

Are you prepared to be baptized?

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Introduction: Having identified God's remnant church, the true follower of Jesus will want to know how to join it. Jesus said: "Other sheep I have who are not of this fold; them also I must bring, and they will hear My voice; and there will be one flock" (JOH 10:16). Generally one joins the church through baptism, though those who previously have been baptized may join by receiving Jesus as absolute Lord of their life and accepting the Biblical principles upon which the church is built. In this lesson we will learn the meaning and importance of baptism, as well as the way Jesus showed it should be administered.

1. What two things are involved in being born again? JOH 3:5 [Note: It takes *love AND a legal ceremony* for a good marriage. There also are two aspects to the new birth: The spiritual part is our new, love relationship with Jesus; and the official part is baptism, where we publicly pledge ourselves to Him. Both are called for in Scripture. The Further-study verse is 1JO 5:4-6]

2. Through what rite do we "put on Christ"? GAL 3:27 [Note: "Baptism" is a Greek word meaning "to dip" or "to immerse." It was carried over directly into English in our Bibles, being made a "theological" term. To call sprinkling baptism is a misuse of the term. ACT 22:16]

3. What does baptism represent? ROM 6:3-5 [Note: Immersion represents two things: 1) Our faith in *Jesus'* death, burial, and resurrection; and 2) *our* death to self, burial of our old habits of sin, and our resurrection to a new way of life in Jesus. COL 2:11-13]

4. Why was Jesus baptized, and what was God's response? MAT 3:13-17 [LUK 3:21, 22]

5. Was Jesus sprinkled, or immersed? MAR 1:10 [Note: There is not a single instance of sprinkling in the New Testament. Sprinkling was substituted by non inspired men after the death of the apostles. EPH 4:5]

6. If Jesus Himself was baptized, should any of us consider ourselves too important to be baptized? Should pride prevent anyone from being buried in water for Him, when He was buried in a tomb for us?

7. In the Old Testament, the animal sacrifices pointed to Jesus' death. Were these sacrifices effectual without faith on the part of the worshiper? HEB 10:4 [LEV 4:35; LEV 23:27-30; ROM 9:31, 32; DEU 32:20; Hab. 2:4]

8. In this respect, baptism is like these sacrifices. While baptism is necessary, can baptism itself, without faith, save us? MAR 16:16 [Note: Baptizing infants is meaningless because they have no faith. An infant can be dedicated to the Lord, as Jesus was as a baby, but baptism is meaningful only when it expresses the believer's faith. 1PE 3:21; Heb. 11:6; ROM 5:1, 2]

9. At Pentecost, what did Peter tell the new converts to do? ACT 2:38 [ACT 8:12, 38]

10. What were the new converts "added" to when they were baptized? ACT 2:41, 47 [Note: Some Bible versions omit "to the church." See KJV or NKJV. ACT 5:14]

11. What symbol represents the church? EPH 1:22, 23 [Ans: 'The church . . . is His body.' COL 1:24]

12. What are we to be baptized "into"? 1CO 12:13 [Ans: Christ's body, the church. verses 27, 28]

13. What is given to those who are baptized? 1CO 12:7-12 [Ans: Everyone receives some gift of the Holy Spirit for service in God's work and in His church. "Not more surely is the place prepared for us in the heavenly mansions than is the special place designated on earth where we are to work for God."--*Christ's Object Lessons*, p. 327. ROM 12:4-11]

14. What are we to do with these gifts after we are baptized? JOH 15:2, 8 [MAT 12:30]

15. What was Jesus' last commission to the disciples? MAT 28:18-20 [MAR 16:15, 16]

16. On one occasion, what did Paul do to those who had been baptized before learning all of the gospel? ACT 19:3-5 [Ans: He baptized them again. ACT 17:30]

Commitment: Jesus said, "Whoever confesses Me before men, him I will also confess before My Father" (MAT 10:32). Once God gives us the opportunity to develop a faith relationship with Jesus, and then as we learn how to publicly confess that relationship through baptism by immersion, salvation is conditional upon our obedience. Would you like to request baptism today and begin to prepare for that wonderful event? And while you are preparing for baptism, will you pray that God will show you what gifts He has given you to be used in service for Him and His church?

