into many different denominations and doctrines.

As the apostles died, apostolic faith and apostolic doctrine were also marginalized. Beresford Job suggests that the Church Fathers brought new teachings and practices that are utterly contrary to the New Testament! They defended the truth as they understood it, and through their leadership and influence, the Christian gospel survived and spread at a time when it was probably at its most vulnerable. The early churches, in my view, did not defend the deity of Jesus and the Holy Spirit. The Nicene Ecclesiastical Assembly reaffirmed the Deity of Jesus in 325 and the Holy Spirit was exalted to Deity and part of the Triune God in Constantinople in 381. In the 4th century, the Catholic Church became institutionalized after Christianity was approved and made official religion of the Roman Empire by Emperor Constantine. It is a great wonder to me that it took three hundred years after Jesus' teaching to define the content of Christian doctrine in Church Councils! And it went wrong at that.

Therefore, people should instead study and test the legacy left by the early church fathers in the light of God's word, rather than believe that the **New Testament can only be understood correctly in the light of the teachings of the churches, and not to think that Church fathers are the key to understanding the Bible.** This mistake has persecuted the Christian Church ever since. After the Church fathers, not only did they shape the doctrine, but also the significance of the Pope began to accentuate.

Many things have changed in the Church so much that the current church system is hardly reminiscent of the Church of small family communities that existed in the apostolic period

and sometime after that. Nevertheless, one should have looked at what Jesus and the apostles said in the New Testament and not give power to the still expanding and hierarchical Catholic Church organization.

Under the leadership of the churches, the churches departed from biblical truth. The churches became precisely the opposite of what Jesus and the apostles meant! By no means do I claim that the Church Fathers who led the churches were not God and Christ-loving men of faith, but over time something went wrong.

Notable Church Fathers:

St. Ignatius of Antioch (Bishop of Antioch, Syria, died c. 110). He is known mainly from seven highly regarded letters that he wrote during a trip to Rome, as a prisoner condemned to be executed for his beliefs. Ignatius defended the New Testament against Jews who did not accept it.

Justin Martyr (Died 165 AD) Justin was an apologist of Christianity. He is known as the interpreter of the theory of the Logos (the Word of God) in the 2nd century. He also brought Christianity under the influence of Greek philosophy.

Irenaeus (Bishop of Lyon c. 130-202. Bishop in 177) To counter the doctrines of the gnostic sects claiming secret wisdom, he offered three pillars of orthodoxy: the scriptures, the tradition handed down from the apostles, and the teaching of the apostles' successors.

Tertullian(us) (Lived in Carthage. – n. 155-240) He also was an early Christian apologist and a polemicist against heresy, including contemporary Christian Gnosticism. He has been called “the father of Latin Christianity” and

Cyprian(us) – Bishop of Carthage (He converted to Christian in

246 and was elected bishop in 249. He was a prolific writer: *Epistola ad Donatum de gratia Dei* and his early treatise *On the Unity of the Catholic Church* are his best-known works)
<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cyprian>

The church leaders were male (of course) elders who were overseers or pastors. They had to be according to Tim 3:1 This is a faithful saying: if a man seeks the office of an overseer [Or, bishop ἐπισκοπή *episkopē*, “episcopate”:-the office of a “bishop”], he desires a good work.

2 The overseer, therefore, must be without reproach, the husband of one wife, temperate, sensible, modest, hospitable, good at teaching,

3 He must not drink excessively or be a violent person, but instead, be gentle. He must not be argumentative or a lover of money.

4 one who rules his own house well, having children in subjection with all reverence;

5 but if a man doesn't know how to rule his own house, how will he take care of the assembly of God?

What went wrong?

The church leaders were male (of course) elders who were overseers or pastors. They had to be according to Tim 3:1 This is a faithful saying: if a man seeks the office of an overseer [Or, bishop ἐπισκοπή *episkopē*, “episcopate”:-the office of a “bishop”], he desires a good work.

Church father Ignatius instructed to honor the bishop and the Presbyterians: “Do not do anything without the bishop or the Presbyterians.” Without the bishop, there was no permission to perform baptism. The distinction between the clergy and the people became more and more clear. Apostolic equality was gone. Instead, a new concept was developed, new ministries, and even new doctrines. The early church fathers demanded the

same authority as the original apostles and claimed that their teaching was, therefore, right. And not long after, a new high office was created; Pope, above all bishops. All this without any instruction from the Bible. On the contrary, the Bible says emphatically:

Mat 23:8 "But you are not to be called 'Rabbi,' [Master and/or Teacher] for you have only one teacher, and all of you are brothers.

9 Call no man on the earth your father, for one is your Father, he who is in heaven.

10 Neither be called masters, for one is your master, the Christ.

11 But the greatest of you shall be your servant.

12 Whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and whoever humbles himself will be exalted

The formation of clergy in the Catholic Church began already during the period as mentioned above of the Church fathers. The priest was called 'father,' and the Pope himself is still the 'Holy Father'. Jesus reserved this word with the highest glory to God.

