

2 Chronicles 7:14 (Misinterpreted Scriptures)

If my people, which are called by my name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land.

Misinterpretation: Some in the UPC say that the people "called by God's Name" are Oneness Pentecostals (because they believe in baptism in Jesus' Name).

Facts: This Scripture was written at least 400-500 years before Christ ((Dyer, C., Merrill, E., Swindoll, C. R., & Zuck, R. B. (2001). *Nelson's Old Testament Survey : Discover the Background, Theology and Meaning of Every Book in the Old Testament* (294). Nashville: Word.)), and the event that it was recording was the dedication of Solomon's Temple, which happened almost 1,000 years before Christ ((Youngblood, R. F., Bruce, F. F., Harrison, R. K., & Thomas Nelson Publishers. (1995). *Nelson's new illustrated Bible dictionary*. Rev. ed. of: *Nelson's illustrated Bible dictionary*.; Includes index ("Solomon's Temple"). Nashville: T. Nelson.))! The promise in 2 Chr. 7:14 was to the Jews, not to Oneness Pentecostals, or even to Christians in general. Of course, I do believe that the forgiveness of sins is a Biblical concept, and this Scripture is certainly a beautiful illustration of that! However, it is a mistake to say that this Scripture is talking directly to anyone but the Israelites.

Matthew 28:19 (Misinterpreted Scriptures)

Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost...

Misinterpretation: The UPC points out that this Scripture says to baptize in the Name (singular). They go on to say that the Name is Jesus, and they quote Acts 2:38 as proof (because Peter instructed people to be baptized in the Name of Jesus). Unfortunately, the UPC believes that if a person was baptized in the Name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, then their baptism was invalid and they are not truly saved.

Facts: I will not open up a debate on Oneness vs. the Trinity here, or a debate on whether or not baptism is necessary for salvation. Instead, I will say that I really do not think that Jesus is going to send the majority of His followers to hell for obeying Him. Think about that for a moment. Is Jesus really going to take a person who love Him and faithfully served Him, but was baptized in the Name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost and send them to hell—especially when He was the one who told them to be baptized that way? Is that really the kind of God that we serve?

Furthermore, if the UPC view is true then the majority of so-called Christians for the last 2,000 years have gone to hell. I find it hard to believe that Jesus came to Earth, suffered, died, was buried, and rose again, just so that He could trick almost all of His followers into going to hell.

Finally, the UPC often claims that Christians baptized in the Name of Jesus until the Roman Catholic church came on the scene. They believe that the Roman Catholic church corrupted Christianity with the doctrine of the Trinity (which the UPC equates with polytheism) and a false baptism. However, recent

historical discoveries make it clear that the early Church was baptizing people in the Name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost at a very early date. The Didache—written between c50-250 A.D.—instructs people to be baptized in the Name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost ((Youngblood, R. F., Bruce, F. F., Harrison, R. K., & Thomas Nelson Publishers. (1995). Nelson's new illustrated Bible dictionary. Rev. ed. of: Nelson's illustrated Bible dictionary.; Includes index ("Didache"). Nashville: T. Nelson.)). This means that it is very possible that the early Church was already baptizing people in the Titles when the Apostle John was still alive!

Acts 2:37-38 (Misinterpreted Scriptures)

Now when [the Jews present at the Upper Room on the Day of Pentecost] heard this, they were pricked in their heart, and said unto Peter and to the rest of the apostles, Men and brethren, what shall we do? Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.

Misinterpretation: This is the “flagship” Scripture of the UPC and of all Oneness Pentecostal churches. There are many ways that this Scripture is mistaught by the UPC, but the only error that I will point out here is that many Oneness Pentecostal preachers and saints misquote the Scripture by reciting, “Men and brethren, what shall we do *to be saved.*”

Facts: The careful reader will notice that the words “to be saved” are not found in Acts 2:37. Peter had already told the

believers how to be saved in Acts 2:21, when he quoted the prophet Joel and said, “[W]hosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved.” By the time Peter concluded his sermon in Acts 2:36, the Jews who were present were “pricked in their heart.” That is when they asked Peter and the “rest of the apostles,” “[W]hat shall we do?”

The reason that this is important is because these men had already believed in Christ. That’s why they were pricked in their heart! They wouldn’t have ever asked the question unless they already believed on Christ! If they didn’t believe then they would have laughed and walked off. However, they did believe, and so they were moved to ask what they needed to do. Peter responded by telling them to be baptized in the Name of Jesus Christ, and that they would receive the Holy Ghost.

