

# WARNING: “ONENESS PENTECOSTALISM”

## (THE “JESUS ONLY” CULT)

**Real Christians have always believed that there is only one true God.** Numerous Bible verses teach this. For example, in Isaiah 43:10 God declares, “Before Me there was no God formed, and there will be none after Me.” But merely believing in only one God doesn’t guarantee that someone is a genuine Christian. (Even the demons believe that there is only one God, and they shudder!—James 2:19)

**For centuries the biblical doctrine of the Trinity has rightly been considered a central and essential teaching of the historic Christian faith,** affirmed by all true Christians everywhere. Here is a simple summary of what Scripture teaches about this important doctrine:

**The one true God eternally exists as three distinct,  
co-equal, and co-eternal Persons:  
the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.**

**But today there is a group of churches that twists and changes what the Bible says about the “oneness” of God.** Even though they *call* themselves Pentecostals, “Oneness Pentecostals” are dangerously different in what they teach. Their main belief—a very ancient heresy called “modalism”—says the biblical doctrine of the Trinity is false. Instead, they misread the Bible to claim that the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are all just one person: Jesus. “Oneness” churches trace this belief back to a third-century heretic named Sabellius, and some of their followers claim the doctrine was “rediscovered” by revelation at a Pentecostal camp meeting near Los Angeles in 1913.

**“Oneness” churches use many different names around the world.** They include the United Pentecostal Church International; World Christian Ministries Association; Apostolic Union of the World; True Jesus Church (Taiwan); and Iglesia Apostólica de la Fe en Cristo Jesús (Mexico). **Many know them as “Jesus Only” or “Apostolic” churches.** Some “Oneness” preachers—like singers Phillips, Craig, & Dean—are celebrities among unsuspecting Christians.

**“Oneness” groups aggressively work to deceive and convert Christians who believe in the biblical doctrine of the Trinity.** Their missionaries boast about re-baptizing Trinitarian pastors and their congregations! So Christians need to be warned about two main teachings that “Oneness” missionaries use to trap evangelical believers into false worship: *modalism* and *requiring baptism in Jesus’ name*.

## MODALISM

**Modalism falsely claims that the Father, Son and Holy Spirit are all just one person.** Each of them is simply a “mode” in which God operates. Modalists say this is like a man who plays different roles in life as a father, a husband, and a teacher. This doesn’t mean that the father and husband and teacher are three different people—they’re different “modes” (or titles) used by the same man. Likewise, modalism says that God is only one person but operates in three modes: the Father in creation, the Son in redemption and the Spirit in regeneration. According to them, “Jesus” is the name of all three persons! We only call Jesus “the Son” to refer to Him after He was born here on earth.

**But this isn’t what the Bible teaches.** Though we can’t understand it fully, Scripture reveals that within the nature of the one true God there are three distinct persons: the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. Yet the Father is not the Son, the Son is not the Holy Spirit, and the Holy Spirit is not the Father. For instance, Galatians 4:4 and John 3:16 describe God the Son (Jesus) as living *alongside* God the Father before He was born on earth. In John 8:17–18, Jesus appeals to the Old Testament law stating that “the testimony of two witnesses is true.” Then He explains that “I am one who testifies for Myself; My other witness is the Father, who sent Me.” If Jesus is the both Father and the Son, then there would only be one witness, and Jesus’ testimony would be invalid (see also John 5:31–32).

**In John 14:16–17, Jesus tells the disciples that He will ask the Father to give them another Helper (or Comforter): the Holy Spirit.** Is Jesus asking *Himself*? Is the Father sending *Himself*? Indeed, this is completely different from someone who is simultaneously a father, husband, and teacher. It would make no sense for the husband to say, “I will ask the father [*that’s me*], and he will send the teacher [*that’s me, too*].” Though the relationship among the persons of the Trinity is hard for us to grasp, passages like John 14:16–17 can only make sense if the Father, Jesus, and the Holy Spirit are distinct persons within the one being of God. (Also consider Matthew 3:16–17, which describes Jesus being baptized, the Father speaking from heaven, and the Spirit descending. All three of them are right there at the same time, yet each one of them is clearly distinct from the others.)

“Oneness” followers will often quote Colossians 2:9, which says that “in Christ all the fullness of the Deity lives in bodily form.” This verse tells us that Jesus is fully God. But “Oneness” followers misapply the passage to argue there can’t be a distinct divine person other than Jesus. Why is this logic false? For example: Just because you (the reader) are fully human, this doesn’t mean that no one else is human! You can be fully “human” in your nature while others are equally human. In just the same way, **Jesus is fully God at the same time that the Father and Spirit are *also* fully God.**

## REQUIRING BAPTISM IN JESUS' NAME

**“Oneness” cultists don’t baptize “in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit”** (Matthew 28:19). They claim that the words “Father, Son, and Holy Spirit” aren’t names, but *titles*. They reason that for us to obey Matthew 28:19 we must find out what the name (singular) of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit is. As we explain above, “Oneness” followers falsely teach that “Jesus” is the name of all three titles. They claim this is why Peter preached, “Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins” (Acts 2:38). They will also tell you that Jesus’ words in Matthew 28:19 were never used by anyone in the Book of Acts, and instead the disciples always baptized “in the name of Jesus” (see Acts 2:38, 8:16, 10:48, 19:5). They insist that true and correct baptism must *always* be done by speaking the words “in the name of Jesus.”

