

# STEWART-PEACOCK DEBATE

A Written Discussion On The Necessity Of Baptism.  
AUGUST 2001 - FEBRUARY 2002

## PROPOSITION:

*The New Testament Scriptures teach that the penitent believer must be baptized in water for the remission of sins to be saved.*

Affirming: William J. Stewart  
Denying: Jason J. Peacock

This material presented by the

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# FIRST AFFIRMATIVE ESSAY - WILLIAM J. STEWART

I am happy for the opportunity to participate in this discussion of salvation, and specifically, the necessity of baptism. In the article which follows, it is my responsibility to provide Scriptural proof for my proposition.

**PROPOSITION: The New Testament Scriptures teach that the penitent believer must be baptized in water for the remission of sins to be saved.**

To be sure we are understanding one another, it is ideal to define the terms and phrases introduced in the proposition:

*"New Testament Scriptures"* - the 27 Bible books commonly known as the New Testament

*"teach"* - provide instruction to be followed

*"Penitent believer"* - one who has both established faith in Christ as the Son of God and has a change of heart leading to the reformation of life

*"Must be"* - it is absolutely essential

*"Baptized in water"* - fully immersed in water

*"For the remission of sins"* - in order to have sins forgiven

*"To be saved"* - to have deliverance in Christ Jesus, and thus the hope of heaven.

Since we are dealing with the salvation of souls, we must consider carefully the word of God in an orderly fashion with both sincerity and sobriety. The aim of this written exchange is not to exalt or degrade either man involved, but to seek with an honest and sincere heart the will of God, and to conform to it. Thus, may both Jason and I, along with the readers of this debate lay aside any preconceived doctrinal prejudices, and wholly rely upon the word of God.

Let us now turn our attention to the Scriptures.

## MARK 16:16

The very reason for our interest in this debate, whether participants or readers, is that we are concerned with what God has said about the salvation of man's soul. Please place your finger on the word **"saved"** in the above text. What has Jesus placed before salvation?

In the word **"believes"**, the Lord has established faith as a requirement of salvation. There are many Scriptures which further state the necessity of faith (**John 3:16; John 8:24; Ephesians 2:8; Hebrews 11:6**). However, Jesus did not simply say, **"...he who believes...will be saved..."** He included a second requirement, equally important as the first, namely, baptism. Equally important, for Jesus used the conjunction **"and"** to bind these two prerequisites for salvation together.

When eating at a formal restaurant, men are often required to wear both a jacket and tie. Thus, it might be said, *"He who wears a jacket and tie will be seated, but he who does not wear a jacket will be asked to leave."* What is required if you are to be seated in the restaurant? If we show up without a jacket, we will be asked to leave (as stated in the last clause). If we show up without a tie, we will be asked to leave (note, this is not expressly stated, nor does it need to be, since the positive statement in the sentence requires that we wear a tie). If we are to be seated in the restaurant, we must have both a jacket and a tie (which is the primary statement in the sentence).

What does the Lord require for the salvation of man's soul? If we do not believe, He tells us, **"...he who does not believe will be condemned."** If we are not baptized, we will be condemned (note, this is not expressly stated, nor does it need to be, since the positive statement in the verse requires that we be baptized). If we are to be saved, we must both believe and be baptized (which is the primary statement in the verse).

## ACTS 2:38

Though this is a simple passage, many have twisted, misstated, and redefined Peter's words to avoid the consequences of the text, namely, that baptism is necessary for salvation. Having confronted the Jerusalem crowd regarding their part in crucifying the Lord, Peter told them what to do for the salvation of their souls. As the Lord had done in **Mark 16:16**, Peter states two requirements, joining them together with the conjunctive **"and"**.

Peter first commanded that they **"Repent..."** They were to turn from the path of wickedness in which they had conducted themselves to the path of righteousness. However, Peter did not stop speaking there. He continued, **"...and be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins..."** Note, the command was not, *"Repent for the remission of sins, and then be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ..."* If Peter had meant that, he

would have said that. Was Peter mistaken? If so, we must trash the entirety of Scripture, for he wrote as directed by the Spirit of God (**2 Peter 1:20-21**), as did each Bible writer.

If I tell you to *“sand the wood and apply a coat of varnish for a glossy finish”*, how should you understand my statement? If we use the same manner of reasoning that some have applied to **Acts 2:38**, you would thus conclude: *“Sand the wood for a glossy finish, and then apply a coat of varnish.”* Sanding the wood will provide a smooth surface, but the glossy finish is not realized until the varnish is applied. Likewise, repentance is necessary if we are to receive the remission of sins (for we will not be forgiven of our sins if we refuse to turn away from them), but the remission of sins is not realized until we have been baptized in the name of Jesus Christ.

Some will tell us that we are baptized because we have already received the remission of sins (ie. baptism is a sign that we are already saved, not unto salvation). If **Acts 2:38** teaches that our sins are forgiven before baptism, then consistency demands that **Matthew 26:28** teaches that our sins were forgiven before Jesus' blood was shed. God forbid that any should take such an absurd stand.

### **ACTS 22:16**

Luke records for us the conversion of Saul of Tarsus. Ananias was not entreating a saved man to be baptized, for he tells Saul that his sins are yet to be washed away (note, this entirely dismantles the theory that Paul was saved on the road to Damascus, for if that is the case, he was saved while still dead in his sins). Thus, Ananias encourages Saul to be baptized. What was the hurry to **“...arise and be baptized...”**? In so doing, he would wash away his sins, calling on the name of the Lord.

What does it mean to **“...call on the name of the Lord...”**? It is certainly more than a vocal cry or appeal to the Lord, for Jesus stated, **“Not everyone who says to Me 'Lord, Lord' shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven.”** (**Matthew 7:21**). Again, Jesus asked, **“Why do you call Me 'Lord, Lord', and do not do the things that I say?”** (**Luke 6:46**). The apostle Peter tells us that through our obedience to the Lord's command to be baptized, we make **“...an appeal to God for a good conscience...”** (**1 Peter 3:21, NASB**). Thus, Ananias pleaded with Saul to appeal to God, commanding him to **“...arise and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on the name of the Lord.”**

Years later, Paul himself wrote to the brethren in Rome saying, **“God be thanked that though you were slaves of sin, yet you obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine to which you were delivered.”** (**Romans 6:17**). They did not cease to be **“...slaves of sin...”** until they had **“...obeyed from the heart...”** What doctrine does Paul refer to? The very context speaks of the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus Christ. The **“form of doctrine”** is our death, burial and resurrection with the Lord through baptism (**3-4**).

### **ROMANS 6:3-4**

Let me ask, when do you expect to be buried, when you are dead, or while you are still alive? It would be ludicrous to even consider being buried while we are alive. It is the dead who need to be buried, not the living. Likewise, we do not bury those who are alive in Christ, but rather those who are dead in sin.

In **Romans 5:9-10**, Paul writes, **“Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him. For if when we were enemies we were reconciled through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life.”** Paul says explicitly that we are **“...reconciled through the death of His Son...”** Just fourteen verses later, Paul tells us that we **“...were baptized into His death...”** and again, **“...we were buried with Him through baptism into death...”** Where then does our reconciliation take place? Where is it that we shall contact the blood of Christ? Before we are baptized? Surely not, for then the apostle's words are made void and false.

The apostle Paul clearly illustrates that we have a death, burial and resurrection patterned after the Lord's own death, burial and resurrection (**1 Corinthians 15:3-4; Romans 6:5**). He died physically; we die to sin (**Romans 6:1-3**). He was buried in a tomb; we are buried in the grave of baptism (**Romans 6:3-4**). Coming forth from the grave, He conquered the power of death; arising from baptism, we are raised to walk in newness of life (**Romans 6:4**).

### **COLOSSIANS 2:11-13**

Note from **verse 13**, Paul reminds those to whom he writes that they were at one time **“...dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh...”** How did they leave this dead state, in order that they might be made alive in Christ? **Verse 11** tells us that they were **“...circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, by putting off the body of sins of the flesh...”** This **“...circumcision of Christ...”** is identified in **verse 12** as being **“...buried with Him in baptism...”**

God established a covenant with Abraham, that his descendents should be circumcised in order to be in a relationship with the Lord (**Genesis 17:10-14**). For those who are subject to the law of Christ, the necessity of a circumcision has not changed, but the nature of the operation has. It is no longer that which is exercised by the hands of man, but a **"...circumcision made without hands..."** It is no longer the cutting away of the foreskin, but the **"...putting off the body of sins of the flesh..."** If the physical circumcision (the cutting off of the foreskin) was essential, how much more then the spiritual circumcision (the putting off the body of the sins of the flesh)?

The objection might be made, that in being baptized we are then working for our salvation, and Paul told the Ephesians that salvation was **"...not of works, lest any man should boast..."** (**Ephesians 2:9**). Consider whose work baptism is. The writer says we are **"...raised with Him through faith in the working of God..."** Baptism is not our work, it is God's. We are not cutting off the **"...body of the sins of the flesh..."**, God is. Baptism is God's operation to remove our sins.

### 1 PETER 3:18-21

Years ago, I was invited to attend a study on the topic of baptism, in which the speaker was to illustrate from the Scriptures that baptism was not necessary for salvation. At the end of his discourse, he opened the floor for any questions or comments from the audience. I asked him to read **1 Peter 3:21**. He used the KJV, where the text is rendered, **"...the like figure whereunto even baptism doth also now save us (not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God), by the resurrection of Jesus Christ."** He read, *"...the like figure whereunto even baptism doth also NOT save us..."* Noting his error, I asked him if he might read again. He read, *"...whereunto even baptism doth also NOT save us..."* A third time, I request that he carefully read the text, and he read, *"...baptism doth also NOT save us..."* He did not read the text as Peter recorded it by the Spirit of God, but rather as he believed. He rejected the notion that baptism could have any part in the salvation of man's soul, and thus substituted (without any hesitation) the word NOW with the word NOT. There is a huge difference between saying **"...baptism doth also NOW save us..."** (which Peter recorded), and *"...baptism doth also NOT save us..."*

Besides illustrating a complete lack of respect for the word of God, changing Peter's statement in this manner makes the reading of the text to be nonsense. Peter asks his reader to consider the physical salvation of Noah. He states bluntly, **"...eight souls were saved through water..."** Building upon this point, he then speaks of our salvation, **"There is an antitype..."** [NKJV], **"...the like figure..."** [KJV], **"...after a true likeness..."** [ASV], **"...corresponding to that..."** [NASB]. Does it make any sense for Peter to say Noah and his family were saved through water, and in like manner, we are NOT save through water? Where is the logic in that?

Our spiritual salvation is a likeness or a figure of Noah's physical salvation. He was in danger of death (**Genesis 6:13, 17**); we are in danger of death (**Romans 3:23; 6:23**). He was saved by God (**Genesis 7:16**); we are saved by God (**Titus 3:4-5**). He was saved by grace (**Genesis 6:8**); we are saved by grace (**Ephesians 2:8-9**). He was saved by faith (**Hebrews 11:7**); we are saved by faith (**Romans 1:16**). He was saved by obedience (**Hebrews 11:7**); we are saved by obedience (**Romans 6:17**). He was saved by water (**1 Peter 3:20**); we are saved by water (**1 Peter 3:21**). It is evident that our salvation is a like figure of Noah's.

### CONCLUSION

Indeed, the Scriptures teach that faith is necessary and that without faith one cannot be saved (**Hebrews 11:6**). However, God has also plainly told us in His word that baptism is essential for the salvation of man's soul. Jesus said that the one who **"...believes and is baptized will be saved..."** (**Mark 16:16**). Peter commanded men to **"...be baptized for the remission of sins..."** (**Acts 2:38**). Ananias entreated Saul to **"...be baptized, washing away your sins..."** (**Acts 22:16**). Later, Paul wrote to the Romans that we were **"...buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life."** (**Romans 6:4**). This same Paul told the Colossians of the need to receive the **"...circumcision of Christ..."** wherein God cuts off **"...the body of the sins of the flesh..."** (**Colossians 2:11-12**). And finally the apostle Peter stated outright, **"...there is an antitype (like figure) which now saves us - baptism..."** (**1 Peter 3:21**). Surely we have seen that the New Testament Scriptures teach that the penitent believer must be baptized in water for the remission of sins.

