

## On Trine Immersion Baptism

Most Christians would agree on the necessity and importance of baptism. It is when we begin to discuss the symbolism and mode of baptism that disagreements arise. However, an honest reading of the New Testament and of history would tend to support baptism *by immersion*.

*Baptism testifies to a burial and a resurrection* — Romans 6:3-5 speaks of being buried and resurrected with Christ, and Colossians 2:12 reinforces this. When one is buried he goes under the ground or into the earth in some fashion. Baptism in water, then, most fully shows this burial and then the resurrection or coming up out of the ground. To fully show this testimony, there should be enough water used to show the burial (descent into) and the resurrection (rising up from).

*Baptism symbolizes a washing* — Ananias told Saul, “Arise and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on the name of the Lord” (Acts 22:16). Outward water baptism cannot physically wash away sins, but it relates what Christ has done for us in washing away our sins with His blood. Washing means to thoroughly cleanse something, through immersing it in water. One washes a garment by thoroughly get it wet, and plunging it under the water.

*The Greek word “baptizo” always means to immerse* — It signifies a cleansing by washing. There is no hint of merely sprinkling water on a new believer, or of pouring a small amount of water on one. It means “to dip, to immerge, to submerge” (J.H. Thayer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*).

Even those who agree on baptism by immersion may differ on the specific mode or method of performing that immersion. Again, grammar, theology, and history point to a specific kind of immersion for baptism of New Testament believers--trine (or triune) immersion. Trine immersion means being immersed three times in one ritual. It is not three baptisms, but one baptism with three separate actions.

*The Greek word “baptizo” requires more than one immersion*. The basic word for wash is “bapto.” When the “izo” ending is added, it signifies a repeated action. So “baptizo” (in Greek) means “to dip or immerse repeatedly” (*A Greek-English Lexicon*). Anyone familiar with koine Greek in the first century would have an immediate understanding of “baptizo,” and would see it as needed a

repeated immersion into water. The Greek word for “sprinkling” is “rantizo,” and would have been used in the New Testament had the early church used that rite.

*The Great Commission requires trine immersion*. Matthew 28:19 says that we are to baptize “in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.” A simple diagram of that phrase shows it to have three separate prepositions (even in Greek), which would require the baptismal action be done as one rite with three separate actions or immersions. Some recent translations overlook the repeated prepositions in this verse, and so add to the confusion over the proper mode of baptism.

*Honoring the Trinity requires trine immersion*. Again, Matthew 28:19 recognizes each member of the Godhead, and our initiatory rite into the Trinitarian Christian faith reflects our belief in the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit. All three Persons of the Trinity are mentioned because each One has a part in our salvation. God the Father is the Architect of the plan of salvation; God the Son came to earth and paid the bill for salvation; and God the Holy Spirit convicts us of sin and brings about our surrender to Christ, and applies the work of Jesus’ death, burial, and resurrection to our souls and lives.

The text in Matthew 28 requires Trinitarian action in order to fully complete the Lord’s command. By trine immersion--one ritual with three actions, we recognize and give honor and worship to each member of the Godhead. We proclaim ourselves as obedient Trinitarians. As we believe in the Trinity, we should symbolize the Trinity in our entrance into the Trinitarian faith.