The point is that it was not baptism who saved the new believers, it was their belief. (More properly, it was God’s grace working through their belief). Their baptism was a *response* to their salvation, not the *cause* of their salvation. The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia sums it up well when they write, “Peter’s ‘Repent ye, and be baptized...in the name of Jesus Christ’ (Act_2:38) is meaningless unless faith were exercised in Christ.” ((ISBE, “Justification”))

I will conclude my discussion of Acts 2:37-38 by quoting the story of the jailer’s conversion, found in Acts 16:27-34, which makes the distinction between belief and baptism even more clearer.

Act 16:27-34 KJV

(27) And the keeper of the prison awaking out of his sleep, and seeing the prison doors open, he drew out his sword, and would have killed himself, supposing that the prisoners had been fled.

(28) But Paul cried with a loud voice, saying, Do thyself no harm: for we are all here.

(29) Then he called for a light, and sprang in, and came

trembling, and fell down before Paul and Silas,

(30) And brought them out, and said, Sirs, what must I do to be saved?

(31) And they said, Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house.

(32) And they spake unto him the word of the Lord, and to all that were in his house.

(33) And he took them the same hour of the night, and washed their stripes; and was baptized, he and all his, straightway.

(34) And when he had brought them into his house, he set meat before them, and rejoiced, believing in God with all his house.

Colossians 3:17 **(Misinterpreted Scriptures)**

And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him.

Misinterpretation: This Scripture is used to teach that baptism in the Name of Jesus is necessary. The logic is that we are supposed to do *everything* in the Name of Jesus, and *everything* includes baptism. UPC preachers often go on to say that Trinitarian preachers will pray in the Name of Jesus, marry in the Name of Jesus, and do many other things in the Name of Jesus, but that they will not baptize in the Name of Jesus.

Facts: First, this Scripture has nothing to do with baptism. Paul is writing about living a godly life, and he is reminding people that they need to do everything "in the name of the

Lord Jesus." One could think of this as an ancient "WWJD" saying. Paul was reminding the Colossian church to always live their lives in a way that is pleasing to God (cf. Col. 3:8-17). Second, the UPC forgets that Trinitarian preachers are obeying Jesus when they baptize in the Name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost [see [my notes on Mat. 28:19](#)].

1 Timothy 3:16 (Misinterpreted Scriptures)

And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory.

Misinterpretation: The UPC uses this Scripture as one of their major proofs for the doctrine of the Oneness of God. They claim that the mystery of the Godhead is revealed in 1 Tim. 3:16, because God was manifest in the flesh (as Jesus), justified in the Spirit (as the Holy Ghost), and received up into glory (where He steps back into His role as the Father).

Facts: This Scripture says that the mystery of *godliness* is great, not the mystery of the *Godhead*.

To understand this Scripture we must back up and look at the context. Paul is explaining to Timothy how bishops and deacons should live. A good starting place to get an idea of the context is 1 Tim. 3:14:

1Ti 3:14-16 KJV

(14) These things write I unto thee, hoping to come unto thee

shortly:

(15) But if I tarry long, that thou mayest know how thou oughtest to behave thyself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth.

(16) And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory.

It is clear that Paul is explaining "how thou oughtest to behave thyself in the house of God." He then concludes with 1 Tim. 3:16.

So what was Paul's point? Why did he jump from "how to live" to Jesus? The clearest answer that I have found is in The Complete WordStudy Dictionary's article on the Greek word for "godliness." This is what it says:

In 1 Tim. 3:16, we are told that [godliness] is a mystery. This refers to a holy life resulting from God's incarnation in the person of Jesus Christ when that incarnation and all that it entails is truly believed. This is [godliness], a holiness initiated in the life of the believer by Christ Himself through the Holy Spirit ((The Complete WordStudy Dictionary, "G2150")).

I think that this explanation makes sense, but some readers may disagree with me. Either way, the point remains the same: Paul was not talking about the Godhead in 1 Tim. 3:16.

James 2:19 (Misinterpreted Scriptures)

Thou believest that there is one God; thou doest well: the devils also believe, and tremble.

Misinterpretation: Used to say 1) that Trinitarian doctrine is wrong, because there is only one God, and 2) that belief is not sufficient for salvation, because if it were then the devils would be saved.

Facts: Trinitarianism (belief in One *Being*–God–Who exists in three *Persons*) is not the same as tritheism (belief in three supreme beings or gods). In other words, Trinitarians read James 2:19 and agree with the UPC–there is only one God.

Also, just because the devils believe there is one God does not mean that A) they have placed their faith in that one God for their salvation, or B) that they could be saved even if they did place their faith in Christ. The Bible never suggests that devils can be saved. As a matter of fact, Peter says that at least some of them are in "chains of darkness...reserved for judgment" (2 Pet. 2:4 NKJV). In other words, placing your faith in Christ for your salvation is much different than just believing in one God. Muslims believe in one god, but that does not make them saved. Salvation requires that a person place their faith in Christ (cf. Acts 2:21, Acts 16:30-31, Rom. 10:13).