COMING TO BAPTISM

You feel your life needs to change and that you need forgiveness. You are drawn to God's Word and want to be baptized. Are you prepared for it?

When we reach the point of baptism each of us has faced a variety of life experiences. Some have a "record". Others have been "religious since mother's knee". Some were christened or even baptized as an adult. Some have never had any religious training or experience. Some have been associated with a variety of churches, and others have never darkened a church door.

Then we come to believe that change is needed. What do we do? Is it only a matter of "belief"?

The Scriptures teach a twin action: "**Repent, and be baptized**" (ACT 2:38). The baptism bit is easy. But - do we understand what's meant by "repentance"?

A New Beginning

Note first that baptism is "the bottom of the ladder" of the Christian life. It is a new beginning. When you step out of the water and have the laying-on of hands (to receive God's Spirit) you are a new life - a spiritual embryo, if you like. God's Spirit has united with your spirit to form a new creature. You are a "babe in Christ". And you have much to learn! You need to "grow". So, what God expects from you as a mature Christian after years of experience is not what He expects from you at baptism! Thankfully, God doesn't reveal the specific trials ahead of a new Christian. But the way He wants us to live as Christians - the evidence that we are truly converted - is *clearly explained* in Scripture!

Repentance

We can't be saved by any personal works of righteousness. It is of grace, of God's mercy, out of His love for us. So why echo the question of ACT 2:37: *What must I do?* The key, as Peter answered, is - *repent*. Christianity is a way of life, and we are expected to "**live by every Word of God**" (MAT 4:4), and that will mean a radical change in our daily walk. Let's look at some of these changes.

God has called you to offer you His salvation. In His goodness He leads you to repentance. He uses the circumstances of your life to induce a godly sorrow - a deep contrition for your sin and your sinful nature. Such sorrow can be triggered by ill-health, by loss of someone close, by reverses, simply by a general dissatisfaction with your life. But whatever it is, you begin to seek, and follow, God's way. To seek and to follow is repentance. Repentance is not a "feeling". It is *action!* It is a turning to God's "narrow way". It is willing obedience.

And you can't leave obedience till *after* your baptism! When God begins to call you, it is His Spirit that is working with you. You are not alone, for the Holy Spirit is with you, prompting you to obedience. It is for *you* to turn those prompts into action! You show your submission to God by a changed life-style, by starting to produce good fruit. *And you start before baptism.*

Check List

This article is not meant to be a substitute for counsel with a competent counselor of the Church. You ought to discuss baptism fully, and indeed baptism won't be carried out unless you do - for your own sake! Here, however, is a "check list" to summarize key parts of what the counsellor wants you to understand.

Not surprisingly, there are ten areas of your life to make a start on before baptism. Unless you are committed to them God won't give you His Spirit. They are signposts to the life in Christ. God expects you to take your *first steps* of obedience before giving you His Spirit. Like any parent, He does not look for maturity from a babe - but you have to take those first steps as evidence of commitment!

Let's look at the ten areas in brief. Note, however, that these are *foundational*. True repentance means we are giving to God (not to any man!) an "open check". We will throughout life continue need to repent of numerous attitudes and actions as we grow in knowledge of God's Word.