## PEACOCK'S QUESTIONS & STEWART'S ANSWERS

### Question 1.

*No reason leads us to believe the thief crucified along side of Jesus was baptized, in fact no reason to think he had faith in Christ...so if baptism (by water) is essential for salvation, what did Christ mean on the cross when to one of the thieves he said, "I tell you the truth today you will be with me in paradise"?*

Christ meant exactly what He said, the thief would be with the Lord that very day in paradise. Regarding whether or not the thief was baptized, I simply do not know. My opponent apparently believes he was not. However, consider that the thief was crucified in Jerusalem, and thus quite possibly from Judea. John baptized throughout Judea (**Mark 1:5**). Jesus' disciples baptized more than John (**John 4:1-3**). Furthermore, he knew Jesus was Lord, and that He was coming in His kingdom (**Luke 23:42**). For all we know, he could have been a disciple of either John or Jesus. As easily as my opponent assumes the man was not baptized, it could be assumed that he was. We simply do not know.

However, it is of no consequence. Baptism was unnecessary for him. Baptism is commanded in the law of Christ, which was not in effect until Christ had died (**Hebrews 9:16-17**). Jesus promised the man paradise before His death, before His covenant came into effect. Those who desire to be "...saved like the thief..." fail to note that they are subject to a different law than he (**Galatians 3:15-29**).

My opponent states, "...in fact no reason to think he had faith in Christ..." The Scriptures plainly illustrate that this man had faith (**Luke 23:39-43**). However, if we follow the logic of Jason's false assumption, shall we then conclude that faith is not essential to salvation? God forbid that we remove the necessity of anything God has required for salvation.

### Question 2.

*In Acts 10:44, the Gentiles received the Holy Spirit, by having faith in the gospel message Peter was preaching, they glorified God and spoke in tongues, two gifts only given to Christians. This happened prior to water baptism. If one absolutely needs baptism for salvation, why did these Gentiles receive the Holy Spirit?*

Indeed, the Holy Spirit came upon the Gentiles prior to water baptism. Actually, the Spirit came upon them prior to "...having faith in the gospel message Peter was preaching..." Peter explains, "...as I began to speak, the Holy Spirit fell upon them..." (**Acts 11:15**). They did not have faith in the gospel message until after they had heard the gospel (**Acts 15:7**). Is Jason willing to teach that one is saved before faith and before baptism, so long as they are capable of speaking in tongues? If speaking in a tongue is evidence that one is saved, then I suppose we ought to conclude that Balaam's donkey was a Christian (**Numbers 22:28, 30**).

The Holy Spirit was poured out on the household of Cornelius, not as evidence of salvation, but as divine proof that the Gentiles too were accepted by God (**Acts 11:15-18, 34-35; 15:7-9**). Seeing that the Spirit had come upon them, Peter could not forbid water (**Acts 10:47-48**), but commanded that they put on Christ in like manner as the Jews (**Galatians 3:26-29**).

# FIRST NEGATIVE ESSAY - JASON J. PEACOCK

Considering I have some space here at the beginning of this rebuttal to William Stewart's first affirmative, I'd like to express my deepest sympathies for the victims' families and friends of the recent terrorist attack of September 11th, 2001, on New York City and Washington D.C..

On a second note, I'd like to thank William for his opening statement. I will briefly summarize my position regarding baptism and then move on to my rebuttal. I do believe the Scriptures place great importance on water baptism, but I believe the New Testament teaches that Christian baptism (water by immersion), is a sacrament - a physical manifestation of a spiritual reality. Spirit baptism is an anointing, possession, movement of God on a person. I guess I'd compare water baptism to a wedding ring, the wedding ring is a symbol to others, if you take it off, do you then become unmarried in God's sight? No, of course not. In the same way, not being immersed does not make one an un-Christian.

## MARK 16:16

Okay, the obvious problem with using **Mark 16:16** is **Mark 16:9-20** is not found in most of the oldest and most reliable Greek manuscripts. Therefore its suspect, and should not be used to teach: the one who believes and is baptized will be saved. However, for the sake of argument, it ought to be dealt with. Within the Greek, there are two expressed conditions, "**belief**" and "**baptism**" (known as *protasi*). And the one statement to indicate the result of the fulfillment of these conditions (known as *apodosis*). However, the two conditions do not need to have identical relationships in regard to *apodosis*. One might be a cause and the other an evidence. [1] If this were the case then it would explain the statement, "**He who does not believe shall be condemned.**" This analysis conforms to logical construction as Milliard Erickson says, "*It is simply absence of belief, not baptism that is correlated with condemnation. According to the canons of inductive logic, if a phenomenon (salvation) occurs on one occasion but not on another, the one circumstance on which they differ is the case of the phenomenon.*" [2]

## ACTS 2:38

I will be the first to admit **Acts 2:38** in any translation does seem to teach that baptism does bring about forgiveness of sins, and thus salvation. The issue though is one of Greek grammar and word meaning, namely how the Greek words for repentance and baptism relate to the phrase "*for forgiveness/remission of sins*", and what the meaning of the preposition "**for**" (*eis*) is within the verse.

A view given by several New Testament Greek grammarians is that **Acts 2:38** does not teach that baptism brings forgiveness, because the Greek word *eis* should be translated "*because of*" rather than "*for the purpose of.*" J.R. Mantey argued that *eis* could be used to express cause in various places in the New Testament, among them **Matthew 3:11** and **Acts 2:38**. Mantey believes, as do many others, that salvation by grace would be violated if a casual *eis* was not true in **Acts 2:38**. [3]

Premier Greek grammarian A.T. Robertson also argued that *eis* in **Acts 2:38** should be understood as "*because of*", similar to its reasonable usage in **Matthew 12:41**, "**They repented because of [eis] the preaching of Jonah.**" [4] Kenneth Wuest contended the same, but mentioned a comment by Josephus that John baptized people only after they repented in *Antiquities of the Jews*, book 18, chapter 5, section 2. [5]

Holding to a view that baptism brings forgiveness of sins flies in the face of Lucan theology (**Luke 13:3; 24:47; Acts 3:19; 5:28-32; 11:18; 17:30; 20:21; 26:20**).

One alternative is to re-punctuate the passage to read, "*Repent, and let each one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ, for the remission of sins*" or "*Repent for the remission of sins, and let each one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ.*" If this were the correct understanding, the *eis* is subordinate to "**repent**" alone and not to "**be baptized.**" Though this would be different from the word order in the Greek, the Greek language does not depend nearly as much on the order of words as English does in order to make sense.

What favours this interpretation is that "**repent**" here is a second person plural verb, which would be in proper accord with "**remission of your sins**", while "**let each...be baptized**" is a third person singular verb. [6]

Repentance and faith are opposite sides of the coin of conversion and are the internal workings of the Holy Spirit in the heart of the person who comes to God. In my opinion **Acts 2:38** teaches: believe on the Lord Jesus and repent for the forgiveness of sins, then seal that confession of the heart with the outward confession of baptism.

The incident at Cornelius' house poses problems for those believing baptism brings salvation. **Acts 10:44** reveals

that upon hearing the gospel preached by Peter, the house of Cornelius received the Holy Spirit (**cf. Matthew 3:11; Acts 2:39**). Reception of the Spirit showed Peter and his companions that God had already worked inwardly in the house of Cornelius. Demonstrating the legitimacy of baptism for these newly regenerated believers, when Peter recounted the event to the apostles and elders in Jerusalem, the issue was faith, he did not even mention water baptism (**Acts 11:15-18**).

In **Acts 16:30-31**, when the Philippian jailer asked Paul what he must do to be saved, Paul told him to believe in Christ and he would be saved. Only later after the jailer had washed Paul and Silas's wounds did Paul baptize him.

### **ACTS 22:16**

Some, those who hold to the essentialness of water baptism interpret **Acts 22:16** as though it said, "*Arise and wash away your sins, by being baptized and call on the name of the Lord.*" This English rendering of this verse would lead one to believe this verse has two conjunctions (*kai* in Greek) rather than one. However, this is very different from the actual Greek syntax. In reality, there are two distinct ideas being expressed in the verse. **Acts 22:16** has two separate clauses, each with an imperative verb and its modifying participle. The Greek is difficult to express in fluid English, but a very literal rendering of the verse would be, "*Rise, have yourself baptized, and allow your sins to be washed away by calling on the name of the Lord.*" Calling on the name of the Lord would be a confession of Christ like those found in **Joel 2:32, Acts 2:21, or Romans 10:13**. The baptismal act would be a visual sign that one is calling on the name of the Lord and becoming a Christian.

Is the washing away of sins done by baptism, the representation of the circumcised heart (**Colossians 2:11-12**), which means you are already saved, or is it by the blood of Christ (**Hebrews 9:14; Romans 5:9; Ephesians 1:7**)? Obviously it is the blood of Jesus and the washing here refers to the calling on Jesus' name.

### **ROMANS 6:3-4**

The passage in **Romans 6:3-4** is one such that speaks about being in Christ, or in his body, and some use this such passage to teach the necessity of baptism. It is often taken to mean that the component of water baptism is necessary, but does it? In **Romans 6:2**, Paul says that we have died to sin, then in **verse 3**, we have been baptized into Christ's death. He's saying that we are now dead to our old sinful ways, because we are in Christ now, and the proof of this is our baptism in water, an outward sign of the inward soul washing and regeneration with the blood of Christ.

It's not saying that baptism is what makes this dying to our old sinful self real, but that it is the public declaration and covenant sign of our identification with the death of Christ on the cross, his burial, and resurrection. It signifies our public death, going into the water; our death, under the water; and raise to new life, out of the water. This initially happens when one receives Christ, justified by faith in Christ Jesus our Lord (**Romans 5:1**).

It is said that baptism signifies our death, burial and resurrection, obviously we did not die literally; unless it is meant to be taken figuratively? Nevertheless, it's best understood in the covenant relationship with God, like communion is a covenant sign and the bread and wine are the elements.

In his opening statement, William appealed to **Romans 5:9-10**, "**Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him. For if when we were enemies we were reconciled through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life.**" He says we make contact with the blood of Christ in the baptismal waters, thus justifying us. But all of **Romans 5** is void of telling us we need to be water baptized to be justified. It tells us exactly how to be justified, "**By faith we are justified and have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.**" (**Romans 5:1**). It does not say we receive this justification through the waters of baptism.

### **COLOSSIANS 2:11-13**

**Colossians 2:11-13, Romans 6:3-4**, as well as **Galatians 3:26-27** and **1 Corinthians 12:13** all speak of being in Christ. Some believe these verses mean we must be water baptized to be in Christ. In reality, they do not teach that salvation comes to us through baptism, rather, they convey to us an important symbolism that happens during baptism. It is the public statement of identification with Jesus Christ, and as in **Colossians 2:11-13**, it is the outward expression of the inward working done by the operation of the Holy Spirit and not by the hands of man.

As William said in his opening statement, he denies that baptism (in water) is a work done by man, rather God's work. The problem I see with that is baptism logically cannot be all of God, when man plays a part in it. Church authorities, congregations, so on... And as small as those holding that baptism is a necessary component to

salvation say that part is, it is still a vital part, and so vital that if the church authorities, congregation and so on did not play that part, salvation could not happen. That takes the focus off God and puts it on man.

In his first affirmative, William used **Titus 3:4-5** to substantiate an argument, but he did not exegete it, just said God saves us. Right, I totally agree. **“But when the kindness and the love of God our Saviour toward man appeared, not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us, through the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit.”** (Titus 3:4-5).