Joh 17:11 "Holy Father, protect them by your name, the name that you gave me, so that they may be one, as we are one." In addition to the Pope, he has been awarded the title Vicarius Filii Dei – Substitute of the Son of God. Matthew 23:12 tells us what their destiny will be:

23:11 But he that is greatest among you shall be your servant.

23:12 And whosoever shall exalt himself shall be humbled, and whoever shall humble himself shall be exalted.

Church leadership had been a ministry task for the apostles, but it had become a post, and soon after that, the office depended on its hierarchical position. This is most evident in the Catholic Church. Partly because there are so many Catholics, about two billion. The hierarchy of a congregation

can be seen even in smaller organizations, like in the seven million members of Jehovah's Witnesses.

Pope and bishops and ecclesiastical congregations create a new interpretation of biblical questions based on teachings of Church fathers, when everything should be based on the teachings of Christ and the explanations of the apostles. Admittedly, descriptions and even interpretations are often needed. But one should be very restrained when it comes to creating new doctrines. Traditions superseded the word of God. Thus Matthew writes the words of Jesus:

15:3 But he answered them, "Why do you also disregard the commandment of God because of your tradition?"

15:6 ...You have made the commandment of God void **because of your tradition.**

The Pharisees had their own traditional rules, and in the same line, representatives of church administrations have advanced after the apostolic time.

Baptismal practices began to differ from Bible teaching

Let's have a look at a few examples of baptismal situations in the Bible:

Act 2:38 And Peter said to them, Repent, and be baptised, each one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ, for remission of sins, and ye will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. 41 Those then *who had accepted his word were baptised*; and there were added in that day about three thousand souls.

Act 8:12 But when they believed Philip announcing the glad tidings concerning the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptised, both men and women. – All who confessed their faith in Jesus Christ were baptized. I say this on the basis that Simon, who had astonished them by his

magic arts, was Baptized. (Act 8:13)

Act 8:36-38 As they were going along the road, they came to some water. The eunuch said, "Look, there's some water. What keeps me from being baptized?" 38 and he commanded the chariot to stand still, and they both went down to the water, both Philip and the eunuch, and he baptized him;

Act 9:17-18 Ananias departed, and entered into the house. Laying his hands on him, he said, "Brother Saul, the Lord, who appeared to you on the road by which you came, has sent me, that you may receive your sight, and be filled with the Holy Spirit."18 Immediately something like scales fell from his eyes, and *he received his sight. He arose and was baptized.*

Act 10:44-48 While Peter was still speaking these words, the Holy Spirit fell on all those who heard the word.

45 Then the circumcised believers who had come with Peter were amazed that the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out on the Gentiles, too.

46 For they heard them speaking in tongues and praising God. Then Peter said,

47 "No one can stop us from using water to baptize these people who have received the Holy Spirit in the same way that we did, can he?"

48 He commanded them to be baptized **in the name of Jesus Christ**. Then they asked him to stay some days.

Mar 16:16 "The one **who believes and is baptized will be saved**, but the one who doesn't believe will be condemned."

A few notes from these Bible verses:

The verses show that

Baptism was performed quickly after the hearers believed what they heard; that is, came to faith. Mark 16:16 shows that only those who believe can be saved. It is often said that baptism washes away sins. I, however, consider the baptismal cleansing

effect is figurative; faith is the final wash of sins, and man is saved by faith. This is easy to accept if you think of a baptized person who does not believe. Would he be saved without faith?

In those early days there was no need to ask permission from the bishop. The gift of the Holy Spirit was also given to the Gentiles, and the essential thing, have you noticed?

Peter commanded them to baptize **in the name of Jesus Christ!** The baptismal commandment in Matthew 28:19 says, however: "herefore go, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them **in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,**" This commandment of Christ was given in Galilee after he had risen but was still on earth to provide instructions to the apostles. What do the Apostles do? When, on Pentecost, a large number of people of different languages wanted to be baptized, the apostles performed baptism **solely in the name of Jesus Christ.** Why didn't they obey Christ's command of baptism? If such a commandment had been given, I believe it is quite sure that the apostles would have followed it. Or is it that Christ did not give such a baptismal command? I think this is a later addition. Trinity proponents have been desperately seeking evidence for their doctrine. If they don't find, these can be fabricated!

Baptism was performed during the apostolic period by immersion in water shortly after the baptized had confessed his faith. Baptism did not require anyone's permission, but was done by someone who, through his speech, had convinced that person. The children were not baptized, as I explained above. In addition, there were no "confirmation classes" or other training.

And finally from Galatians: 5:6 "For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision amounts to anything, nor uncircumcision, but **faith working through love.**" – The same can be said about baptism; salvation is influenced by faith that comes through

love.

Who were baptized?

Households:

Act 16:15 When **she and her household** were baptized, she begged us, saying, "If you have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come into my house, and stay." So she persuaded us.