1. Determine to put God, His Word and His work first in your life. ***Have you made this commitment?***
2. Realize that true religion is of the spirit and not dependent on the physical - e.g. religious symbols, pictures, buildings. ***Are you looking to God for salvation and not to your deeds or religious trappings?***
3. All our service to God reflects His revealed Word. If it's contrary to Scripture, if it does not carry God's imprint - discard it. It is "vain worship", and *idolatrous*. This applies, for example, to many "Christian" traditions. It applies to religious "holy days": only those revealed in Scripture are acceptable to God - see Leviticus 23. ***Have you begun to observe God's Holy Days, and renounced traditional Christian holidays like Christmas and Easter?***
4. God requires positive worship from us each week on His (7th day) Sabbath, coupled with cessation of our normal business activity. ***Do you now observe God's weekly seventh-day Sabbath?***
5. Our Christian life is marked by recognition of God's pattern of family life. Take steps to be on good terms with your family. ***Have you taken steps (e.g. forgiveness) to be reconciled to your parents?***
6. Be reconciled, also, to *all* those to whom you have any animosity. Failure to forgive means we inwardly harbor murderous thoughts. ***Have you searched your heart for hatred, and begun to love your enemies?***
7. Determine to discipline yourself to purity of thought: check that what you read, what you view, what you think is godly, and according to God's Word. Adultery, homosexuality, lesbianism and all forms of perverted sexual behavior are sinful. God requires His people to be chaste, and faithful within marriage. ***Have you abandoned all unlawful personal relationships?***
8. Be industrious, respectful of the property of others, and generous in all your good deeds. ***Are you following only legal occupations, honest in your dealings - e.g. with your employer and the tax man?***
9. Truthfulness and honesty should become constant companions. ***Are you helpful and supportive to your neighbor, willing to overlook his faults?***
10. Be thankful for what you have, and don't desire what's not yours, nor what you can't afford (e.g. consumerism, gambling), nor what's harmful to your body (e.g. smoking, alcohol, drugs) - all are forms of idolatry! If necessary get professional help to conquer such habits. If, however, you are actively trying to be rid of them, but have not yet succeeded, it need not stop you from being baptized. ***Are you content with your lot, yet actively trying to conquer harmful habit?***

I repeat - you must be committed to this outline. But God knows our weakness, and does not expect maturity of a babe in Christ!

False Conversion?

This is a brief summary of how we should begin to live *before* baptism. Repentance means we voluntarily submit to this way of life. Unless committed to these ten commandments we are not truly repentant. They are "seeds" that we plant *before* baptism. As we mature in Christ they bring forth an abundance of godly fruit. If we are not so committed *our baptism is a sham*.

It will result in a "false conversion" in which we worship Jesus Christ in vain. Dangerously, we will be lulled into a false security, assuming we are "saved". Multiple millions follow this path of lawlessness, and, led by false shepherds, become blinded to the beautiful way of life revealed through God's Law. Such may indeed have sorrow for their sin. They see in Jesus Christ the forgiveness of that sin. But by false teachings they are then led to resist God's holy and perfect and righteous Law! That resistance is carnal, and spells death.

Obedience to God is *not* "salvation by works". It is an expression of our submission to His lordship and sovereignty. Joyful obedience to God's *torah* - as expanded in all of Scripture - is one sign that we are truly being converted. No-one can expect to be converted, can expect God to give His Holy Spirit, can be sure of salvation *unless they first "bring forth fruit meet for repentance"*

Can you be saved, for example, without keeping the Sabbath? It's the wrong question! Rather we ought to ask, Will God freely give His Holy Spirit to someone who knowingly refuses to obey His revealed Word? Clearly - no!

Remember: God will give His Holy Spirit - without which we are none of His (ROM 8:9) - only to those who have become truly sorry for their sin, and are changing their life-style according to the way of life revealed in His Word. Only then, and wholly by His grace and mercy, we enter His Family as new-born babes in Christ.

Baptism

by Gertrude Battle (Used by permission)

Baptism is one of the ordinances Christ placed in the church. It commemorates the burial and resurrection of Christ. There are different modes of baptism. Are they all right, or is there one correct way?

I. Forms of Baptism

A. How many forms of baptism are mentioned in the Bible? EPH 4:5

Only one.

B. How is it described in one place? COL 2:12

As a burial. The word baptism' comes from the Greek word baptizo', meaning to dip or immerse. This mode was practiced by the early church. It was not until the twelfth century that a change was made.

C. Why did JOH go to Aenon, near Salim, to baptize? JOH 3:23

Because there was much water there.

D. Where was Jesus baptized and how? MAT 3:13 , 16

In the river Jordan. If He came up out of the water, He must have gone down into it.

E. How did Philip baptize the eunuch? ACT 8:35-39

They both went down into the water.

II. When to be Baptized

A. What was a part of the great commission? MAR 16:15, 16

To baptize those who accepted the Gospel. It was always associated with their teachings..

B. Is baptism by water enough in itself? JOH 3:5

No. We are also to receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.

C. Is it wise to put off baptism when one is ready? ACT 22:16 ; ACT 9:18 ; ACT 8:36 ; See also PSA 119:60

No. Paul was an example, also the eunuch.