In the context of **Titus 3**, “...washing of regeneration...” does not necessarily have to be baptism. Rather, it uses a common word for the cleansing process to express a spiritual reality. This is similar to the way water is used in **Ezekiel 36:25-27**. Joining the water and the work of the Spirit in the Ezekiel passage gives a possibility to another construction of the passage, **“Washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit.”** It may be understood in an appositional way. With the conjunction **“and”** (*kaî*) being translated **“even”**, the verse then reads, **“Washing of regeneration, even the renewing of the Holy Spirit.”**

### **1 PETER 3:18-21**

Many have viewed **1 Peter** as a baptismal tract, which gives support to a high view of water baptism as being essential unto salvation. David Hill makes a simple observation, *“That baptism only appears once in the letter 3:21, and virtually in a parenthetical way.”* In reality Peter's letter addressed the suffering of believers (**1 Peter 1:6-7; 3:13-18; 5:10**). A Christian's suffering and baptism were linked, by accepting baptism he or she was showing their willingness to share in the sufferings of fellow Christians, who commonly were treated with much suspicion and hostility.

What I see as an obvious problem with saying the water of baptism saves us the same way as the waters of Noah's day saved him and his 7 other family members can be borne out by asking three questions. What was it that saved Noah and his family? The water or the ark? And did they enter the ark by faith?

**“By faith Noah, when warned about things not yet seen, in holy fear built an ark to save his family. By his faith he condemned the world and became heir of the righteousness that comes by faith.”** (Hebrews 11:7).

Then they were saved by faith. That is why it says in the rest of **1 Peter 3:21**, **“...not the removal of the dirt from the flesh, but an appeal to God for a good conscience through the resurrection of Jesus Christ.”** Peter is not saying that it was the water itself which saved Noah and his family, but an appeal to God that saves. The appeal is done by faith. Then baptism is actually an appeal to God, a trust in Him by faith, a dying to ourselves (**Romans 6; Colossians 2**), a public declaration of our identification with Christ.

### **OTHER MATTERS**

William's answer to my first question, of the thief crucified with Jesus may have been baptized by John's baptism is number one, is an argument from silence. Whether or not the thief crucified with Jesus did receive baptism of repentance is inconsequential. John baptized Jesus at the beginning of his ministry. Shortly after Herod imprisoned John the baptizer, John was then murdered, so even if this thief was baptized then by John, obviously it meant nothing, but a cool bath. Certainly, he did not repent, as evidenced by his crucifixion. To think this man committed his crimes some 2 1/2 to 3 years earlier, then went through his baptism of repentance is to assume that the Roman system of law was extremely slow and inefficient. But is there a good reason to think that the Romans system of law was that inefficient? I really do not think so. The fact remains, if this man was not baptized, and we really do not have good reasons to say he was, Jesus answered him **“I tell you the truth, today you will be with me in paradise.”** Then baptism is not essential.

Indeed, the Spirit did come on those in the house of Cornelius not till **verse 44**, Peter began to speak the message in **verse 34**. **Acts 10:44**, they are baptized after receiving the Holy Spirit. It was after they speak in tongues and glorify God. Tongues are a gift for the church, for church members, for the saved...then they were baptized.

If baptism is necessary, then that means those people were filled with the Holy Spirit, glorified God, and spoke in tongues, but they were not saved. This does not make any sense to me. If they were saved before baptism, then baptism isn't necessary for salvation, plain and simple.

### **POINT CONCERNING THE LAW**

Often in the first affirmative, William referred to *“the law of Christ.”* I assume he means from the sermon Jesus gave in **Matthew 5-7**. I get the impression that William believes that we should follow this to a T as a Christian. True, this sermon does tell us how God intended things to be, but as you go through these chapters, if you're honest, you will discover just how impossible it is to follow it to a T 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days a

year! So what are we to do, try harder? Did Jesus come to tell us to bear down and do the best we can? NO way! Jesus as the God-man knew about humanities weaknesses, so he gave us a law he knew we could not live up to. He gave us himself though. Here's the point. Look at the words of Jesus in **Matthew 5:18**, "**For assuredly, I say to you, till heaven and earth pass away, one jot or one tittle will by no means pass from the law till all is fulfilled.**"

Nothing will pass from the law until all is fulfilled. Christ has fulfilled the law to perfection, because he was perfection, this is why **Romans 7:4-7**, "**Therefore, my brethren, you also have become dead to the law through the body of Christ, that you may be married to another - to Him who was raised from the dead, that we should bear fruit to God. For when we were in the flesh, the sinful passions which were aroused by the law were at work in our members to bear fruit to death. But now we have been delivered from the law, having died to what we were held by, so that we should serve in the newness of the Spirit not the oldness of the letter.**" The Bible is quite clear; those truly redeemed by Christ do not live under the law, but under grace. Does this mean that I am giving us a license to sin? Certainly not. To echo the words of Paul.

## CONCLUSION

In closing, in the same way that the Lord's supper is a representative of his body and blood, and is extremely important, however does not save us, but to reject the Lord's supper is a sign that we are not saved. In the same way, baptism represents so closely what it stands for, the death, burial and resurrection of Christ, and yes, refusing to be baptized once one receives Christ is a good indicator of not being saved. Scripture teaches certain individuals were saved without baptism (**Luke 23:42-43**). Then he said, "**Jesus remember me when you come into your kingdom.**" Jesus answered him, "**I tell you the truth, today you will be with me in paradise.**" Scriptures teach certain people were saved before baptism (**Acts10:44-47**).

## Endnotes

1. Daniel B. Wallace, *Greek Grammar beyond the Basics*.
2. Milliard Erickson, *Christian Theology*
3. Wallace, 369-70.
4. Archibald Thomas Robertson, *Word Pictures in the New Testament*, vol. 3. "The Acts of the Apostles", Nashville:Broadman Press, 1930, 35-36.
5. Kenneth S. Wuest, *The Practical Use of the Greek New Testament: Prepositions and synonyms in Greek Exposition, Part III*, Bibliotheca, July 1960.
6. Luther B. McIntyre Jr., "Baptism and forgiveness in Acts 2:38," *Bibletheca Sacra* [Jan '96], 54-62.

## SECOND AFFIRMATIVE ESSAY - WILLIAM J. STEWART

I appreciate Jason's response to my first affirmative in our present discussion of the necessity of baptism. I thank him for summarizing his position regarding baptism, though I believe his position is entirely contrary to the word of God. Rather than likening water baptism to a wedding ring, why will my opponent not use the types employed by the Bible writers? Paul compares our baptism to circumcision (**Colossians 2**). Peter likens our salvation through water to Noah's salvation through water (**1 Peter 3**). Notice that neither of these provide accommodations for those who desire to exclude baptism. Baptism is as necessary under the law of Christ as circumcision was under the law of Moses. We are saved through water today, even as Noah was saved through water in his day.

Before continuing in this discussion on the necessity of baptism for salvation, I first wish to clear up a misunderstanding that became apparent in my opponent's last essay. He referenced my use of the phrase "*law of Christ*", and wrongly assumed that I meant "*..the sermon Jesus gave in Matthew 5-7...*" Indeed, this sermon constitutes part of Christ's law, but by no means is it the entirety. In the Old Testament Scriptures we find the law of Moses and the prophets. In the New Testament Scriptures, we find the new covenant (**Matthew 26:28; 2 Corinthians 3:6; Hebrews 8:8, 13, 9:15; 12:24**). This new covenant has come through, and is Christ's law. When I say that we today are subject to the law of Christ, or that baptism is commanded in the law of Christ, it is the new covenant which is established in Christ Jesus that I refer to.

Regarding Jesus' sermon in **Matthew 5-7**, my opponent incorrectly asserts that Jesus "*...gave us a law he knew we could not live up to...*" Do you not see how unjust it would be to provide a law which man cannot keep, and punish him for not keeping it? In the text itself, Jesus said, "**Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord', shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who DOES the will of My Father in heaven.**" (**7:21**). It is not only possible to keep the law of Christ, we must do so if we are to have the hope of heaven.

### MARK 16:16

Jason calls into question my use of **Mark 16:16** on the basis that it "*...is not found in most of the oldest and most reliable Greek manuscripts.*" Indeed, two manuscripts (Sinaiticus and Vaticanus) do not include **Mark 16:9-20**. However, one or both of these "*reliable*" manuscripts also omit **Genesis 1:1-46:28; 2 Kings 2:5-7, 10-13; Psalm 106-137; Matthew 3; 16:2-3; Luke 6:1; 22:43-44; 23:34; John 5:4-5; 8:1-11; 9:38; 19:33-34; 21:25; Acts 8:37; Romans 16:24; 1 Timothy; 2 Timothy; Titus; Philemon; Hebrews 9:8-13:25; Revelation**, and much more (ie. in the gospels alone, Vaticanus leaves out 237 words, 452 clauses, and 748 whole sentences). Is Jason willing to cut these from his Bible as well? [1]

Furthermore, these manuscripts do not agree with one another, differing in over 5,000 places in the New Testament alone. They were written in Classical Greek rather than Koine (common) Greek (which the original New Testament was written in). The Sinaiticus has at least 12,000 alterations throughout the text, made by ten different scribes. Noteworthy, Irenaeus, who lived from 120-205 A.D., wrote, "*Also, towards the conclusion of his Gospel, Mark says, 'So then, after the Lord Jesus had spoken to them, He was received up into heaven, and sitteth on the right hand of God;' confirming what had been spoken by the prophet: 'The Lord saith to my Lord, sit Thou on My right hand, until I make Thy foes Thy footstool.'*" [2] Over 100 years before either the Vaticanus or Sinaiticus were written (mid-4th century), Irenaeus quoted **Mark 16:19**. How then can Jason call these "*...the oldest and most reliable Greek manuscripts.*"?

Much more time could be devoted to establishing the authenticity of **Mark 16:9-20**, but I will leave further investigation to the reader. I call your attention to Mr. Peacock's avoidance of Jesus' words in **Mark 16:16**. Jason believes that baptism is not a condition of (prior to), but rather an evidence of (after) salvation. Thus, he has in his own mind changed the text to read, "*...he who believes will be saved and baptized...*" Who will you believe, Jason Peacock or Jesus Christ? Don't allow his theological smokescreen to hide from your eyes that Jesus placed faith ("**believes**") and baptism ("**baptized**") before salvation ("**saved**"). The "*...canons of inductive logic...*" employed by Milliard Erickson regarding **Mark 16:16** amounts to nothing more than an attempt to defeat the word of God by means of human wisdom.

To illustrate the absurdity of Erickson and Peacock's reasoning, consider the following: in the statement, "*He who exercises AND eats right will be healthy...*", is eating right a condition to become healthy, or is it evidence that one is already healthy? Likewise, if we say, "*He who runs the race AND crosses the finish line first will win...*", are we to understand crossing the finish line as a condition of winning the race, or evidence that it has already been won? To be healthy, there are two conditions - exercise and eat right. To win a race, there are two conditions - running in the race and crossing the finish line first. To be saved, Jesus establishes two conditions - believe and be baptized.

## ACTS 2:38

To avoid a supposed contradiction with Luke's writings, Jason justifies rewriting Scripture. Thus, he (not Peter) pens, "Repent for the remission of sins, and let each one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ." Do you not think that Luke (being the writer of Acts) would have noticed if his writings were self-contradictory? There is no contradiction between Acts 2:38 and the list of "repentance" passages presented. As I wrote in my first affirmative, "...the command was not, 'Repent for the remission of sins, and then be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ...' If Peter had meant that, he would have said that. Was Peter mistaken? If so, we must trash the entirety of Scripture...", for he spoke (and Luke wrote) as directed by the Spirit of God (**2 Peter 1:20-21**). Who are we to believe, Jason Peacock or the apostle Peter?

Mr. Peacock again turns our attention to theological babble rather than Bible truth. He tells us that "...several New Testament Greek grammarians..." say that the word "for" in **Acts 2:38** should be understood as "because of". As support, he echoes A.T. Robertson's assertion that the "for" of **Acts 2:38** "...should be understood as 'because of', similar to its reasonable usage in Matthew 12:41."

Using **Matthew 12:41** to establish the usage of the Greek *eis* in **Acts 2:38** is flawed. The phrases are in no way parallel, neither in the English nor the Greek.