18:8 Crispus, the ruler of the synagogue, believed in the Lord with **all his house**. Many of the Corinthians, when they heard, believed and were baptized.

10:44 While Peter is yet speaking these sayings, the **Holy spirit fell upon all those hearing** the word,

ἀκούω akouō 1. to hear

1. to attend to, **consider what is or has been said**
2. to **understand, perceive the sense of what is said**

Child baptism:

Mat 18:6 "If anyone causes one of these **little ones who believe in me** to sin, it would be better for him if a large millstone were hung around his neck and he were drowned at the bottom of the sea."

Mar 10:15 (also Luk 18:17) Most assuredly I tell you, **whoever will not receive the Kingdom of God like a little child**, he will in no way enter into it."

When Jesus said that those who enter the kingdom of heaven must be like children, these children Jesus referred to, were not baptized!

Can a little child receive the kingdom of God in faith? An infant does not understand anything about God's kingdom. It

only describes the trust of a young child; the child believes when the father or mother tells him something. Adults must believe in God's word in the same way, even if they do not understand everything. The Church's teaching that when a child is baptized, the child receives the *faith that saves him*. This is not true.

Children were, of course, part of the concept of household. Families were baptized, but were young children also baptized? Acts 10:44 says that the Holy Spirit came upon all who **heard**. To hear in Greek is ἀκούω akouō, which means hearing the way that the listeners understand. Infants and toddlers do not understand religious issues. At what age does the child understand? In Israel, boys at the age of 13 and girls a year earlier. At that time, they were given a Bar Mitzvah party, which made them 'subject to the law'. This includes the notion that they were now old enough to understand the law. Maybe this would be an age limit for baptism, I can't say for sure. It should be remembered that those who were baptized were mainly Gentiles, but that those who performed baptism were mainly Jews, who, when choosing those to be baptized, could take into account the aforementioned Jewish conceptions.

Will man be reborn in his conversion to faith in Christ or baptism? The importance of baptism was emphasized during Tertullian because it was believed that the Holy Spirit would consecrate the baptismal water at the very moment the priest prays. Holy water at baptism cleanses past sins and also those to come. This is how the priest plays an important role in performing baptism. In the apostolic era, there was no need for such a sanctification of water, but all water was acceptable. Neither needed a priest nor bishop's permission, but any believer could perform baptism. From the outset, **the only requirement for church membership was a life transformed by the Holy Ghost**. Nobody even talked about being a member of a particular congregation. But after the end of the apostles' time, **the most crucial thing in church membership was not the**

influence of the Holy Spirit on the people, but the acceptance of ecclesiastical doctrines and discipline. As the priesthood grew in importance and the churches became religious *organizations*, baptism, and infant baptism, in particular, was seen as a way to increase the church and keep it obedient. Joining the congregation required baptism and obedience to the priests to receive it. Baptism itself was no longer the spontaneous expression of faith in Christ as it had initially been. Now it was the culmination of a more or less formal training period.

Anabaptists

Baptism of believers (i.e., adult baptism, usually by immersion)

There are an estimated 800 million Protestants in the world. The main churches, Lutheran, Reformed, and Anglican churches formed as a result of the Reformation may have 250 million of these. There are almost twice as many Christians who teach the baptism of believers. Most of these are Pentecostals, Baptists, Methodists, Adventists, and Jehovah's Witnesses. Anabaptism, or baptism by believers, is thus included in the teaching of many churches.

Anabaptism in Greek means re-baptism. This baptismal movement began around the same time as Luther's Reformation, in the early 16th century. While Luther and his supporters were solely on the child baptismal side, the Anabaptists accepted the baptism of believers as the only valid baptism; whoever believed in the gospel participated in the baptism of believers. Only adults were baptized. As its name implied, it required faith, which had to be based on knowledge. For this reason, the Bible's practice was considered by the Anabaptists to be the only righteous one, and they accepted the baptism given only to those who have heard and accepted the gospel.

They also taught that churches were to be independent of the rulers. Tens and hundreds of thousands were baptized by believers who supported the doctrines they found in the Bible. When they were persecuted, they moved to new places where they found freedom for a moment.

Zwingli and Luther also emphasized the Bible as the only measure of truth. The Reformists wanted the Church to be responsible for interpreting and understanding the Bible. Luther did not grant ordinary people the right to proclaim and explain God's word without the permission of the official concerned. Anabaptists studied the Bible and found new doctrines there that they supported regardless of the Church. Wherever they were persecuted, they moved elsewhere. Hundreds of thousands of believers died in the persecution. The Anabaptists couldn't find any security anywhere. Freedom of religion was an unknown concept. It was not until the end of the Thirty Years' War that the peace of Westfalen ended in 1648 between Catholics and Protestants. Anabaptists were persecuted until the 18th century.

Christianity has grown through churches based on the Anabaptist heritage. For many Christians, the significant proportion of these churches in Christianity is surprising.