D. What is one thing that pleases God? ISA 15:22

Obedience.

III. Instruction Before Baptism

A. What should precede baptism? MAT 28:19, 20

Instruction should be given the candidate. He should be taught to observe all things, whatsoever Christ commanded. Repentance and conversion should also precede baptism.

IV. Meaning of Baptism

A. What does baptism symbolize? ROM 6:3-8

It is a symbol of the death of the old man of sin (our carnal natures) and a resurrection to a new life in Christ Jesus. HOS 2:19, 20 See also GAL 2:20 Also like a marriage ceremony, when we are married to Christ. JER 3:14 first part.

B. Through this experience, what do we become? 1 JOH 3:1

We become sons and daughters of God, children of the royal family of heaven.

V. Rebaptism

A. Is it sometimes good to be rebaptized? ACT 19:1-5

Yes. These people had only heard of JOH's teachings and were not fully informed in the teachings of Jesus. They may have been converts of Apollos who, himself, was taught the Gospel by Aquila and Priscilla. ACT 18:24-26

It is good to be baptized by a minister who believes in and is, himself, keeping all of God's commandments. Shocking? Inconceivable? Preposterous? Not at all. But rather, thrilling! Exciting! Marvelous! Christ says "we are buried with Him by baptism." ROM 6:4. At conversion, the old life dies. The Lord forgives all the past, blots out our transgressions, and even promises He "will not remember thy sins." ISA 43:25. Conversion is called the "new birth" because there is no past. God forgets a person's past at conversion. And baptism symbolizes the burial of the former sinful life. The cross is mentioned 28 times in the Bible, but baptism is mentioned 97 times. This gives us some idea of its supreme importance. And no wonder, for it symbolizes the beginning of a new life—with the haunting, sinful past buried and forgotten forever.

1. WHAT ORDINANCE IS CLOSELY ASSOCIATED WITH BELIEVING THE GOSPEL? And He said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned. MAR 16:15,16
2. WHAT DID THE APOSTLE PETER ASSOCIATE WITH BAPTISM IN HIS INSTRUCTION ON THE DAY OF PENTECOST? 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. ACT 2:38
3. N REPLY TO HIS INQUIRY CONCERNING SALVATION, WHAT WAS THE PHILIPPIAN JAILER TOLD TO DO? And they said, Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house. ACT 16:31
4. WHAT FOLLOWED IMMEDIATELY AFTER THE JAILER AND HIS FAMILY HAD ACCEPTED CHRIST AS THEIR SAVIOUR? And he took them the same hour of the night, and washed their stripes; and was baptized, he and all his, straightway. ACT 16:33
5. IN CONNECTION WITH CHRISTIAN BAPTISM, WHAT IS WASHED AWAY? And now why tarriest thou? arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord. ACT 22:16
6. BY WHAT MEANS ARE SINS WASHED AWAY? And from Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness, and the first begotten of the dead, and the prince of the kings of the earth, Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, REV 1:5
7. IN WHOSE NAME ARE BELIEVERS TO BE BAPTIZED? Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: MAT 28:19
8. WHEN BELIEVERS ARE BAPTIZED INTO CHRIST, WHOM DO THEY PUT ON? For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ. GAL 3:27
9. INTO WHAT EXPERIENCE ARE THOSE WHO ARE BAPTIZED INTO CHRIST? Know ye not , that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into His death? ROM 6:3
10. HOW IS SUCH A BAPTISM DESCRIBED? Therefore we are buried with Him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. ROM 6:4
11. HOW FULLY ARE WE THUS UNITED WITH CHRIST IN HIS EXPERIENCE OF DEATH AND RESURRECTION? For if we have been planted together in the likeness of His death, we shall be also in the likeness of His resurrection: ROM 6:5
12. WHAT WILL FOLLOW THIS UNION WITH CHRIST IN HIS DEATH AND RESURRECTION? Now if we be dead with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with Him. ROM 6:8
13. IN WHAT WORKING OF GOD IS FAITH TO BE EXERCISED IN CONNECTION WITH BAPTISM? Buried with Him in baptism, wherein also ye are risen with Him through the faith of the operation of God, who hath raised Him form the dead. COL 2:12
14. AT THE BEGINNING OF HIS MINISTRY, WHAT EXAMPLE DID JESUS SET FOR THE BENEFIT OF HIS FOLLOWERS? The cometh Jesus from Galilee to Jordan unto JOH, to be baptized of him. MAT 3:13
15. WHAT REMARABLE EXPERIENCE ATTENDED THE BAPTISM OF JESUS? And Jesus, when He was baptized, went up straightway out of the water: and, lo, the heavens were opened unto Him, and He saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove, and lighting upon Him; and lo a voice from heaven, saying, This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. MAT 3:16,17
16. WHAT PROMISE IS MADE TO THOSE WHO REPENT AND ARE BAPTIZED? The 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. ACT 2:38
17. WHAT QUESTION DID THE EUNUCH ASK AFTER PHILIP HAD PREACHED JESUS UNTO HIM? And as they went on their way, they came unto a certain water: and the eunuch said, See, here is water; what doth hinder me to be baptized? ACT 8:36
18. IN ORDER TO BAPTIZE THE EUNUCH, WHERE DID PHILIP TAKE HIM? And he commanded the chariot to stand still: and they went down both into the water, both Philip and the eunuch; and he baptized him. ACT 8:38
19. HOW DID THE PEOPLE OF SAMARIA PUBLICLY TESTIFY TO THEIR FAITH IN THE PREACHING OF PHILIP? But when they believed Philip preaching the things concerning the kingdom of God, and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women. ACT 8:12
20. WHAT INSTRUCTION DID THE APOSTLE PETER GIVE CONCERNING THE GENTILES WHO HAD BELIEVED? Can any man forbid water, that these should not be baptized, which have received the Holy Ghost as well as we? And he commanded them to be baptized in the name of the Lord. Then prayed they him to tarry certain days. ACT 10, 47,48