**Acts 2:38**.....*eis aphasis hamartia* ("...for the remission of sins...")

**Matthew 12:41**.....*eis ho kerugma ionas* ("...at the preaching of Jonah...")

Mr. Robertson and Mr. Peacock have ignored **Matthew 26:28**, which is an exact parallel in both English and Greek, in favour of **Matthew 12:41**. I wonder why?

**Acts 2:38**.....*eis aphasis hamartia* ("...for the remission of sins...")

**Matthew 26:28**.....*eis aphasis hamartia* ("...for the remission of sins...")

If **Acts 2:38** teaches that we are baptized because we already have received the remission of sins, then consistency demands that **Matthew 26:28** teaches that Jesus' blood was shed because we already had the remission of sins. You can't have it both ways! Which will you concede to? Baptism is unto the remission of sins, or Jesus' blood was shed because we were already saved?

## ACTS 22:16

Jason takes exception to the NKJV rendering of **Acts 22:16**, stating that it "...would lead one to believe this verse has two conjunctions..." Thus, as he has done for **Mark 16:16** and **Acts 2:38**, so he does for **Acts 22:16** -- Jason provides his own version, "...rise, have yourself baptized, and allow your sins to be washed away by calling on the name of the Lord." Let me ask pointedly, where in the Greek text did you find the words "allow", "to be", and "by"? Such a rendering is nothing but a custom-made rewording of the text to suit a predisposed doctrinal preference.

Young's Literal Translation reads, "...and now, why tarriest thou? Having risen, baptize thyself, and wash away thy sins, calling upon the name of the Lord." Ananias was not entreating a saved man to be baptized. Saul was still dead in sin, for they were not yet washed away. I am sure Jason and those who are likeminded would be delighted if Ananias had said, "...why tarriest thou? Wash away thy sins, calling upon the name of the Lord, and having risen, baptize thyself." However, he said nothing of the sort. He commanded Paul to arise (with haste), and to be baptized (to wash away his sins), and thus he would have called upon the Lord (**Matthew 7:21; Luke 6:46**).

## ROMANS 6:3-4

As he argued in **Mark 16:16**, so he does in **Romans 6**, that baptism is a proof or evidence of salvation. Paul does not call baptism a proof or evidence, no Bible writer does. Jason calls baptism "...an outward sign of the inward soul washing and regeneration with the blood of Christ." Certainly, baptism is an outward action which signifies an inward cleansing (**1 Peter 3:21**), but realize that the inward cleansing occurs at the time of the outward action, not before. The Bible speaks of baptism as an event that precedes salvation. Further, Jason calls baptism a "...public declaration..." The Bible says nothing about a "public declaration". This is mere reasoning of men.

Consider closely the apostle's words. He writes, "...we were buried with Him through baptism into death..." Our death to sin is parallel to the Lord's physical death. The burial of our old man of sin (in baptism) is parallel to the Lord's burial in the tomb, "...that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life." Our rising from the watery grave is parallel to the Lord's resurrection from the tomb. Paul continues, "For if we have been united together in the likeness of His death, certainly we also shall be in the likeness of His resurrection..." (v 5). The Lord was buried while dead (we enter the watery grave dead in sin), His life was revived while in the tomb (our sins are forgiven, refreshing our

soul), and He rose from the grave nevermore to die (we rise from baptism to newness of life). But, if we have not **"...been united together in the likeness of His death..."** (ie. are not baptized), how can we expect to **"...be in the likeness of His resurrection..."** (ie. be saved)?

### COLOSSIANS 2:11-13

Mr. Peacock denies the words of the inspired writer, for he will not believe that baptism is God's work. Regarding our salvation in Christ, Paul stated we are **"...buried with Him in baptism, in which you also were raised with Him through faith in the working of God..."** This is a parallel to **Romans 6:4**. As God raised Jesus from the dead, He raises us from the water alive in Christ. It is not man who performs the operation, it is the Lord. By Him, we are **"...circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, by putting off the body of the sins of the flesh, by the circumcision of Christ..."** What is the **"circumcision of Christ"**? How does this happen Paul? When? Where? **"...Buried with Him in baptism, in which you also were raised with Him through faith in the working of God, who raised Him from the dead."**

Jesus refers to baptism as a *"covenant sign"*. He must have skipped over some of my first affirmative comments on **Colossians 2**. Recall that God established a covenant with Abraham, and provided circumcision as the sign of that covenant (**Genesis 17:10-14**). The Lord sternly warned, **"...the uncircumcised male child, who is not circumcised in the flesh of his foreskin, that person shall be cut off from his people; he has broken My covenant."** The Lord has now established a **"new covenant"** in Christ Jesus. With the new covenant came a new sign; the circumcision made without hands. If the one who was not circumcised was not a partaker of the old covenant, how is it possible that the one who is not baptized can be a partaker of the new covenant? Jason's own words argue for the necessity of baptism.

### 1 PETER 3:18-21

Jason tells us that the letter of **1 Peter** deals with the suffering of believers, which I wholeheartedly agree. However, he goes on to tell us, *"A Christian suffering and baptism were linked, by accepting baptism he or she was showing their willingness to share in the sufferings of fellow Christians..."* Interesting, unsubstantiated quote. What Bible verse teaches this to be true? Certainly not **1 Peter 3:21**.

Mr. Peacock asked a few questions, the answers of which will supposedly show us the obvious problem with affirming the necessity of baptism for salvation. He inquires, *"What was it that saved Noah and his family? The water or the ark? And did they enter the ark by faith?"* Peter wrote, **"...eight souls, were saved through water..."** (**1 Peter 3:20**). The Hebrew writer penned, **"By faith Noah...prepared an ark for the saving of his household..."** (**Hebrews 11:7**). Noah's salvation required both the water and the ark. Take either away, and salvation would not have resulted. The Bible tells us that Noah built the ark by faith (**Hebrews 11:7**), and he entered it by faith (**Genesis 7:1**).

Jason, attempting to reject the necessity of baptism has inadvertently argued for it. Indeed, Noah had faith. Noah's faith prompted him to **"...prepare an ark for the saving of his household..."** On account of Noah's obedience to the Lord's command, **"...eight souls, were saved through water..."** In like manner, we must have faith. Our faith must motivate us to be baptized for the remission of sins. Due to our obedience to the Lord's command, we shall be saved. God's general pattern to save man has not changed.

### OTHER MATTERS

It seems that Jason only read part of my response to his question about the thief on the cross. Indeed, I acknowledge the possibility that he could have been baptized. There is as much evidence to support the supposition that he was baptized as there is to support the supposition that he was not. Regardless, my conclusion was *"...it is of no consequence."* The thief was not subject to the law of Christ (which commands baptism for the remission of sins), for he lived under the law of Moses. Furthermore, Jesus promised him paradise before His death; before His covenant came into effect. The thief is not a pattern for our salvation; none of us are hanging on a cross beside the Lord as he was.

Jason's discussion of the Roman system of law is useless babble. When he committed his crime, whether he had been baptized before or after his crime, and how long it took the Roman authorities to prosecute him of his crime have nothing to do with his salvation. The fact is, he was saved because the Lord exercised His ability to **"...give life to whom He will."** (**John 5:21**).

Jason still holds that Cornelius and his household had to be saved before they were baptized because of the tongues which they spoke. He writes, *"...if baptism is necessary, then that means those people were filled with the Holy Spirit, glorified God, and spoke in tongues, but they were not saved, this does not make any sense to me."* With all due respect, it was explained in my response to the question about Cornelius. Mr. Peacock simply rejects

the explanation on account of a preconceived idea. He assumes that only Christians can/have spoken in tongues; the Bible teaches no such thing. By such reasoning, Balaam's donkey had to be a Christian!

### **PUBLIC STATEMENT / PUBLIC DECLARATION**

Rather than accept the Bible, which clearly states that baptism is necessary for salvation, Mr. Peacock refers to baptism as a public statement or a public declaration of our decision to follow Christ. He has made two false assumptions, 1) that baptism must be public. That would negate the Ethiopian eunuch's baptism (**Acts 8:27-39**), and 2) that baptism is merely a statement or declaration of that which has already happened. Such a thought denies what ever New Testament passage on the subject declares.

Where is the text which calls baptism a public statement or public declaration? How many people must be present for it to be public? Creed books of men might call baptism a public declaration, but no Bible writer has.

### **CONCLUSION**

The fact that Mr. Peacock, in order to negate the proposition has had to rewrite **Mark 16:16; Acts 2:38** and **Acts 22:16** is revealing! With **Romans 6:3-4; Colossians 2:11-13** and **1 Peter 3:18-21**, Jason has done nothing but ignore the written word, and substituted it with his theological position. Jason's entire response to the Scriptures presented is a theological and grammatical smokescreen, but once the fog has lifted, the Scriptures still declare the necessity of baptism for salvation. The proposition stands, *"The New Testament Scriptures teach that the penitent believer must be baptized in water for the remission of sins to be saved."*

### Endnotes

[1] Various web resources:

<http://home.sprynet.com/~eastwood01/kjv03.htm>

<http://carlgraham.home.mindspring.com/Bible%20Roots.htm>

<http://atschool.eduweb.co.uk/sbs777/vital/kjv/part1-4.html>

[2] Irenaeus, "Against Heresies," Ante-Nicene Fathers, vol. 1, pg. 426.

## PEACOCK'S QUESTIONS & STEWART'S ANSWERS

*Question 1.*

*Let's suppose that a person, under the conviction of the Holy Spirit (John 16:8), believed in Jesus as his Saviour (Romans 10:9-10; Titus 2:13), and has received Christ (John 1:12) as Saviour. Is that person saved?*

**“...Those who gladly received his word were baptized; and that day about three thousand souls were added to them ... and the Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved.” (Acts 2:41, 47).** You cannot receive Christ without receiving His word. **“He who rejects Me, and does not receive My words, has that which judges him...” (John 12:48).**

*Question 2.*

*Let's further suppose that this person confesses his sinfulness, cries out in repentance to the Lord, and received Jesus as Saviour and then walks across the street to get baptized at a local church. In the middle of the road he gets hit by a car and is killed. Does he go to heaven or hell?*

Jesus is the Judge of who goes to heaven or hell (**James 4:12**). You haven't been hit by a car. This is nothing but an empty argument to avoid the plain command of Scripture. If you want to receive Jesus, you need to be baptized for the remission of sins. By the way, what if your hypothetical man believes in Jesus, and just before he confesses, an airliner full of Islamic terrorists rams the building he's in? Why not set aside such nonsense and deal with the Scriptures?

## SECOND NEGATIVE ESSAY - JASON J. PEACOCK

I appreciate William's second affirmative; I also disagree with William's stance on baptism. That without it we cannot be saved, I very much believe it doubts the finished work of Christ on the cross. However my goal in my first rebuttal was not to show the view William holds is contradictory to Scripture; it can be argued that baptism is essential. My goal was simple, to demonstrate that the texts which William used to show the necessity of baptism do not have to be taken as such. The wedding ring analogy fails, because if you take your wedding band off, for whatever reason, you still remain married. Or, as Tom Cruise said in *A Few Good Men*, "You don't need a badge on your arm to get respect." In the same way, salvation is not what you do, but who you have (**1 John 5:11**).

As far as the law of Christ, I do apologize to William for my false assumption. **1 Corinthians 9:21** talks of Christ's law, but is Christ's law regulations to replace the old regulations? Not that I can see. As for the New Covenant which came with Christ, I certainly hold to that, and I base my hope in it. But I cannot understand why William thinks that this covenant includes a law to replace the old law, when **2 Corinthians** tells us the ministers of this new covenant -- not of the letter (implying law), but the Spirit, and why? Because the letter (implying law) kills, but the Spirit gives life. The Old Covenant was rules and regulations which we could not keep, but God in His mercy gave us a new covenant. It makes no sense to give another law that God knows we cannot keep.

