

Baptized into the Name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit

by Walton Weaver

Jesus commanded His apostles, "Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age. Amen" (Matthew 28:19-20). The preposition "in" in the phrase "baptizing them in the name of . . ." is translated "into" in the American Standard Version of 1901. Some more recent translations have given "into" as an alternate rendering. The footnote in the New International Version says, "Or into. See Acts 8:16; 19:5; Romans 6:3; I Corinthians 1:13; 10:2; Galatians 3:27."

The alternate rendering with the preposition "into" when the name of Christ is under consideration makes real good sense when one considers it's meaning. There is really little difference in being baptized into Christ and in being baptized into the name of Christ. This becomes apparent when one considers the meaning of the word "name" in such expressions. The word "name" was used in Bible times to include everything behind and involving the person referred to by the word. It represented the person and character of the one considered. So to receive a prophet "in the name of a prophet," and a righteous man "in the name of a righteous man," or to give even a cup of water to a disciple "in the name of a disciple," (Matthew 10:41-42) is to do what one does with purpose, or out of regard for the person involved. Act in full view of who and what the person is, what he does, and all for which he stands.

To be baptized into Christ is to leave an old relationship and to enter into a new one. This is what happened to the Israelites when they left Egypt-under the leadership of Moses by passing through the Red Sea, and were thus baptized into Moses (I Corinthians 10:1-2). They accepted Moses as their new leader; they trusted in him and entered into a new relationship with him as their leader and deliverer as they followed him through the Red Sea. We are doing the same thing in relation to the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit when we are baptized "into the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit:" At the point of baptism we are entering into a new relationship with them; we are entering into covenant with them, accepting their leadership. The same is true when we are "baptized into the name of Christ," or, for that matter, when we are baptized "into Christ." We are putting our full trust in Him for who He is and what He has done and is doing for us as our Savior, Mediator and Benefactor, and we are being brought into Him as our new leader – we are entering into a new covenant relationship with him as we are baptized into Him.