21. HOW PERFECT IS THE UNITY INTO WHICH BELIEVERS ARE BROUGHT BY BEING BAPTIZED INTO CHRIST? For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body: so also is Christ. For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit. For the body is not one member, but many. 1CO 12:12-14
22. AFTER BEING UNITED WITH CHRIST IN THE LIKENESS OF HIS DEATH AND RESURRECTION, WHAT SHOULD THE BELIEVER DO? If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. COL 3:1

Is Rebaptism Ever Right?

There is another aspect of this subject which should be explored, and it has to do with rebaptism. Is it a denial of the original commitment if a person chooses to enter the water of baptism a second time, or perhaps even more? For what reason, if any, would it be important or even necessary to be baptized again? Does the Bible provide an answer to these questions? It does indeed. The very same inquiries apparently were raised in the early apostolic church, and ACT 19:1-5 explains how Paul dealt with it in Ephesus. "And it came to pass, that, while Apollos was at Corinth, Paul having passed through the upper coasts came to Ephesus: and finding certain disciples, He said unto them, Have ye received the Holy Ghost since ye believed? And they said unto him, We have not so much as heard whether there be any Holy Ghost. And he said unto them, Unto what then were ye baptized? And they said, Unto JOH's baptism. Then said Paul, JOH verily baptized with the baptism of repentance, saying unto the people, that they should believe on him which should come after him, that is, on Christ Jesus. When they heard this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus."

Observe carefully that these Christians at Ephesus had already been baptized by JOH. Not only was it a legitimate baptism, but they had accepted Christ as the Messiah from JOH's careful instruction. But under Paul's questioning they confessed to a lack of knowledge regarding the Holy Spirit. The message that Paul shared with them on this subject was of such a nature that they felt it necessary to be baptized again.

With this Bible example before us, let's consider possible reasons for modern disciples choosing to be baptized again. Obviously if one discovers that his first baptism was not in harmony with the example of Jesus, he should submit to the proper form in order to fulfill "all righteousness." Sprinkling, for example, although performed under the name of baptism, could never meet the required symbolism of death and burial. This means that babies, regardless of the sincerity of their parents or godparents, must be considered unbaptized until they take the step after their own spiritual awakening at a responsible age. Sometimes it is difficult for sprinkled adults to grasp the idea that they have never really been baptized at all and should make arrangements for a true immersion baptism as soon as possible.