Why was the Anabaptism rejected, and the people treated so negatively? Couldn't it just be interpreted as meaning "asking for a good conscience from God"; after being baptized as a child, the person had begun to realize that he had lived a very sinful and worthless life and was now repenting? The persecution of the 16th century is, in my view, a sign of the fear that baptismal renewers might develop among themselves other kinds of social values compared for example, with Luther. Luther advocated authority in society and the Anabaptists were in favor of social orders such as socialists or communists of their time.

The Reformation sought to return to the teachings of the

Bible; therefore, it is difficult to understand why the Reformation, begun in 1517, advocated infant baptism. However, a minority was in favor of abolishing infant baptism.

However, supporters of the Reformation lacked a unified plan. Many realized that the movement would have to follow the teachings of the Bible but did not find a common interpretation. However, it was agreed that the Catholic Church was corrupt and full of immorality. Anabaptists joined this mess. The issue between them and the Reformers seemed to be rising in attitudes towards infant baptism.

Martin Luther, Ulrich Zwingli, and Jean Calvin were the most prominent reformers who defended child baptism life and blood as part of the Reformation. Their opponents were active in small groups and fragmented movements. One of the major supporters of the believers' baptism was Balthasar **Hübmaier**. He was named Principal Heretics at the Trento Ecclesiastical Council of the Catholic Church (1545-63), together with the Reformers mentioned above. Hübmaier's idea was that religion could not be forced. Luther and other reformists used torture, balefires, and other similar harsh punishments to force people into 'true' faith. The Hübmaier was burned at stake in 1528. Because of his radicality, he was even considered a danger to society. His wife was later drowned in the river.

According to the principles of the Reformation, it was the duty of every believer to seek the Bible truth to follow. In practice, the individual is denied freedom of religion. Anabaptists were especially persecuted by both Protestants and Catholics. Drowning was the form of punishment used. Such a fate was experienced by people who were just met at the meeting. The same happened to those who did not let their child be baptized.

Why did Lutherans and Catholics together oppose the baptism of adult believers, even though they were otherwise sworn enemies? Baptism of believers in adults was not just a matter

of doctrine. It was also, to a great extent, a question of power. Lutherans and Catholics understood that if baptism were to be passed on to adulthood and the believers themselves would decide whether they wanted to be baptized, the number of those associated with the church could be reduced considerably. When a child is baptized as a baby, he or she is given a religion-based grip from an early age. The Catholic Church had realized this already and now also the Reformists.

Which saves faith or baptism?

Joh 14:6 Jesus said to him, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father, except through me. – God sent His Son to a great mission of salvation, and according to the testimony of this verse, Jesus is at the center of it. The Apostles noted this and it appeared in that they baptized even large crowds in the name of Jesus Christ. (Acts 2:38, 10:48)

Act 16:31 They said, "**Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ**, and you will be saved, you and your household." – I take this to mean that the entire baptized families can be saved, if the head of household takes care of the religious development so that the entire household will be believers. The most important thing is the personal faith of each person.

Act 26:18 "to open their eyes, that they may turn from darkness to light and from the power of Satan to God, that they may receive remission of sins and an **inheritance among those who are sanctified by faith in me [Christ].**' – A verse from Paul's defense speech. By believing in Christ, you will be forgiven of sins and still have an inheritance among the sanctified. Paul confirms the same in Romans 6:22 But now, being made free from sin, and having become servants of God, you have your fruit of sanctification, and the result of eternal life.

What does sanctification mean in the life of a believer? After

becoming a believer, the Holy Spirit accomplishes sanctification through the word of God. It is the constant fulfillment of the Holy Spirit, the work of God in man. It is described to be the same as the fruit of the Spirit according to Gal 5:22: But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness. In the consecrated person, these feelings begin to generalize and accentuate.

In Acts 16:31 and 26:18, faith was the most important and sufficient for salvation. Baptism was not mentioned. A believer can well be saved without baptism. One must strive for sanctification; get rid of sin, live and develop in faith.

The seal of the Holy Spirit. Those who have come to faith receive not only sins forgiven but also the fruits of the Holy Spirit in their lives through sanctification. The believer will also receive the seal of the Holy Spirit.

Eph 1:13 You, too, have heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation. When you believed in him you were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit,
14 who is a pledge of our inheritance, to the redemption of God's own possession, to the praise of his glory.

Eph 4:30 Don't grieve the Holy Spirit of God, in whom you were sealed for the day of redemption.

2 Cor 1:21-22 says: "Now he who establishes us with you in Christ, and anointed us, is God; 22 who has **placed his seal on us** and has **given us the Spirit in our hearts** as a down payment." Paul testifies that God has placed His seal with the Holy Spirit to believers as a down payment.

According to Ephesians 1: 13-14, what are the steps to obtaining the seal of the Holy Spirit?