William believes he can keep the teaching of Jesus concerning His sermon of **Matthew 5-7**. Well what can I say, William is a better man than I am, because I cannot keep it, thank God for His Son Jesus, I sure need Him. On a more serious note though, William, I think you're missing the point of **Matthew 5-7**, what did Jesus say? He said that unless our righteousness surpasses that of the Pharisees and teachers of the law, we will not enter heaven (**5:20**). We know they weren't saved; yet they were considered the most righteous in all Israel. Now we know how hypocritical the religious leaders were partly because they believed that their righteousness was enough for them to reach God, Jesus said no. That's the purpose of the law to reveal sin, **Romans 7:13**. The law as well as Jesus' additions to it (**Matthew 5-7**) is in full effect today, for those not in Christ, with all of its written code, of course it is to drive us to Christ. And God is hardly unjust to give it (**Romans 9:14-16**), William knows this, I know he does.

### MARK 16:16

I wonder why William felt it necessary to give me a lesson on the manuscript and ancient text transmissions of the Bible. This debate has absolutely nothing to do with this. However, I do study both of them extensively, and Sinaiticus and Vaticanus are not the earliest manuscripts found, nevertheless, I don't object to William's use of **Mark 16:16** on the basis of the **16:9-20** disclaimer. Nonetheless, the disclaimer is there and trying to use this questionable passage as a proof-text to validate the doctrine of baptism essentialness is suspect, whether William likes it or not. As said though that disclaimer is not my sole reason for suspecting this passage. My main reason is found in **Mark 16:12**, Jesus appeared in a different form to the two on the road. Red light number 1, Jesus resurrected in the same body, so this contradicts the four empty tomb accounts. Red light number 2, **Mark 16:12** contradicts **Luke 24:16**, where they were merely kept from Jesus' real identity, which is in line with the resurrection accounts.

### ACTS 2:38

William says I'm re-writing Scripture, after all Peter wrote it under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. I'm a mere human, correcting Peter, a God inspired apostle of Christ, what utter and complete blasphemy. There is one problem with William's conclusion on what I'm doing. Peter, the inspired apostle, was not writing in English, what did I say William, in my first rebuttal? "...I will be the first to admit **Acts 2:38** in any translation does seem to teach that baptism does bring about forgiveness of sins, and thus salvation. The issue though is one of Greek grammar and word meaning; namely how the Greek words for repentance and baptism relate to the phrase "for forgiveness/remission of sins." And what the meaning of the preposition "for" (*eis*) is within the verse." Why, not because I re-write the text, but because the original is in Greek, not English. What I did William was purely rebut you, I gave an alternate meaning to the text.

I simply would request William, please respond to my argument, not me, by saying I use theological babble. Since I do not agree with William's interpretation of the Bible, I'm employing the use of theological babble. Then I guess the majority of theologians employ theological babble as well. And William I'm not a Greek grammarian, but the people I quoted are. And they think *eis* ought to be *because of* rather than *for*. Also William why tell me how you interpret *eis*, I already know how you interpret it.

And I did not say that *eis* needs to be translated as *because of* in every place in the New Testament, and **Matthew 26:28**, a verse I did not even use in my first rebut, says Christ's blood is shed for the remission of our sins, but not baptism. Obviously a place where *eis* is better to be understood as *for the purpose of*.

## ACTS 22:16

William, what you're doing here is very subtle, so much so, that you might not realize it. I said the Greek is difficult to express in fluid English. William countered me here by quoting Young's Literal Translation, which is English, not in Greek. Furthermore, I said those who hold to the essentialness of baptism interpret this verse as though it said, "*Arise, and wash away your sins by being baptized and call on the name of the Lord.*" But the NKJV says, "**And now why are you waiting? Arise and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on the name of the Lord.**" William, simply because I used the verse out of NKJV to show what **Acts 22:16** says does not mean I disagree with it, after all I did say I'd use NKJV in my first rebuttal. Actually I very much enjoy using NKJV personally. Nevertheless NKJV, NIV, NASB, RSV, Amplified, Young's Literal... are all translations from the Greek, and a literal rendering of the verse, from the Greek, not English, would be, "*Rise, have yourself baptized, and allow your sins to be washed away by calling on the name of the Lord.*" Calling on the name of the Lord would be a confession of Christ like those found in **Joel 2:32, Acts 2:21** or **Romans 10:13**. The baptism act would be a visual sign that one is calling on the name of the Lord and becoming a Christian.

## ROMANS 6:3-4

William completely overlooks **Romans 6:2** in favour of his interpretation that it is because we have been baptized that we're dead to sin. But **verse two** tells us that we're dead to sin so how can we live in it? Then **three** tells us that baptism signifies this death, and **verse 4** explains to us how this is done. But it does not say that this death to our sins, and thus salvation happens precisely when one is baptized or baptism precedes salvation.

I have two problems with Mr. Stewart's interpretation, firstly baptism cannot be done without at least one other human, for example I cannot baptize myself, therefore, at least one human is jointly responsible for my salvation. Does God need man to help Him save me, William? Logically it is that way isn't it? Secondly, saying the outward act of baptism and the inward soul washing of Christ's blood is co-equal contradicts many verses in the book of Acts which tells us, they received Christ's Holy Spirit prior to baptism.

## COLOSSIANS 2:11-13

The inspired apostle tells us that the circumcision of the heart is totally done by the operation of the Holy Spirit. William affirms that, but he's inconsistent in his interpretation. Why? Well, because if Paul is correct, and circumcision of the heart is an operation done by the Holy Spirit and not at all man, why does at least one human need to be present in my baptism. So vital is that one human presence that if not, then according to William, this Holy Spirit operation cannot happen. Hmmm, who is not carefully considering the apostle's words?

Moreover, **1 Corinthians 12:13** speaks not only of being baptized into one Spirit, but also drinking into the Spirit, both of which symbolically refer to the individual's participation in the life of God. When a person is baptized, he or she comes into unity with all other believers in Jesus Christ. This unity transcends social distinctions (**Galatians 3:28**).

## 1 PETER 3:18-21

William, you asked me to tell you which verse tells us a person baptized as a Christian would suffer, thus they were linked? I hope you're kidding! But I doubt you are. You can read about it in Acts. I'm left wondering where Mr. Stewart is coming from here. If we follow his reasoning to its logical outcome, since it is not expressly said, baptism is a public symbol or a way to be identified with other Christians, it cannot be taught. I tend to wonder if William applies the same line of reasoning to other doctrines of Scripture. Like the nature of God? Since the term "trinity" is found nowhere in the Bible, it cannot be a reality?

William, I'm willing to grant that the wording of **3:21** does seem to support baptismal regeneration, but a careful look at the parallels Peter uses, and the Greek syntax, will show that his typological comparison points in another direction. The Greek unlike English has what is known as a concord, in which a modifying word will agree in gender and number with its antecedent.

The first word in **verse 21** is the neuter pronoun translated "**which**" referring back to "**water**" a neuter noun, not to "**ark**" which is a feminine noun. Wuest translates this verse "**which (water) as a counterpart now save you, (namely) baptism.**" [1] Thus the water of Noah's day is a type of baptism. From the New Jerusalem Bible, "**It is the baptism, corresponding to this water which saves you now - not the washing off of physical dirt but the pledge of a good conscience given to God through the resurrection of Jesus Christ.**" The ark would more accurately refer to salvation, since the ark delivered Noah and his family as it was lifted by the flood waters, but Peter was centering upon the issue of water, to use baptism as an analogy to Noah's deliverance through the suffering and judgment of his day. [2]

The apostle Peter continued in this vein by stressing that baptism does not save through the removal of dirt, but rather as an appeal to a good conscience before God, or as Bo Reicke translates it, “**a pledge of good will to God.**” [3] David Hill expresses the sense of the Greek word *eperoteime* as meaning, “*a response or assent to a Covenant obligation, an agreement to maintain righteousness, through obedience, in the future... The characterization of baptism in 3:21 would then be as follows: not so much the abandonment of the moral failures of the pre-Christian life as a firm response to God, a commitment to maintain an upright life of which one need not be ashamed.*” [4] In other words, Peter isn't saying that baptism brings about forgiveness of sins (removal of dirt), but rather it is the initiation of a life of obedience that demonstrates true conversion and salvation.

Allow me to appeal to the primitive church, many people who believe it is necessary to be baptized in order to be saved, which William does often appeal to the primitive church, saying “*they believed baptism was required for salvation.*” However, there are three problems with that. First of all, the Bible is the “*measuring stick*” which ought to define any Christian issues, especially those of salvation, and nothing else! Secondly, baptism by immersion, which is the only true way people who believe baptism is an absolute necessary act for salvation can be done, and generally done in the primitive church, but nonetheless, cannot be done in all parts of the world. Thirdly, the early church did not believe baptism is an essential act for salvation.

No doubt about it, baptism played an integral role in the overall experience of becoming a Christian in the early church. It's associated with being united with Christ (**Romans 6:3-4**), putting on of Christ (**Galatians 3:27**), and even the forgiveness of sins (associated not responsible), because it serves as the external statement of that internal event of the inward soul washing of the blood of Christ. It's also very likely that baptism served in like manner in becoming a member of the New Covenant, and a member of the community of believers, a counterpart to the Old Covenant of circumcision (**Colossians 2:11-12**). The term “*baptism*” seemed to be used as a short form for the gospel, in which faith and repentance were expected (**Matthew 28:19**). However it is not ancillary to the gospel, but a very real part of it. There is no doubt baptism was not optional for those who named the name of Christ, and it was virtually the first thing the believer did once they responded in faith to the gospel (**Acts 2:38; 8:34-38; 10:45-48; 16:31-34**).

With all of its importance, baptism was never absolutely necessary for salvation. The Scripture is very clear that the only necessity for one's salvation is the internal working of the Holy Spirit (**John 3:15; 5:24; Acts 2:21; 10:43; 15:9**). This requisite is given at least 60 times in the New Testament with no mention of baptism. [5]

The role of baptism in the modern day church has not changed, the Biblical text never once says that baptism will lose its importance. Baptism in the New Testament was much like circumcision in the Old Testament, which never saved anyone: nonetheless, it was not optional for one who wanted to be part of the Covenant with Abraham and a part of the Israelite community. Baptism to faith is like words are to ideas. One can have an idea without putting it into words, but not doing so makes the idea an invisible reality to others. In like manner, one can have faith without baptism, but then that faith has no external reality. An evangelical preacher may give an alter call to come forward and believe and repent, as a visible sign of a confession of faith, nothing wrong with that, but many get a false understanding that this replaces baptism, and that's rather unfortunate. In the early church the person was called forward to be baptized. It was in the act of baptism that repentance and faith in Christ were externally proclaimed, and without baptism there was no divinely recognized outward first *Christian act*. To the early Christian there was no alternative, and there was no such thing as an unbaptized Christian.

What I've done William, is simply shown that the verses you and others use as proof-text to say baptism is necessary for salvation do not require that interpretation. William, you might as well accuse me of being a heretic, if my view is so contrary to the doctrine of the Bible, but its not the Bible friend but your view. The thing is William, if what you say is absolutely true, that baptism is essential to salvation, then the New Testament ought not to be filled with verses which tell us we can be saved, but apart from baptism. And you call what I am doing theological babble, well, it is theological William, but to assert that it is babble simply because it is not in line with your view is not good reasoning friend. The Gospel (**1 Corinthians 15:1-4**) saves us, water baptism is not part of the gospel.

This gospel can be proclaimed separate of water baptism (**1 Corinthians 1:14-17**), “**I am thankful that I did not baptize any of you except Crispus and Gaius, so no one can say that you were baptized into my name (Yes, I also baptized the household of Stephanas; beyond that, I do not remember if I baptized anyone else.) For Christ did not send me to baptize, but to preach the gospel - not with words of human wisdom, lest the cross of Christ be emptied of its power.**” Scripture teaches that our souls can be saved through the agency of the Holy Spirit working through His word, apart from the reception of water baptism.

**(John 15:3) “You are already clean because of the word I have spoken to you” (1 Peter 1:23) “For you have been born again, not of perishable seed, but of imperishable, through the living and enduring word**

of God.” (James 1:21) “Therefore, get rid of all moral filth and the evil that is so prevalent and humbly accept the word planted in you, which can save you.”