I once asked a man if he had ever been baptized. His reply was, "I don't know, but I'll ask my mother and let you know." There can be no doubt that this man needed to be baptized again, regardless of what his mother said.

Sometimes people tell me that they were baptized in their early years before they had really entered into the new birth experience. Thus, it had been merely a formal ritual done to please some friend or family member. Such persons, after entering a true conversion, should follow the meaningful burial-baptism to commemorate the death of sin in their lives.

What about the Christian who slips away from the faith and reverts to his former life of sin? It is without question that public apostasy, marked by open disobedience to God's law, should be just as openly renounced by a renewal of the baptism experience. The personal witness of a turning around in the lifestyle is one of the important aspects of being baptized.

Another reason that some might feel the need for rebaptism is related to the experience of the Ephesian believers. Apparently they believed that the greater light of truth shared with them by Paul was of such a life-changing nature that they felt it necessary to be baptized again. The same may be felt by many today as they learn new biblical teachings which revolutionize their way of believing and worshiping God. Some indeed discover that their previous Christian walk, though sincere, was actually violating some very important principles of Scripture. None should feel that they are denying their earlier experience by choosing to wash the past clean through a renewing of the baptismal experience.

With such an irrefutable array of reasons for making the decision for baptism and church membership, why do so many people hold back and procrastinate in taking the step? For many years I have listened to excuses offered for not going all the way with Jesus, and particularly for not yielding the life in baptism. One of the most common expressions I've heard is this: "I'm afraid I can't hold out, and I don't want to be a hypocrite." Surely this cannot be a valid argument for anyone who has met the prerequisites of faith, repentance, and conversion. Such a person is very aware of the weakness of the flesh and the impossibility of measuring up to God's standard in human strength. Everything depends upon prayer and a constant, intimate relationship with Jesus.

Is it possible for that prayer and faith life to weaken, plunging us into defeat? Of course, we can choose to neglect those spiritual exercises at any or every moment of our lives. Should that possibility discourage us from dedicating our lives in baptism? Not at all. Only if we are making plans to live for self would we be fearful of making those solemn baptismal vows of eternal faithfulness. But the truly converted step out by faith in that public commitment, trusting fully in God's power to uphold them. They recognize the possibility of stumbling as they grow stronger day by day, but they know the loving Jesus will be there to pick them up, forgive, and surround them with encouragement if they make a mistake. Those who are too fearful and faithless to begin the Christian journey are

simply confirming their spiritual unpreparedness for the baptism experience. Let them wait until their faith is more firmly fixed upon Jesus than upon self.

How then can people really be sure that they are ready for baptism? Should they wait until they feel absolutely certain they will never make a mistake? Definitely not. In fact, feeling has nothing to do with their readiness. But they must be perfectly settled in their innermost soul that Christ has performed the new birth miracle in their lives. They must be able to comfortably put their own name into the beautiful messianic promise of Isaiah 53. Each proper candidate for baptism should be able to read verse 5 like this: But he was wounded for *my* transgressions, he was bruised for *my* iniquities: the chastisement of *my* peace was upon him, and with his stripes I am healed.

Some may be reading these words right now who have been lingering long over the decision to follow Jesus into the watery grave of baptism. Have you been afraid of disappointing your Saviour by some possible misstep or failure? Turn this very moment from such groundless, self-centered fears. Your walk with Jesus does not depend on your ability to overcome temptation and human weakness. If you think in terms of what you are able to do, you may remain in the twilight zone of indecision forever. You must focus every thought upon the strength and power of the One who invites you to be His friend forever. It is the unfailing nature of His promises that can give you perfect trust in living the Christian life.

Even the Philippian jailer was so moved by conviction and faith in God that he insisted on being baptized in the middle of the night with all his family. Paul, though a prisoner himself, performed the baptism for the eager new converts. Ananias expressed the same urgency in his appeal to the newly converted Saul. He said, "And now why tarriest thou? arise and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord." ACT 22:16.

Is that the appeal which the Holy Spirit is pressing upon your heart this very moment? You love the Lord, and recognize that He has died for your sins. By faith you have accepted His atoning death in your behalf. The transforming grace of Jesus has brought peace and assurance into your life for the first time. If all this is true, you need to make the most important decision of your life. The Spirit inquires, "Why tarriest thou? Arise, and be baptized."