1) Hearing the word of truth 2) Becoming a believer 3) Getting the seal of the Holy Spirit

Not a word about baptism! When we come to faith, we receive the baptism of the Holy Spirit, or the seal of the Holy Spirit, in our hearts.

Becoming filled with the Holy Spirit is still a different event. According to the Acts of the Apostles, this happened on Pentecost. 2:1-4 "Now when the day of Pentecost had come, they were all with one accord in one place. Suddenly there came from the sky a sound like the rushing of a mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting. They saw tongues like flames of fire that separated, and one rested on each of them. They were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other languages, as the Spirit gave them the ability to speak." ... – Being filled with the Holy Spirit includes such unique gifts or talents as are necessary to perform a task.

The seal of the Holy Spirit protects man in the end times: Rev 9:4 They were told that they should not hurt the grass of the earth, neither any green thing, neither any tree, but only those people who don't have **God's seal** on their foreheads.

Eph 2:8 For **by grace you have been saved through faith**. This does not come from you; it is the gift of God.

Paul in Romans, too, speak of the faith of the heart and the recognition of the mouth for salvation:

Rom 10:9 If you **declare with your mouth** that Jesus is Lord, and **believe in your heart** that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. 10 For a person **believes with his heart and is justified, and a person declares with his mouth and is saved**.

Rom 8:9 But you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if it is so that the Spirit of God dwells in you. But **if any man doesn't have the Spirit of Christ, he is not his**.

There are different views about the baptism effecting

salvation. Acts 16:31 states that "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved, you and your household." Baptism is not required here; faith is enough. Mark 16:16 also confirms that if you do not believe you will be damned. Faith seems to be decisive. How to Understand Mar 16:16 "believes **and is** baptized"?

1 Pet 3:21 answers the problem: Baptism is asking God for a clear conscience based on the Resurrection of Jesus Christ. – We can also solve the problem of salvation by stating that those who have taken believers' baptism (as an adult) will be saved because they have confessed their faith in Christ and God.

Act 10:45 Then the circumcised believers who had come with Peter were amazed that the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out on the Gentiles, too.

46 For they heard them speaking in tongues and praising God. Then Peter said,

47 "No one can stop us from using water to baptize these people who have **received the Holy Spirit in the same way that we did, can he?**" Verse 47 shows that **the Gentiles received first the Holy Spirit, and only afterwards, they were baptized!**

In the end times, on the Day of the Lord, God will chasten sinful humanity. Many unbelievers die. However, the Bible offers a way out of this curse. Acts 2:21 (Also Romans 10:13 and Joel 2:32) "Then whoever calls the name of the Lord will be saved." – Notice the word, everyone. God does not ask if you have been baptized or received the Holy Spirit for yourself, whether you are a Gentile or a member of the Christian Church. It is enough to call on Jesus for help in faith. I am sure that Jehovah's name is valid too.

How are children saved?

Children, especially infants, cannot be expected to believe. Nor do they understand anything they have heard. There have been times when it was considered that a small child who perished without being baptized was lost. Baptism became the official means of salvation for Catholics, which was later adopted by the Protestant Church. Unbaptized children were exposed to **Limbo** (Lat. Limbus), a doctrine that was completely invented and not based on the Bible. According to this doctrine, Limbus was the edge of hell and the supposed abode of the souls of unbaptized infants, People had to develop this kind of milder hell for the kids – after all, they hadn't even sinned! Fortunately, the Limbo doctrine is no longer an official Catholic doctrine.

Let's look at a few Bible verses:

Mar 10:13 "They were bringing to him little children, that he should touch them, but the disciples rebuked those who were bringing them.

14 But when Jesus saw it, he was moved with indignation, and said to them, "Allow the little children to come to me! Don't forbid them, for **the Kingdom of God belongs to such as these.**

15 Most assuredly I tell you, whoever will not receive the Kingdom of God like a little child, he will in no way enter into it."

16 He took them in his arms, and blessed them, laying his hands on them."

The children in verse 13 are young children, Gk. παιδίον paidíon. Strong's: a young child, a little boy, a little girl

1. infants
2. children, little ones
3. an infant

Some see a clear defense of infant baptism in these verses. After all, not a word about baptism here! The infant children were not baptized at all during Jesus. Of *unbaptized children*, Jesus says that such is the kingdom of God. Jesus added:

whoever will not receive the Kingdom of God like a little child, he will in no way enter into it.

Those who enter the kingdom of God are pure and sinless. That's just how little children are, according to Jesus' testimony. They would enter the kingdom of God even if they were not baptized. Children are sinless and have no "original sin" until they can independently think and understand what sin is.

1 Pet 2:2 "Like newborn babies, thirst for the pure milk of the word so that by it you may **grow in your salvation.**" Peter speaks of growing up to salvation. It can be concluded that the effect of baptism as a child is not lasting until adulthood. It ends when the child has grown up and has begun to understand the impact of his actions. The above was an example of Jewish children who, at the age of 12-13, are now 'subject to the law' and are now old enough to understand the law. If they know what the law requires, they will surely realize what salvation requires.

