

## **WHAT'S THE TRUTH ABOUT WATER BAPTISM?**

Key Scriptures related to baptism are Matthew 3:13-17; Matthew 28:18-20; Acts 2:41; Acts 8:35-39; Romans 6:3-5, Galatians 3:27, Colossians 2:12,

Water Baptism is a symbolic drama. It is the public declaration of faith in Christ that every believer should celebrate. It is a fundamental part of the Christian experience that should not be omitted or neglected. A full understanding of its meaning is sure to enhance the event itself and one's future walk with the Lord.

According to a formal Baptist statement of doctrine, "Christian Baptism is the immersion of a believer in water in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. It is an act of obedience symbolizing the believer's faith in a crucified, buried, and risen Savior, the believer's death to sin, the burial of the old life, and the resurrection to walk in newness of life in Christ Jesus. It is a testimony to his faith in the final resurrection of the dead. Being a church ordinance, baptism is prerequisite to the privileges of church membership and to the Lord's Supper." (Baptist Faith and Message 1963, 2000)

There are several essential biblical teachings about baptism. First, only people who exercise faith in Christ should be baptized. Therefore baptism should always follow a genuine conversion experience and not occur before. Baptism which occurs before genuine belief is not a biblical baptism. Second, baptism should be practiced by fully immersing the believer under the water. The fullest meaning of baptism can only be understood if immersion is practiced. Third, baptism is an important symbol of salvation, but baptism does not produce salvation. Therefore, the omission of baptism does not by itself condemn one to Hell. And conversely, the event itself, lacking genuine repentance and belief, does not prepare one for Heaven. An obedient believer, however, will always want to be baptized because the Lord Jesus Himself commanded it to be done.

Jesus Himself was baptized by John the Baptizer in the Jordan River in order to fulfill all righteousness.

Three things are symbolized in the act of water baptism by immersion...

- 1) The complete washing away of sins.
- 2) The death of the old sinful way of life, and the birth of the new obedient life in Jesus.
- 3) The death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus, and hope of one's own resurrection someday as well.

The symbolism of #2 and #3 above may be further enhanced by seeing the baptismal waters as a "watery grave." Going under the water symbolizes going into the grave, coming up out of the water symbolizes rebirth or resurrection from the grave. When the believer is gently put under the water, this pictures his own eventual death and burial, the death and burial of Jesus, and the death of his old sinful way of living. When brought up out of the water, this pictures his own eventual resurrection, the resurrection of Jesus, and a new obedient life in Jesus Christ.