Scripture teaches one is saved the moment we place faith in Christ as our Saviour (John 5:24). “I tell you the truth, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life and will not be condemned; he has crossed over from death to life.”

Scripture teaches certain individuals were saved without baptism (Luke 23:42-43). Scriptures teach certain people were saved before baptism (Acts 10:44-47).

Your conclusion William, “*The New Testament Scriptures teach that the penitent believer must be baptized in water for the remission of sins to be saved.*” Are you absolutely sure friend? I just don't see it.

I cannot respond to William fully, as my character count is approaching 15,000 rather quickly. William though accuses me of using smokescreens when he used them throughout his initial statement. Something quite evident in his answers to my questions. They're questions William, answer them!

#### Endnotes

1. Kenneth S. Wuest, *First Peter* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1942), 108-109 quoted in Avebeck 299.
2. Avebeck 299.
3. Bo Reicke, *The Epistles of James, Peter and John* (Garden City, NJ: Doubleday, 1964), p 106.
4. David Hill, 188-189, quoted in Avebeck, 300.
5. Gregory A. Boyd, *Oneness Pentecostals and the Trinity*, p 136.

## THIRD AFFIRMATIVE ESSAY - WILLIAM J. STEWART

I pray that the readers have benefited from this conversation, and appreciate the importance of baptism to the salvation of souls. Also, I thank Mr. Peacock for his participation in this discussion. Before coming to the issue of baptism, let me address Jason's introductory remarks from his last essay.

Jason said, "...my goal in my first rebuttal was not to show the view William holds is contradictory to Scripture..." Surely it was! In negating my position, Jason's duty is to show that I have misapplied the Bible, and am teaching error. To simply "...demonstrate that the texts...used to show the necessity of baptism do not need to be taken as such..." merely makes room for alternate positions. The Bible is truth (**John 17:17**). Truth is absolute. It is not possible for two contrary positions to both be correct. Thus, it is Mr. Peacock's responsibility, if I am teaching false doctrine to illustrate such, or if not, to submit to the truth.

My friend cannot understand why I believe Christ's law replaced the old law. The Bible says so (**Hebrews 8:13; 10:9**). He makes reference to **2 Corinthians 3:6**. The "**letter**" is in reference to the law of Moses, the "**Spirit**" in reference to the law of Christ. Paul makes the contrast:

"...the letter..." (v 6)

"...the ministry of death..." (v 7)

"...written and engraved on stones..." (v 7)

"...ministry of condemnation..." (v 9)

"...had glory..." (v 9)

"...the Spirit..." (v 6)

"...the ministry of the Spirit..." (v 8)

"...tablets of flesh, that is, the heart..." (v 3)

"...ministry of righteousness..." (v 9)

"...exceeds much more in glory..." (v 9)

Mr. Peacock says, "*The law as well as Jesus' additions to it (Matthew 5-7) is in full affect today...*" If that is the case, we must not wear clothes of cotton and polyester mix (**Deuteronomy 22:11**). We must have tassels on our clothing (**Deuteronomy 22:12**). We cannot sow two kinds of seed in a field (**Deuteronomy 22:9**). We must not eat bacon, ham, sausage, lobster, shrimp, crab, etc.. (**Leviticus 11:4-7, 9-12**). However, these have all been nailed to the cross (**Ephesians 2:14-16; Colossians 2:14**).

Jason is in err, assuming that God gave an old covenant "...we could not keep..." How just would God be to condemn us, if He (our Creator) did not give us the ability to keep His law? Jason's doctrine makes God out to be a monster! Suffice it to say, several times God commanded the children of Israel through Moses, "**...be careful to observe all the words of this law and these statutes...**" (**Deuteronomy 17:19**). Perhaps we can address this issue in more detail some other time.

Jason tells us that he "...cannot keep..." the Lord's words in **Matthew 5-7**. Jesus said, "**...not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord', shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who DOES the will of My Father in heaven.**" (**7:21**). Again, he says, "**...whoever hears these sayings of Mine, and DOES them, I will liken him to a wise man who built his house on the rock...**" (**7:24**). Jesus indicated not only that we CAN, but that we MUST keep His word if we are to have the hope of heaven.

### MARK 16:16

Jason inquired why I "*felt it necessary to give...a lesson on the manuscript and ancient text transmission...*" Though Mr. Peacock says, "*...I don't object to William's use of Mark 16:16...*", comments from both his essays say otherwise. He tells us that "*...it is suspect, and should not be used to teach...*" He calls the text a "*...questionable passage...*" However, he cannot show **Mark 16:16** to be contrary to any Bible text, so now he focuses his attack on **Mark 16:12**. I write a weekly article, *Answering The Atheist*. Jason's doubt regarding **Mark 16:12** prompted me to write a recent article on this supposed discrepancy. Jason must assume that Mark is describing a bodily change in Jesus' appearance. The text does not say that. Is it not possible that Mark describes how the two on the road to Emmaus perceived Him? Luke says the men did not know the Lord for "**...their eyes were restrained...**" Certainly, if they were withheld from recognizing Him, it would appear to them that Jesus was in another form. There is no contradiction between **Mark 16:12** and **Luke 24:16**.

Jason takes exception to my use of secular examples to illustrate the structure of **Mark 16:16**. Jesus used secular examples to explain spiritual truth, as did the apostle Paul. Even Jason has used non-Bible examples to explain Bible teaching. All Bible teachers do. Mr. Peacock does not like the examples employed in my second affirmative essay because they prove his position on the text false.

Mr. Peacock says I must explain why Jesus added "**he who does not believe will be condemned.**" Seems to me the statement is self-explanatory. Faith is the primary element to lead us to life. If we will not believe, then we cannot be saved. What he really wants me to explain is why Jesus did not say "*he who is not baptized will be*

condemned.” Since the unbaptized are not condemned directly, Jason assumes that baptism is not essential. Must Jesus provide a negative warning to validate His positive command? I invite Mr. Peacock and the reader to review my comments on **Mark 16:16** in the first affirmative essay. It is unnecessary to speak condemnation to the unbaptized; it is inferred by the positive command of the verse. If the Lord has commanded baptism (and He has), and has linked it with man’s salvation (and He has), then it is my friend’s obligation to prove that the unbaptized individual is saved.

### ACTS 2:38

Mr. Peacock defends his twisting of **Acts 2:38** by stating that Peter did not write in English. Indeed, our English versions are translations of the inspired text, and therefore subject to error. I do not defend any English version as a perfect rendition of the original. Yet, I do not believe such blatant error as Mr. Peacock supposes is present.

My friend calls it an issue of “...Greek grammar and word meaning...” Yet, Mr. Peacock admits, “*I am not a Greek grammarian...*” Why then are you retranslating the text? If ‘his’ re-translation is correct, then the translators of **EVERY** English version I have seen are wrong! He assures us “...the people I quoted are...” Greek grammarians. Notice though, if we combine Jason’s translation of the text, along with his ‘Greek grammarian’ quotes, we would have, “...Repent because of the remission of sins, and let each one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ.” Will you espouse that? You now have people forgiven of sin before they repent of sins! Using the Bible so carelessly, we might expect people to accept “...He who has an opinion and is sprinkled shall be pickled...” as a valid translation of **Mark 16:16!** Stop playing with the text, and deal with what it says.

Again, I bring the reader’s attention to Mr. Peacock’s agreement with A.T. Robertson’s argument that **Acts 2:38** and **Matthew 12:41** are parallel in their usage of ‘eis’. I believe that a reasonable person can see the differences in both the English and the Greek. Furthermore, I believe that it is evident that **Matthew 26:28** is a parallel, not **Matthew 12:41**. Consider:

TEXT	GREEK	ENGLISH
<b>Matthew 12:41</b> .....	<i>eis ho kerugma ionas</i> .....	<b>at the preaching of Jonah</b>
<b>Acts 2:38</b> .....	<i>eis aphasis hamartia</i> .....	<b>for the remission of sins</b>
<b>Matthew 26:28</b> .....	<i>eis aphasis hamartia</i> .....	<b>for the remission of sins</b>

Remember the matching games from Kindergarten and Grade 1? Which two are the same? You need not be a Greek scholar or grammarian. One needs to honestly look, and it will be evident which two are alike. If we are baptized ‘because of’ (ie. because we already received) the remission of sins, then equally, Jesus’ blood was shed ‘because of’ (ie. because we already received) the remission of sins. Whether Jason likes it or not, that’s where his argument leads. I know of no one who would espouse such an obviously false doctrine.

### ACTS 22:16

It seems that my friend does not believe we can know what the Bible says unless we are capable of reading Greek. According to Mr. Peacock, the translators have messed up **Acts 2:38**, **Acts 22:16** and **1 Peter 3:21**. Again, he gives us his custom-made version of **Acts 22:16**: ‘*Rise, having yourself baptized, and allow your sins to be washed away by calling on the name of the Lord.*’ Again, I ask, where in the Greek text are the words “allow”, “to be” and “by”? Please tell us. If your translation is literal, what Greek words have you derived these words from?

Again, to call on the name of the Lord is more than a vocal cry or appeal to the Lord. Jesus said, “**Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord', shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who DOES the will of My Father in heaven.**” (**Matthew 7:21**). Again, “**Why do you call me 'Lord, Lord', and do not DO the things that I say?**” (**Luke 6:46**). To call on the name of the Lord requires DOing. It involves obedience.

### ROMANS 6:3-4

Apparently I overlooked **Romans 6:2** in my reading of **Romans 6**. Let’s see how it fits in the context. Paul asks whether we can continue in sin after coming to Christ (**v 1**). His answer, NO, we died to sin (**v 2**). How did we die to sin? Paul explains in **v 3-4**, “**Or do you not know that as many of us as were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death? Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.**” I have not overlooked **verse 2**; Jason simply does not accept Paul’s explanation (**v 3-4**).

Mr. Peacock cannot believe in the necessity of baptism since “...at least one human is jointly responsible for my salvation.” He inquires, “Does God need man to help Him save me?” Certainly not! God is capable of saving man without man’s assistance. The question is not “Does God need...”, But rather “Does God use man to help

*Him save me?"* Certainly does! The Scriptures tell us in many places that God employs men to affect the salvation of others (**Ezekiel 3:18-19; Romans 10:14; 16:25; Mark 16:15; Luke 24:47; Titus 1:3; 1 Timothy 4:16; 2 Timothy 2:2; 4:2**). Will Jason tell God how He ought to bring salvation to men?

### COLOSSIANS 2:11-13

Jason continues to reject Paul's words. He is unable to reconcile in his mind that baptism is God's work and yet requires a man; therefore, he refuses to believe what Paul wrote. Though a man 'dunks' the body, it is God who cuts off the sins of the flesh. Whether Mr. Peacock can understand this or not does not change what the apostle wrote.

Rather than dealing with **Colossians 2:11-13**, my friend turns our attention to **1 Corinthians 12:13** and **Galatians 3:28**. These texts in no way nullify what Paul wrote in the text under consideration. The simple fact remains that Paul said our sins are removed through the "...circumcision of Christ...", which he identifies as being "...buried with Him in baptism..." We are told it has nothing to do with the one who baptizes us, but we are "...raised with Him through faith in the working of God..."

### 1 PETER 3:18-21

Rather than dealing with what Peter writes, Jason made an unsubstantiated claim in his first essay, "*A Christian's suffering and baptism were linked, by accepting baptism he or she was showing their willingness to share in the sufferings of fellow Christians...*" I asked him to support this statement, but rather than do so, he chose to ramble about the supposed failure of my logic. Jason, you still haven't answered my question. What Bible verse teaches that a Christian's suffering and baptism are linked? Book, chapter and verse. And why bring this up in a conversation about **1 Peter 3:21**, except to evade what the text teaches? Peter does not speak about a link between suffering and baptism in **3:18-21**. He does speak about a link between baptism and salvation.