Milestones of Baptism for Children

In 253 Carthage Church Council declares: babies should be baptized right away

In the beginning of 400s baptism is a permanent part of Catholicism

Around 1200 Pope Innocentius III defended infant baptism

In 1531 Philipp Melancon publishes Augsburg confession defense

Around 1550 Trento Church Council proclaims cursed opponents of infant baptism

In 1951 in case of emergency, midwives should perform baptism themselves

1958 Vatican orders children to be baptized as soon as possible

Until now, infant baptism had been defended by the Pope and the Church councils. In the 1960s, the Vatican changes its mind stating that salvation is possible without baptism.

However, the Augsburg Creed Defense of 1531 states that "baptism is essential to salvation, that children should be baptized, and that baptism is not invalid but necessary."

Apology of The **Augsburg Confession Article IX**

Our opponents also agree to the ninth article, in which we confess that **Baptism is necessary to salvation**, and that **the Baptism of infants is not fruitless, but necessary and salutary**. And as the Gospel is preached in its purity and with all diligence among us, we have enjoyed (God be praised) a great benefit and blessed fruit, because **the Anabaptists have gained no ground in our churches**. We praise God, that our people are fortified by his Word against the ungodly, riotous mobs of these evil men; and while we have put down and condemned many other errors of the Anabaptists, we have especially contended for, and maintained against them, the blessings of infant Baptism.

For it is altogether certain that the divine promises of grace and of the Holy Spirit, belong not only to adults, but also to children. Now, the promises do not apply to those that are out of the church of Christ, where there is no Gospel nor Sacrament. For the kingdom of Christ exists only, where the Word of God and the Sacraments are found.

<http://www.1580boc.org/ap/ix-iv>

It is, therefore, a truly Christian and necessary practice, to baptize children, in order that they may become participants of the Gospel, the promise of salvation and grace, as Christ commands, Matt. 28:19: "Go ye, therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them," etc. Now, as grace and salvation in

Christ are offered to all, so Baptism is offered, both to men and women, to youths and infants. Hence it certainly follows that **we may and should baptize infants; for in and with Baptism, universal grace and the treasure of the Gospel are offered to them.**

In the second place, it is clear that the Lord God approves the Baptism of young children. The Anabaptists, who condemn such Baptism, therefore teach false doctrine. But it is manifest that **God approves the Baptism of young children, from the fact that he gave the Holy Spirit to many who were baptized in their infancy;** for there have been many holy men in the church, and they were not baptized otherwise. (English Translation by Ambrose and Socrates Henkel (1851), Revised by W. F. Lehmann (1854))

Augsburg Confession constitute the basic confession of the Lutheran churches, was presented June 25, 1530. The principal author was the Reformer *Philipp Melancthon*, who drew on earlier Lutheran statements of faith. The purpose was to defend the Lutherans against misrepresentations and to provide a statement of their theology that would be acceptable to the Roman Catholics. On August 3 the Catholic theologians condemned 13 articles of the confession, accepted 9 without qualifications, and approved 6 with qualifications. This 1530 version of the confession (known as the "unaltered" version) has been authoritative for Lutherans. <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Augsburg-Confession>

For five hundred years, there has been a dispute between Lutheran Protestants and Catholics. Is it time for Christ to return to earth to end religious strife and dissolution between Churches?

From water and Spirit – the water of life

Joh 3:3 Jesus replied to him, "Truly, truly I tell you, unless

a person is **born from above** [Or born again] he cannot see the kingdom of God." 3:5 Jesus answered, "Truly, truly I tell you, unless a person is **born of water and Spirit** he cannot enter the kingdom of God."

Joh 4:11 The woman said to him, "Sir, you have nothing to draw with, and the well is deep. Where are you going to get this **living water**?

4:14 but whoever **drinks of the water that I will give him** will never thirst again; but **the water that I will give him** will become **in him a well of water springing up to eternal life.**"

Rev 21:6 He said to me, "It is done! I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End. I will give **freely** to him who is thirsty **from the spring of the water of life.**" – The verse is from the second last chapter of Revelation, which tells about the new heaven and the new earth. New Jerusalem descends from heaven from God. God Himself dwells among men. Everything is made new. In this situation, no one is baptized anymore; When Christ says in Rev 21:6, he gives freely **from the spring of the water of life**, this water is not baptismal water! **Water of life depicts eternal life.** The river of water of life (22:1) running from the throne of God and the Lamb must also be interpreted.

22:1 He showed me **a river of water of life**, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb,

This was also the case in Rev 22:17: "The Spirit and the bride say, "Come!" He who hears, let him say, "Come!" He who is thirsty, let him come. He who desires, let him take the water of life freely." – Thirst is not a physical thirst, but a yearning for knowledge and salvation. The **water of life** that is offered as a gift is the **word of God** in which believing gives eternal life.