BAPTISM In MAT 28:19, 20 Jesus commands His disciples to "go and make disciples of all peoples, baptising them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit ..." Notice that the people were "made disciples" of before they were baptised. This tells us that there are certain requirements which must precede baptism. These are: 1. Hearing and believing (MAR 16:16) 2. Repentance (ACT 2:38) 3. Whole-hearted acceptance of Christ (ACT 8:37) Note that "believing in Christ" is not simply believing that Jesus existed, but is believing that He died for our sins and has therefore saved us. (1CO 15:1-4) WHY BAPTISM? Peter describes baptism as the "pledge of a good conscience towards God", an act of faith if you like. But why should we make this pledge by the act of baptism instead of simply making some spoken declaration? By comparing baptism with the example of Noah and the flood as Peter did (1PE 3:20- 22) we can see at least three answers: 1. It is the way that God has told us to go. 2. There is no other alternative suggested. 3. It leads to a new life. WHAT SORT OF BAPTISM? Today there are a number of different types of baptism being practised. Basically they fall into two groups: a. Baptism by immersion. b. Baptism by affusion, or sprinkling. From at least two accounts of baptism in the New Testament we can see that the Biblical method is baptism by immersion, that is where teenagers or adults are totally submerged beneath the water. (See JOH 3:23 and ACT 8:36-39) Sprinkling probably came in where there was difficulty finding enough water (in desert areas for example) and infant baptism came in due to a strange theology which made people believe that if their children died without being baptised they would go to hell! THE MEANING OF BAPTISM This type of baptism was not just chosen at random, it is a deeply symbolic act. By entering the water the believer shows that he is leaving his old life behind. By being submerged beneath the water he shows that he is dying to his sins. By being lifted up out of the water he shows that he is beginning a new life lived under the direction of Jesus who also died, was buried and resurrected for us. Today baptism has some other important functions as well. By being baptised in public we are making a promise to everyone that we have decided to follow Christ. We have told everyone that we are beginning a new life. Also baptism is generally recognised as the step by which we enter a particular church family.

Baptism - Who? How? Why?

WHO should be baptized? This question is clearly answered in the Bible. A quick reading of only a few passages will sufficiently explain for whom baptism is intended. However, because of man-made traditions handed down for generations, many people have been misled on this important matter. The creeds of many denominational churches teach that baptism is for infants as well as for those who have understanding of what they are doing. Such a doctrine is nowhere found in the Bible. To the contrary, the Bible teaches that proper subjects for baptism must be capable of doing the following things:

1. They must be able to believe. Belief is a prerequisite to baptism. "He that believeth and is baptized..." (Mk. 16:16) Since infants cannot believe, they are not subject to baptism.
2. They must be able to repent (that is, turn from sin). Repentance is also a prerequisite to baptism. "Repent and be baptized..." (ACT 2:38) Since infants cannot repent, they are not at all subject to baptism.
3. They must be able to confess their faith in Yeshua (Jesus).

Confession, like faith and repentance, is a prerequisite to baptism. "Confess with thy mouth the Lord Yeshua (Jesus)..." (ROM 10:9) Since infants cannot confess, they are not subject to baptism. Only those who can believe in Yeshua (Jesus), repent of sins, and confess faith in Yeshua (Jesus) are ready for baptism. In other words, only those who willing, consciously desire to follow Yeshua (Jesus) are ready for this important step. Unfortunately, many

people who have been "baptized" as infants are under the impression that their "baptism" is acceptable to God. All such people need to go to the scriptures and read for themselves what God has plainly taught. Infant baptism, though it is practiced by a great many churches, is a doctrine of man and not God. On this point the Bible is unmistakably clear!

HOW a person should be baptized is another question clearly answered in the Bible. There is only one way baptism can be scripturally administered. However, due to false doctrine taught throughout the denominational world, many folk have been misinformed and have been "baptized" in ways unknown to the Bible. Many have been "sprinkled" for baptism, and others have been "poured". But neither of these practices can be found in the Bible.