Again, Jason would have us consider how careless the Greek scholars who worked on the myriad of English translations must have been! And yet, after all his talk about the Greek, he states, "...the water of Noah's day is a type of baptism." AMEN!! That's what I've been affirming! Now notice, "...eight souls, were saved through water..." (v 20). If the water of Noah's day is a type of baptism, and Noah was "...saved through water...", Then it follows that we are now saved through water, even baptism. And that is exactly what Peter said.

Now, Jason cautions us about '*baptismal regeneration*.' Peter's words do not support '*baptismal regeneration*'; neither have I, nor will I espouse such a doctrine. '*Baptismal regeneration*' assumes that we are saved by baptism alone, apart from faith, confession of Christ, and repentance. Saying we are saved by baptism alone is as false a doctrine as saying we are saved by faith alone.

Mr. Peacock gives us a couple of alternate translations of **1 Peter 3:21**, Wuest and the New Jerusalem Bible. These teach the necessity of baptism, just as every other translation does.

- \* **There is also an antitype which now saves us - baptism...** [NKJV]
- \* **...which also after a true likeness doth now save us, even baptism...** [ASV]
- \* **The life figure whereunto even baptism doth also now save us...** [KJV]
- \* **Baptism, which corresponds to this, now saves you...** [RSV]
- \* **And that water is like baptism that now saves you...** [NCV]
- \* **This is a symbol of baptism, which now saves you...** [WEB]

We could keep going, but I am sure the reader gets the picture. Regardless what translation you read, baptism and salvation are directly linked.

Jason tries to make this text more difficult than it is. According to him, the ark is in reference to salvation; and baptism is "*an analogy to Noah's deliverance through the suffering and judgment of his day.*" I don't know where you got that, but it certainly was not from this text. Peter has shown that our salvation is an antitype of Noah's salvation. Noah was saved through water (by his obedience to the Lord's command). We are saved through water (by our obedience to the Lord's command).

Using the latter portion of **3:21**, Jason tells us "*Peter isn't saying that baptism brings about forgiveness of sins (removal of dirt)...*" I challenge you to show me one instance in Scripture where the word "*dirt*" is used to describe sin. He's telling us that it is not the outward removal of dirt (real dirt) that cleanses us, but the response of our conscience to God's command. Did Peter believe that baptism affected the forgiveness of sins? He sure did! "**...Repent and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ FOR THE REMISSION OF SINS...**" (**Acts 2:38**). Does he specifically identify that purpose in this text? NO, but he does acknowledge that

baptism “...now saves us...” If we are being saved from our sins, then I suppose it is understood that baptism affects the forgiveness of sins.

## OTHER MATTERS

Jason speaks of my 'often appeal' to the primitive church, supposedly quoting me as saying, '*...they believed baptism was required for salvation.*' Please, Mr. Peacock, where have I said this? The only reference I have made to the 'primitive church' in our present discussion is quoted from Irenaeus, wherein he confirmed the authenticity of **Mark 16:19** (and thus **9-20**).. You make the unsubstantiated statement, “*...the early church did not believe baptism is an essential act for salvation.*” Would you care to support your claim?

Quotes from the 'primitive church' are not authority for us, but do help us understand what they believed. Here are a few to chew on:

*“This class of men have been instigated by Satan to a denial of that baptism which is regeneration to God, and thus to a renunciation of the whole faith.”*

**(Irenaeus, ca. 120-205 A.D.)**

*“The prescript is laid down that 'without baptism, salvation is attainable by none' chiefly on the ground of that declaration of the Lord, who says, 'Unless one be born of water, he hath not life.’”*

**(Tertullian, ca. 140-230 A.D.)**

*“As we are lepers in sin, we are made clean from our old transgressions by means of the sacred water and the invocation of the Lord...even as the Lord has declared, 'Except a man be born again through water and the Spirit, he shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven’”*

**(Irenaeus, ca. 120-205 A.D.)**

*“Being baptized, we are illuminated; illuminated, we become sons; being made sons, we are made perfect, being made perfect, we are made immortal... This work is variously called grace, and illumination, and perfection, and washing. Washing, by which we cleanse away our sins; grace, by which the penalties accruing to transgressions are remitted; and illumination, by which that holy light of salvation is beheld, that is, by which we see God clearly.”*

**(Clement of Alexandria, ca. 150-220 A.D.)**

*“Baptism itself is a corporal act by which we are plunged into the water, while its effect is spiritual, in that we are freed from our sins.”*

**(Tertullian, ca. 140-230 A.D.)**

Jason makes the statement regarding the early church, “*...there was no such thing as an unbaptized Christian.*” AMEN! Neither is there such a thing today. To exclude baptism because he can find passages dealing with salvation that do not mention baptism is poor reasoning. If there is one passage which links baptism to salvation, then it is essential. The fact is, there are many such passages.

## CONCLUSION

The Bible clearly teaches that baptism brings about salvation (**Mark 16:16**; **1 Peter 3:21**); results in the remission of our sins (**Acts 2:38**; **Acts 22:16**); is the point at which we become dead to sin (**Romans 6:1-4**); is the circumcision of Christ (**Colossians 2:11-13**); and is how we put on Christ (**Galatians 3:27**). Throughout Mr. Peacock's argument, he has not sought to discount the proposition, but has attacked the Scriptures. But when we look past the theological and grammatical smokescreen he has set up, the Bible still declares the necessity of baptism for salvation. The proposition stands, “*The New Testament Scriptures teach that the penitent believer must be baptized in water for the remission of sins to be saved.*”

## PEACOCK'S QUESTIONS & STEWART'S ANSWERS

### Question 1.

*William, I have been baptized by immersion. I was not baptized in the name of Jesus alone, rather, "In the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit." (Matthew 28:19). I understood it as a public confession of Christ, and an outward sign, which represents the inward soul washing of the blood of Christ. I believe the inward part was done at the point I received Christ and trusted, relied and depended on him alone for the salvation of my soul, this happened in February of '99. Now I know the way I was baptized is not how William and the Church of Christ say it ought to be done (not the right formula), moreover according to William, I had a false understanding of what baptism brings. So, William, am I saved? If you say yes William, then you must grant that baptism is not essential, at the very least, not in the way you say it must be done, and I have accomplished my goal as negotiator in this debate. If you say no, I'm not saved, then in effect you are eternally condemning me. If you do not know, then your view on baptism being essential for salvation may be in error, and I have accomplished my goal as negotiator in this debate.*

I am not sure where Mr. Peacock got the idea that I believe there to be a formula that requires baptism in the name of Jesus alone. I have said no such thing, nor do I believe such to be true. Baptism "...in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit..." is equally valid to baptism "...in the name of Jesus Christ." It is a statement of authority, not a formula.

So far as the details of Mr. Peacock's baptism, I would ask him where the Bible says baptism is a "public confession." If that is the case, the eunuch's baptism was invalid (**Acts 8:37-39**). Mr. Peacock indicates that he received Christ and was baptized at different occasions. You cannot receive Christ without receiving His word (**John 12:48**). Those who received the word were baptized and then added to the church (**Acts 2:41, 47**).

I am not the eternal judge of any man, yet Mr. Peacock compels me to judge the present condition of his soul. Since the tool of the eternal Judge is the Word (**John 12:47-48**), I appeal to the Word. By his own admission, Mr. Peacock has not been baptized "...for the remission of sins..." (**Acts 2:38**). He muddles the symbolism which exists between our death to sin and the Lord's death (**Romans 6:3-4**), saying that he had life before he was buried. He believes he was forgiven of his sins without receiving the "...circumcision of Christ..." (**Colossians 2:11-13**), wherein sin is removed. By his own confession, and the testimony of Scriptures, NO, Mr. Peacock, you are not saved.

Now, of my "NO" response, Mr. Peacock cautions, "...you are eternally condemning me." Certainly not, my friend. Throughout this debate, you have had the opportunity to learn the truth, and so long as there is breath in your being, you have the opportunity to obey that truth. I have not eternally condemned you, I have explained the way of the Lord to you "...more accurately..." What you do with it will determine whether you stand eternally condemned or not.

### Question 2.

*The Philippian jailer's question, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" So Paul and Silas said, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved, you and your household." If salvation were gained only after baptism, the why would Paul and Silas leave out this vital part. Yes, he and his family were baptized, but only after they believed and were taught the message.*

It would have been useless for Paul and Silas to respond to the jailer's question by saying "**You must be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ.**" Baptism alone affects nothing. Before baptism would benefit him, he had to believe in Christ. Why did Peter not give the same response to the same question in **Acts 2**? Simply, you must begin where a person is. The people at Pentecost believed Jesus to be the Christ (it was this conviction that prompted their iniquity in **v 37**). Thus, they were commanded to repent and be baptized. The jailer needed to establish faith in Christ first. Therefore, he was commanded to do so. Does that exclude baptism? Certainly not.

Notice from **Acts 16**:

- 1) "**What must I do to be saved?**" (**v 30**)
- 2) "**Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ.**" (**v 31**)
- 3) "**Then they spoke the word of the Lord to him...**" (**v 32**)
- 4) "**Immediately he and all his family were baptized**" (**v 33**)
- 5) "**He rejoiced, having believed in God...**" (**v 34**)

Jason would have us believe that the man was saved before him. The text certainly does not support such a

notion. There was no reason to rejoice until after his sins had been remitted through obedience to the Lord's command.

## THIRD NEGATIVE ESSAY - JASON J. PEACOCK

No I meant what I said in my 2nd rebuttal “...my goal in my first rebuttal was not to show the view William holds is contradictory to Scripture...” Rather “...demonstrate that the texts...used to show the necessity of baptism do not have to be taken as such...” Aside from being told what my goal in this debate is, the definition of rebut is to disprove, is this not what I'm doing? My two rebuttals so far have shown that the verses that Mr. Stewart uses to say we must be baptized unto salvation, do not require his interpretation. But I wonder what brought about the change in policy? I quote the 2nd rule for this debate, “**Each writer agrees that all negative rebuttals will be exactly that, a rebuttal of his opponent's position (not an affirmative of his own position). Any material presented in a negative rebuttal must be in direct response to the material presented by the affirmative debater.**” I fail to see the problem with what I said in the 2nd rebuttal?

Friend, I never said I couldn't believe that you could believe Christ's law replaced the old law. I said, but is Christ's law regulations, to replace the Old Regulations? Not that I can see. As for the New Covenant, which came with Christ, I certainly hold to that, and I base my hope in it. But I cannot understand why William thinks that this Covenant includes a law to replace the old law, when **2 Corinthians** tells us the ministers of this new Covenant – not of the letter (implying law), but the Spirit, and why? Because the letter (implying law) kills, but the Spirit gives life. The Old Covenant was rules and regulations, which we could not keep, but God in his mercy gave us a new Covenant. It makes no sense to give another law that God knows we cannot keep. That's what I said, in context, William pulled a sentence out of that. All I was saying, was Christ's law is not like the first law. That's it that's all.

When I said the law as well as Jesus' additions to it (**Matthew 5-7**) is in full affect today, I did not mean the ceremonial law... God forbid, Jesus fulfilled it! I meant the Ten Commandments and all of the additions and slight changes Jesus talked about. That law I think is absolutely impossible to keep unto perfection; this is why Jesus perfectly fulfilled it. And why **Romans 7:4** says, “**Therefore, my brethren, you also have become dead to the law through the body of Christ, that you may be married to another --- to Him who was raised from the dead, that we should bear fruit to God.**” I'm not saying the law is not important or that we as Christians are free to go out and break God's commands whenever we feel like it. We are to follow the Ten Commandments, along with the Lord's additions to them in **Matthew 5-7**. However I deny we can fulfill this law to 100% perfection as Christ did, therefore we must receive the righteousness of Christ. I know for a fact that the law does not bring about salvation. I suppose I can say it like this, we can't keep the law unto absolute perfection, and God will not accept a half-hearted job, so our only alternative is to run to the one who has fulfilled it to a 'T', and place our faith and trust in him alone.

