

QUESTION: In Matthew 28:19 it says to baptize in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, but in the book of Acts, people are baptized in the name of Jesus only. Plus, we know the name of the Father is Jehovah, and the name of the Son is Jesus, but what is the name of the Holy Spirit? Can you give some insight as to why no one in the New Testament was baptized in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, and why it says in the name (singular), not in the names of?

- Matthew 28:1-20 "Then Jesus came and spoke to them, saying, 'All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. 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'"

ANSWER: I think we get confused when we look at Jesus' words as if He were giving a "formula" for baptizing a convert in water. It is so important to read Scripture in its context. We see in Matthew 28:18-20 that Jesus is not just talking about dunking people in water to get them baptized. He is talking about making disciples, and the word **disciple means "learner."** What does He want them to learn? **He wants them to be taught and to learn "to observe ALL things that I have commanded you"**. Jesus taught us about the nature of God, that He is our Heavenly Father, and that Jesus Himself is God the Son, and equal to the Father (see John, chapters 14-17). Jesus taught that both He and the Father would be sending the Holy Spirit, who also is God. Therefore, to baptize in "the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit" would mean to teach and give people an understanding of **the true nature of God as three persons in One: the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit**. This teaching would probably be done after a new convert was baptized in water, because water baptism was a public profession of a person's faith right after they accepted Jesus as Lord and Savior. **It is the teaching about the nature of God that is important in Jesus' words in Matthew 28, not a legalistic formula for baptizing converts.**

The reason we see in the book of Acts so many times people being baptized in the name of Jesus is because **the Jewish people needed to distinguish this baptism from any other baptisms, such as that of John the Baptist, or any of the other washings or "baptisms" of the Jewish religion**. The first time we see Peter commanding people to be baptized in the name of Jesus, it is in Acts 2:38, where he has been preaching to the Jews on the Day of Pentecost. He had just finished a long sermon where he showed that Jesus is the true Messiah, and that the Jewish religious leaders had rejected Him as their Messiah, and had Him crucified. It is a long sermon, but in Acts 2:22-23 Peter says, "Men of Israel, hear these words: Jesus of Nazareth, a Man attested by God to you by miracles, wonders, and signs which God did through Him in your midst, as you yourselves also know - Him, being delivered by the determined counsel and foreknowledge of God, you have taken by lawless hands, have crucified, and put to death....." Then Peter continues with his sermon, proving from the Old Testament Scriptures how Jesus is the promised Messiah, and that **these Jews there on the Day of Pentecost must now make a decision to accept Him as their Messiah and Savior, and be baptized in His name**. To be baptized in the name of Jesus would forever separate them from the other Jews who had crucified Jesus and rejected Him as their Messiah.

We don't know that "no one in the New Testament was not baptized in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit." We are only given a few examples, and we don't know the actual words that were said. In Acts 10:48, when Peter was preaching to Gentiles (non-Jews) in the house of Cornelius, it says, "And he commanded them **to be baptized in the name of the Lord.**" It

just says "in the name of the Lord." Who is the Lord? He is the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit - one Lord! If we choose to interpret Jesus' words literally as a formula for water baptism, that is fine, but we should not be legalistic about it, any more than ending a prayer with the words, "in the name of Jesus" makes it a better prayer by adding those words. **Any true believer in Jesus Christ is praying "in the name of Jesus" by praying in His power and authority**, whether they tack on those words at the end of their prayer or not. In both cases, when the Bible says "in the name of" something, it means "in the power and authority of" that person. So, we baptize in the power and authority of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, even if we just say, "I now baptize you in the name of Jesus," because His name carries all the power and authority of the Godhead. That is what Jesus meant when He said, **"All authority has been given to Me** in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and **make disciples.**"

- **Colossians 2:9** "For In Him (Jesus Christ) dwells **all the fullness of the Godhead bodily** (in human form), and you are complete in Him, who is the head of all principality and power."

You also said, "we know the name of the Father is Jehovah, and the name of the Son is Jesus, but what is the name of the Holy Spirit?" We are not concerned about God's name or the Holy Spirit's name as if His name were "Charlie" or "Fred" or "George" or something like that. As for the name of God being Jehovah, we don't know that either, and it isn't necessary to know that, because **Jesus revealed God as our Father - WE CALL HIM FATHER!** All through the New Testament, we see God referred to as **"God the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ"**, and this distinguishes Him from any other "gods" that the pagans would be worshiping.

- **Ephesians 1:3** **"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ**, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in heavenly places **IN CHRIST;**"
- **Exodus 3:14** "And God said to Moses, "I AM WHO I AM; and He said, Thus you shall say to the sons of Israel, 'I AM has sent me to you.'"

"I AM" was the name of God given to those under the Old Covenant (Old Testament). It simply means He has no beginning or end, but has ALWAYS EXISTED. When God appeared to Moses in the burning bush (Exodus 3:14) He said, "Tell them '**I AM**'has sent you." When the Jews heard Jesus use this term for Himself, THEY KNEW EXACTLY WHAT HE MEANT BY IT, and they picked up stones to stone Him to death, because **He was saying He was God!** In trying to translate into English, this name is sometimes referred to as "Jehovah" or "Yahweh", but we don't really know how it was pronounced by the Hebrews. The Jews did not pronounce God's name of "I AM" because they thought God's name was too holy to speak or write, but **IT IS NOT NECESSARY for us to know it.** The **NAME that is GIVEN TO US** is the **NAME OF JESUS** (see Acts 4:12), and Jesus revealed God to us **in the New Covenant** (New Testament) as **"the Father."**

- **Acts 4:10-12** (Verse 10) "Let it be known to you all, and to all the people of Israel, that **by the name of Jesus Christ** of Nazareth, whom you crucified, whom God raised from the dead, by Him this man stands here before you whole." (Verse 12) "Nor is there salvation in any other, **for there is NO OTHER NAME under heaven** given among men by which we must be saved."
- **Philippians 2:9-11** "Therefore God also has highly exalted Him and given Him the name which is above every name, that **at the NAME of JESUS every knee should bow**, of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth, and that every tongue should **confess that JESUS is LORD, to the glory of God the Father.**"

It does not read, "In the names of...." as if there were three separate beings, because God has revealed Himself to be a Triune God: ONE God who exists in three persons, the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. We see this triune characteristic of God all through the Bible, and it needs

a separate study in itself, which is available in our paper titled "Why Christians Believe in the Trinity." ieve in the Trinity."