John the Baptist said in Mat 3:11 I indeed do baptize you with water to reformation, but he who after me is coming is

mightier than I, of whom I am not worthy to bear the sandals, he shall baptize you **with the Holy Spirit and with fire,**

In Joh 3:5 Jesus answered, "Truly, truly I tell you, **unless a person is born of water and Spirit he cannot enter the kingdom of God.**"

1 Pet 1:23 says, "For you have been born again, not by a seed that perishes but by one that cannot perish—by **the living and everlasting word of God.**" – Here is another description of the way of salvation; the eternal seed through the living word of God.

What does 'water' mean in the Bible?

In the Bible, 'water' does not always mean water or the water of baptism. From the examples above, it can be deduced that 'water' means the word of God and the Holy Spirit. It also means 'living water' or 'water of life'. People tend to believe the word of the Bible literally. It should be remembered that many of the texts in the Bible are figurative, metaphorical. Water often plays this role. For example Joh 7:37-39: Now on the last and greatest day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried out, "If anyone is thirsty, let him come to me and drink!

38 He **who believes in me, as the Scripture has said, from within him will flow rivers of living water.**"

39 But he said this about the **Spirit**, which those believing in him were to receive. For the Holy Spirit was not yet given, because Jesus wasn't yet glorified.

Eph 5:25 Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the assembly, and gave himself up for it;

5:26 that he might *sanctify it, having cleansed it by the washing of water with the word,*

The sanctification of the Church took place through the word; The word cleanses it as if washing it with water. However,

both John and Paul spoke of washing with water, meaning “washing” by the word of God, not baptism.

Deu 32:2 My **doctrine** shall drop as the rain; My speech shall condense as the dew, As the small rain on the tender grass, As the showers on the herb.

Joh 4:13 Jesus answered her, “Everyone who drinks of this water will thirst again,

4:14 but whoever drinks of the water that I will give him will never thirst again; but **the water that I will give him will become in him a well of water springing up to eternal life.**” –

The verses are from the scene between Jesus and the Samaritan woman. In verse 10, Jesus said to the Samaritan woman: “If you knew the gift of God, and who it is who says to you, ‘Give me a drink,’ you would have asked him, and he [Jesus] would have given you **living water.**” – Water is a symbol of baptism, which saves you.

Perhaps baptism as water does not save, but the fact that a person (adult), when he or she takes baptism, also takes the Christian life in a different way than the non-baptized. After reflection, he has come to a solution and does not want to turn out to be a turncoat, but seeks to develop himself as a believer. Baptism is only a watershed, and baptism as such, does not save anyone. One can also return to his former sinful life, which again means that the guidance that he had at baptism is lost and the meaning of baptism is nullified.

And what if a child is baptized? If he has lived all his life in sin, he has blasphemed all things holy. Does the book of life read that he is saved because he was baptized as a baby? I think not! What if this erring repents and asks Christ in his life? He is saved. Not by the baptism he received as a child, but by the grace of his conversion to Christ for the remission of his sins.

What about the blood of Christ?

For God so loved the world, that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish, but have eternal life. (Joh 3:16)

God gave His only son to die for humanity. He was to make a new covenant and sacrifice himself on the cross-tree so that all who believe in him could have the opportunity to be saved and have eternal life. The following verses prove this.

Mat 26:28 For this is **my blood of the new covenant** that is being poured out for many people for the forgiveness of sins. Heb 9:18 Therefore even the first covenant has not been dedicated without blood.

1 Cor 11:25 In the same way he also took the cup, after supper, saying, "This cup is the **new covenant in my blood**. Do this, as often as you drink, in memory of me." 11:27 Therefore whoever eats this bread or drinks the Lord's cup in a manner unworthy of the Lord will be guilty of the body and the blood of the Lord.

Heb 10:29 How much worse punishment, do you think, will he be judged worthy of, who has trodden under foot the Son of God, and **has counted the blood of the covenant with which he was sanctified an unholy thing**, and has **insulted the Spirit of grace?**

Joh 6:53 Jesus therefore said to them: "Most assuredly I tell you, **unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood**, you don't have life in yourselves." 54 He who eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day. – This refers to a communion set up by Christ, where bread symbolizes his body and wine symbolizes his blood.

Mat 26:26 While they were eating, Jesus took a loaf of bread and blessed it. Then he broke it in pieces and handed it to

the disciples, saying, "Take this and eat it. *This is my body.*" 27 He took the cup, gave thanks, and gave to them, saying, "All of you drink it, 28 for this is *my blood* of the new covenant, which is poured out for many for the remission of sins.