**There are big problems with this “Oneness” requirement.** First, “Jesus” is not the name of God the Father. Jesus Himself would sometimes use the word “we” when talking about His Father (see John 14:23), so “Jesus” can’t be the Father’s personal name.

**But is speaking the exact words “in Jesus’ name” required for baptism? No—and here’s why:** The “Oneness” argument only *seems* to make sense in English translations of the Bible, because in the four separate accounts of baptism “in Jesus’ name,” the original Greek language uses different words. “Oneness” followers may say these differences don’t matter, but they really do. Ask yourself: If God were requiring an exact formula to use, then why didn’t He give us one? The formula would have to be exactly the same in every account—but it isn’t. Only Acts 8:16 and 19:5 are identical. But instead of saying “in the name of Jesus Christ”—as in Peter’s sermon—they say “in the name of the Lord Jesus.” Acts 2:38 and 10:48 are almost identical in the Greek, but they use different prepositions. Hence, *the wording in the four accounts have three different formulas*. God doesn’t require Christians to use an identical formula all the time and everywhere.

**So why do we find a difference between the accounts in Acts and the one in Matthew 28:19?** The key is to correctly understand the meaning of the phrase “in the name of Jesus.” This phrase doesn’t mean that there is something magical about Jesus’ name that makes the baptism valid. Instead, “in the name of” is a common expression that means “by the authority of....” For instance, you may have heard someone say, “Halt in the name of the law!” This doesn’t mean that the law has an actual name of some kind. Instead, this is calling on the *authority* of the law to command someone to stop. In the same way, when Peter said “In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, walk!” (Acts 3:6), he wasn’t using a mandatory formula for healing lame people; Peter healed the man by Jesus’ authority (see also 1 Samuel 17:45).

So when you read the verses in Acts about “baptism in Jesus’ name,” notice: **None of them quotes anybody actually speaking the phrase “In the name of Jesus!” aloud when they baptize.** Instead, all these accounts merely tell us that people were baptized *in the name of*—that is, *by the authority of*—Jesus. No special words are spoken. And importantly, Matthew 28:19 doesn’t give us a formula either. Instead, it commands us to baptize *by the authority of* the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Throughout the centuries, Christians have used Matthew 28 when they baptize—not because those words are required, but because they’re honoring the *authority* by which they’re commanded to baptize. In short, **it’s not wrong to baptize using the words “in the name of Jesus,” but it is wrong to exclude others from salvation by saying that this is the only true and correct way to baptize.**

## WHAT MUST WE DO?

First, **we mustn’t be deceived into false worship.** The Bible commands believers to “worship the LORD in the splendor of His holiness” (Psalm 29:2). God’s call to worship is not a burden, but should be a delight to Christians! As we consider the wonders of God’s nature, the riches of His majesty and the depth of His love, our response should be worship. But how are we to worship God? Jesus explains that **“those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth”** (John 4:24)—i.e., according to how He reveals Himself in Scripture. The god preached by “Oneness” Pentecostals is not the true God of the Bible, so we must reject it. How tragic for a Christian to be deceived by this cult, become an enemy of Christ and His people, and waste the rest of his or her life worshipping a false god!

Second, recognize that **“Oneness” Pentecostal missionaries divide the Body of Christ.** They come to Christians as the “wolves in sheep’s clothing” that Jesus warned us about (Matthew 7:15). They confuse Christians about God in order to lead them into their cult, and they boast of re-baptizing Trinitarian pastors and entire congregations—as though they were trophies.

**What attitude should we have as Christians when we meet such “Oneness” followers?** The Bible tells us to be ready to have an answer for them, and to offer it “with gentleness and respect” (1 Peter 3:15). We should also “not be quarrelsome, but be kind to all, able to teach, patient when wronged, with gentleness correcting those who are in opposition, if perhaps God may grant them repentance leading to the knowledge of the truth, and they may come to their senses and escape from the snare of the devil, having been held captive by him to do his will” (2 Timothy 2:24–26). *May God use your patience and prayers to help others break free from this deception!*

To learn more, watch our video responses to “Oneness” teaching at  
[www.tinyurl.com/CFAR-Oneness-Part1](http://www.tinyurl.com/CFAR-Oneness-Part1) and [www.tinyurl.com/CFAR-Oneness-Part2](http://www.tinyurl.com/CFAR-Oneness-Part2)

*For more information, contact:*