I can almost agree with William on his next point, I'm just unclear on one thing. Yes, we as Christians are to do the will of the Father in heaven, and we are to build our foundation on the words of Christ, not merely hear his words, but do them. But William, I believe you're placing a heavy burden on the backs of the saints, furthermore I believe you're relying on your self-righteousness. Basically, you're saying you can keep all the words of Christ in **Matthew 5-7** unto perfection, then logically William, if true, you'd be perfect and have no need for a Saviour any longer. Furthermore, you being perfectly moral as Christ was, then logically you'd be with Him. Moreover, we cannot obey these commands without the grace of God.

### MARK 16:16

Friend, since these are our final essays, I'd only suggest when you debate in the future and quote you're opponent that you quote the immediate context, instead of your own three periods (...). Of course I object to your use of **Mark 16:16**. This is what I said, “*I wonder why William felt it necessary to give me a lesson on the manuscript and ancient text transmissions of the Bible? This debate has absolutely nothing to do with this. However, I do study both of them extensively, and the Sinaiticus and Vaticanus are not the earliest manuscripts found, nonetheless, I don't object to William's use of Mark 16:16 on the basis of the 16:9-20 disclaimer. Nonetheless, the disclaimer is there and trying to use this questionable passage as a proof-text to validate the doctrine of baptism essentialness is suspect, whether William likes it or not.*”

As for what “Mark” (if it was John Mark) wrote in **16:12**, where Jesus appeared in another form and Luke wrote in **24:16** that his true appearance was kept from the two disciples, my friend says, “*Jason must assume that Mark is describing a bodily change in Jesus' appearance.*” Firstly, of course, why not, did Jesus not rise physically? Secondly, we haven't even established that John Mark, the companion of Peter wrote **16:9-20** in the first place. However, I will grant Mr. Stewart's explanation of why the endings of the two gospels really don't disagree, though I don't see how Mark knew what the two disciples were thinking. I'll even accept the assumption that Mark did write **16:9-20**. Still though, I would think if Jesus was saying we must believe and then be baptized, then we're saved, it wouldn't matter if he said “*he who does not believe will be condemned*”, because if William is right, then it

does not matter if we believe, since we have not been baptized we are condemned anyway. William assumes Jesus is saying, "If you're baptized, but do not believe you will be condemned." True enough, but the historical context is important. Christian baptism then and now is a way of identifying yourself with Jesus, this deserting one's former faith... Early Christians were martyred for their faith in the Lord. No one would be, well, idiotic enough to be Christian baptized, and not believe in the Lord. This makes no sense.

### ACTS 2:38

You know friend, you might get friendlier discourse with future debate opponents if you refrained from accusing them of twisting the text, because their interpretation is contrary to your own. Furthermore, it's not just because of the Greek grammarians that I disagree that **Acts 2:38** teaches that we must be baptized to receive salvation. Even before I studied the Greek grammarians' interpretation of this verse, I still disbelieved it taught baptism is essential. Why? Because of the immediate context, and other passages of Scripture; however, due to rule # 6 for this debate, I will not enter any new material into this, my third and final essay. The order of words in Greek is not as essential as it is in English, so the wording can be changed around, one alternative for **Acts 2:38** is "Repent for the remission of sins, and let each one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ." Or from the *New Living Translation*, "Peter replied, 'Each of you must turn from your sins and turn to God, and be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ, for the forgiveness of your sins. Then you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.'" Or like *The Message* renders the verse: "Peter said, 'Change your life. Turn to God and be baptized, each of you, in the name of Jesus, so your sins are forgiven...'" "Repent" here in this verse is a second person plural verb, which would be in proper accord with "remission of your sins", while "let each...be baptized" is a third person singular verb.

In my first rebuttal, I said, "Holding to the view that baptism brings forgiveness of sins flies in the face of *Lucan theology* (Luke 13:3; 24:47; Acts 3:19; 5:28-32; 11:18; 17:30; 20:21; 26:20)." Here's my point. I do not believe Luke is contradicting himself at all. I believe my friend's stance on **Acts 2:38** contradicts Luke's theology on those other passages in Acts. Those verses mention repentance leading to forgiveness of sins and/or salvation, and baptism is not even mentioned. Friend, I know you do not agree with me at all regarding **Acts 2:38**, but at least I provide an alternative that is not contradiction Luke on other verses!

### ACTS 22:16

Friend, this verse does not teach baptism washes away sin. For it to, it would have to say, "Arise, and wash away your sins by being baptized and call on the name of the Lord." But it doesn't. William, the *NKJV* says, "And now why are you waiting? Arise and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on the name of the Lord." **Acts 22:16** in the *New Living Translation*, "And now, why delay? Get up and be baptized, and have your sins washed away, calling on the name of the Lord." **Acts 22:16** in *The New American Bible*, "Now, why delay? Get up and have yourself baptized and your sins washed away, calling upon his name." In the *Contemporary English Version*, "What are you waiting for? Get up! Be baptized, and wash away your sins by praying to the Lord." *1890 Darby Bible*, "And now why linger thou? Arise and get baptized, and have thy sins washed away, calling on his name." *The Good News Bible*, "And now, why wait any longer? Get up and be baptized and have your sins washed away by praying to him." How are our sins washed away? By calling on the name of the Lord in prayer.

I agree with you friend, in that true discipleship of the Lord involves doing, or works of obedience, and yes, baptism is one of those works of obedience, but salvation from God is not conditional. In other words, it is not gained through our own meritorious works, and William, you need God's grace to obey. We don't do it under our own power.

### ROMANS 6:3-4

William, friend, you would be correct if chapter six was really chapter one, but it is not. We have all these verses prior to chapter six, which tell us we are justified by faith; faith in Jesus Christ. But apart from myself affirming my own case, which is not my job as the one responsible to rebut, nevertheless, **Romans 6:2**, from *NKJV* says, "Certainly not! How shall we who died to sin live any longer in it?" Did you get that? "Who died to sin." When did we die to this sin? Obviously prior to **Romans 6:3-4**. Is it not possible that Paul was using this example of baptism as a way to signify this death to sin, and alive to Christ? I'd say that is the logical outcome.

Friend, I certainly do not deny the fact that God uses men as His vessels to spread His message. But God merely uses men to spread the message of His salvation. Man does not deal out this salvation; there is a big difference between a man proclaiming the message of salvation, and a man playing a paramount role in saving another man. Salvation is God's gift, not both God's and man's!

## COLOSSIANS 2:11-13

Let's carefully go through **Colossians 2:11-13** [are my insertions]. **"In Him you were also circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, [without hands, certainly implying men] by putting off the body of the sins of the flesh, by the circumcision of Christ, [not of men, but of Christ] buried with Him in baptism, in which you also were raised [I'd think that this baptism, if water, the context is not clear, furthermore other dependable versions do not even use the word baptism. But if it is, I'd say it signifies, visibly, this spiritual circumcision] with Him through faith [through what?] in the working of God, who raised Him from the dead. And you, being dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He has made alive together with Him, having forgiven you all trespasses."** [Who has made us alive in Christ? God has.]

Friend, did you not read what I said? The **1 Corinthians** and **Galatians** verses were not meant to nullify what Paul wrote, they were meant to clarify. Here it is again, *"Moreover, 1 Corinthians 12:13 speaks not only of being baptized into one Spirit, but also drinking into the Spirit, both of which symbolically refer to the individual's participation in the life of God. When a person is baptized, he or she comes into unity with all other believers in Jesus Christ. This unity transcends social distinctions (Galatians 3:28)."* The circumcision of Christ is how God and only GOD saves people, and Paul uses the visible symbol of baptism to signify this salvation.

## 1 PETER 3:18-21

Very well friend, let's carefully go through **1 Peter 3:18-21**, and see if it does actually teach that one receives salvation at the point when one is baptized? [These brackets are my comments]. I admit, a quick reading of **1 Peter 3:18-21** might lead one to believe baptism is necessary to be saved. **"For Christ also suffered once for sins, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh but made alive by the Spirit** [this is the point of salvation, strangely however, baptism is not mentioned, but it more so has a spiritual meaning, we certainly did not die literally] **by whom also the Divine longsuffering waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was being prepared** [in other words, Christ's Spirit spoke through Noah, preaching repentance and not baptism], **in which a few, that is, eight souls, were saved through water.** [*"Through water"*, the question needs to be asked, what water? It cannot be the waters responsible for the destruction at that time, they were intended for judgment of the wicked in the ancient world, **2 Peter 2:5; 2 Peter 3:6**. Clearly they were saved by the **Ark**. And how did they enter the Ark? **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.**] **There is also an antitype** [Greek work *'antitupon'*. It means, representation, etc. Therefore, the question then is, *"Corresponding to what?"* For that we need to look at the previous verses.] **which now saves us -- baptism (not the removal of the filth of the flesh,** [certainly implying sin, in other words, Peter is telling us this baptism does not remove our sin.] **but the answer of a good conscience toward God), through the resurrection of Jesus Christ."** [However, it represents this cleansing of our souls.]

Friend, we agree, the waters of Noah's day do represent baptism, but those waters were meant for destruction **2 Peter 2:5** and **2 Peter 3:6**. Obviously the Ark saved them, and they entered the Ark by faith **Hebrews 11:7**. Baptism represents this. Friend, you tell us that you do not hold to baptismal regeneration. I'll agree with you, you don't, at least not the way it is defined in the Roman Catholic Church. However, you do hold to a *sacramental view of baptism* -- according to this belief, baptism is a means by which God conveys grace. The person baptized receives *remission of sins*, and is regenerated or given a *new nature and an awakened or strengthened faith*. Can you see why I believe, you believe, in baptismal regeneration? You speak out against it and yet affirm it at the same time.

## PRIMITIVE CHURCH

Friend, you're absolutely right, you did not say that the early church believed baptism was necessary for salvation, but I did not say that you appealed often to the early church, neither did I say that I quoted you as saying that. I said this, *"Allow me to appeal to the primitive church. Many people who believe it is necessary to be baptized in order to be saved, which William does often appeal to the Primitive church, saying, "They believed baptism was required for salvation."* I appealed to the primitive church, and then said, *"Many people who believe it is necessary to be baptized in order to be saved, which William does often appeal to the Primitive church, saying, "They believed baptism was required for salvation."* See it William? I did not say you personally said that, I simply assumed you also would believe the same, *considering you also believe baptism to be essential unto salvation*. Was my assumption wrong? Well, from the quotes my friend provided, obviously my assumption was not wrong, so I see no problem with what I said.

As far as the 5 quotes which my friend provided, impressive perhaps, but not convincing. Number one, Biblical truth is from *"Sola Scriptura"* (Scripture alone), and not the writing of various church fathers. Number two, I said

primitive church, meaning the Apostolic age (Pentecost **Acts 2**; early persecution and growth **Acts 8**; Paul's conversion **Acts 9**; Paul's missions **Acts 13-19**), and the missions of other apostles, all this approximately 35-100 A.D.. My friend provided quotes from *Irenaeus and Tertullian, two "Polemists", purpose to attack those who attack the faith. Clement of Alexandria, a scientific theologian.* Number three, this is not five early quotes from different church leaders, but three. Finally, number four, obviously we have three church leaders who, if they do not hold to baptismal regeneration, they certainly do to a *sacramental view of baptism*, and that is not too far from the tree of baptismal regeneration. In other words, I'm not impressed!

I'm not saying that baptism is not important, most certainly it is. Is it an act of obedience? Certainly it is. Is it a command by the Lord? Certainly it is. If you claim the name of Christ and refuse to be baptized, are you a Christ follower? I will not condemn anyone, but I will affirm that it is being disobedient to the Lord. But I am fairly sure of one thing, no friend, I'm not certain, I'm not omniscient, but I do have common sense. I'd venture to guess that there are those in this world which claim the name of Christ and would suffer and die for their Lord, but for certain reasons they cannot be baptized, let alone, by immersion. So, should it be concluded then that those people are excluded from salvation? ***Of course not!*** And this is why I find my friend's theology frightening, and why salvation can be gained apart from baptism.

Thank you friend for this debate, nice to have one with a considerate individual.