Rev 5:9 They sang a new song, saying, "You are worthy to take the book, And to open its seals: For you were killed, And bought us for God *with your blood*, Out of every tribe, language, people, and nation,"

Heb 2:14 Since then the children have shared in flesh and blood, he also himself in like manner partook of the same, that **through death he might bring to nothing him who had the power of death, that is, the devil**, – Christ had to die in order to fulfill God's mission, to defeat death. Until then, Satan had death in his power. In Revelation, he says Rom 5:9 Much more then, **being now justified by his blood, we will be saved from God's wrath through him**. – Salvation refers to the coming day of the Lord's wrath, in which God punishes the unbelievers.

Col 1:19 For all the fullness was pleased to dwell in him; 20 and **through him to reconcile all things to himself, by him, whether things on the earth, or things in the heavens, having made peace through the blood of his cross**. – Jesus Christ was born a man; he lived as a man and died as a man. He also ascended to heaven and lives there as a man. But as a man, Christ received all the wisdom from God and learned to know God's will. Christ, through suffering, was refined to his high office; to him the Father God gave all power in heaven and on earth.

Through Rev 1:18 I was dead, and behold, I am alive forevermore. Amen. **I have the keys of Death and of Hades.**

The blood of Christ purifies

Heb 9:14 How much more will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself unblemished to God, *cleanse our consciences* from dead works so that we may serve the living God!

1 Joh 1:7 But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ, his Son, *cleanses us from all sin*. – However, one should not think that the blood of Christ automatically cleanses people from sin. The blood of Christ is the foundation that allows for the remission and purification of sins. However, one must have faith and repent of his sins to obtain this purification.

1 Joh 5:6 This man, Jesus Christ, is the one who came **by water and blood**—not with water only, but with water and with blood. The Spirit is the one who verifies this because the Spirit is the truth. – I have shown above that ‘water’ means the word of God and the Holy Spirit. Thus, Christ has come through water and blood, i.e., Holy Spirit, to give His own blood for the redemption.

Eph 2:13 But now, in Christ Jesus, *you who once were far away have been brought near by the blood of Christ*.

What about the importance of deeds?

Jam 2:18 But someone may say, “You have faith, and I have works.” Show me your faith without any works, and **I will show you my faith by my works**.

2:14 What good is it, my brothers, if a man says he has faith, but has no works? Can faith save him?

2:17 **Even so faith, if it has no works, is dead in itself.**

These Bible passages could be said in short: faith without works is dead. One might also ask why the significance of the

deeds was not raised when arguing about the importance of faith and baptism?

Often, even a small act of helping one's neighbor is enough for God. You remember the story of the widow's sting; the poor widow gave two small coins. Jesus spoke of the incident Mar 12:43-44: "Truly I tell you, this destitute widow has dropped in more than all of those who are contributing to the offering box. 44 for they all gave out of their abundance, but she, out of her poverty, gave all that she had to live on." – Even if the rich had put gold in the collection box, the poor woman's copper coins were more valuable to Christ.

It is not always the amount of money that counts, but the purpose. Matthew 6 emphasizes, "whenever you give to the poor, don't sound a trumpet before yourself." – God will see you secretly slip into the coin collection. The centurion's alms and prayers were also noted; Act 10:31 And [the angel of the Lord] said, "Cornelius, your prayer is heard, and your gifts to the needy are remembered in the sight of God."

James continues: 2:20 Do you want proof, you foolish person, that faith without works is worthless?

21 Wasn't Abraham our father justified by works, in that he offered up Isaac his son on the altar?

22 You see that faith worked with his works, and **by works faith was perfected;**

23 and the Scripture was fulfilled which says, "Abraham **believed God, and it was accounted to him as righteousness;**" and he was called the friend of God.

24 You see then that **by works, a man is justified, and not only by faith.**

– I interpret this verse 24 as meaning that deeds can justify one, but the best thing would be if the deeds were based on faith.

There has been a controversy in the history of Christianity

about salvation. It has been argued that man cannot influence his salvation by his own actions. Only **God's grace** brings salvation:

Room 3:23 Since all have sinned and continue to fall short of God's glory.

24 being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus;

25 whom God set forth to be an atoning sacrifice [or, a propitiation], through faith in his blood, for a demonstration of his righteousness through the passing over of prior sins, in God's forbearance;

26 He wanted to demonstrate at the present time that he himself is righteous and that **he justifies the person who has the faithfulness of Jesus.**

True, we receive righteousness by the grace of God because Jesus redeemed us. But notice that grace does not come alone; grace is given to those who do not fulfill the requirement of righteousness, but who believe in Jesus.

Just look at Matthew 25, where Christ gives judgments and asks why you didn't help your neighbor when he was in need or sick?

Mat 25:44-46 "Then they will reply, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry or thirsty or as a stranger or naked or sick or in prison and didn't help you?' 45 "Then he will answer them, saying, 'Most assuredly I tell you, **inasmuch as you didn't do it to one of the least of these, you didn't do it to me.** 46 These will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life."

Rev 20:12 I saw the dead, the great and the small, standing before the throne, and they opened books. Another book was opened, which is the book of life. **The dead were judged out of the things which were written in the books, according to their works.**

Deeds do matter.