The "one baptism" mentioned in the scriptures (*Ephesians 4:5*) is to be administered by immersion only. This is evident from the definition of the word itself. Baptism is from the Greek BAPTIZO which always means to "dip", "immerse", or "submerge." Strongs Concordance defines baptizo, "to make whelmed (ie:fully wet)". The Greek scholar Henry Thayer defines "baptism" as: "To dip, dip under, immerse." Lydell and Scott define it as "To dip, dip under." All other Greek scholars give the same definition.

JOH 3:23 states, "And JOH also was baptizing in Aenon near to Salim, because there was much water there..." "Much water" is not needed if one is merely being sprinkled or poured, but it is necessary for immersion.

ACT 8:38-39 reads, "and they went down both into the water, both Philip and the eunuch, and he baptized him...And when they were come up out of the water..." Here the obvious reference is to baptism by immersion. Any other interpretation of this text is unwarranted.

ROM 6:4 "Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death..." *COL 2:12* "Buried with him in baptism." To bury something means to cover it completely. Likewise, when one is scripturally raised with Yeshua (Jesus), it is essential to have been buried with Him!

The Bible leaves no doubt as to the proper action of baptism. To be "baptized" in any other way than immersion is unscriptural. Throughout the world there are millions of people who have been sprinkled or poured thinking they have been scripturally baptized. If you are one of these, you should take a careful look at what the Bible says about the act of baptism. This is too important an issue to take a chance!

WHY be baptized anyway? Is it really necessary in order to have salvation? Again the Bible gives a clear answer. Practically all denominational churches teach that baptism is not necessary to salvation, but that it is "only a sign" of being a believer. Most people have been taught that they were saved by "faith only" (before baptism) and that baptism was an outward expression of their salvation. However, the Bible teaches otherwise. Yeshua (Jesus) and the apostles taught that baptism was essential to one's salvation. The following passages make this abundantly clear:

1. In *MAR 16:16* while giving the great commission, Yeshua (Jesus) said, "He that believeth and is *baptized* shall be saved..." How could Yeshua (Jesus) have made it more understandable? Faith+Baptism=Salvation.
2. Yeshua (Jesus) declared in *JOH 3:5* "Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God." To be "born of water" is essential to entering the kingdom of God! However to be "born of water" means "to come forth" from water, an obvious reference to baptism.(immersion)
3. Peter preaching on the day of Pentecost said, "Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Yeshua HaMashiach (Jesus Christ) for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of Ruach HaKodesh (the Holy Ghost). *ACT 2:38*
4. In the Book of ACT, a record of the early Church, the act of baptism is mentioned no less than 19 times...Can we treat this commandment so lightly?

Conclusions reached.

1. Yeshua (Jesus) is our example of how to live a believer's life. We are to follow Him.
2. Yeshua (Jesus) was baptized of JOH. He was immersed, not sprinkled.
3. To be baptized you must believe in Yeshua (Jesus).
4. To be baptized you must repent of your sins.
5. It is obvious that infants are not able to believe in Yeshua (Jesus), or to repent of sin, or to express a faith in Him, therefore infants are not to be baptized.
6. Only believing, repentant, and faithful persons are to be baptized.
7. Baptism is essential for maturity as a believer.

Can so important an act be handled so lightly? Reader...if you have not been baptized according to scripture teaching, it is imperative for you to search out the the passages relating to baptism, and ask the Ruach HaKodesh (Holy Ghost) to lead you into the truth of the Scriptures.

TEN REASONS WHY YOU SHOULD BE BAPTISED

1. Jesus Himself was baptized to set the pattern for all His followers. He said, "Thus it becometh us to fulfill all righteousness" (*MAT 3:15*).
2. Immersion in water is the only manner of baptism. Baptise means "to immerse". (Greek, Baptizo - to immerse, or to dip in.)
3. Believers are commanded to be baptized. Jesus said, "He that believeth and is baptised shall be saved; . ." (*MAR 16:16*. See also *MAT 28:19-20*.)
4. To identify ourselves with Christ's death and resurrection on our behalf. "Therefore we are buried with Him by baptism into death: . ." (*ROM 6:4*.) "Buried with him in baptism, wherein also ye are risen with him . ." (*COL 2:12*).

5. To justify God by giving public testimony that we believe the truth of His word. ". . . the publicans justified God being baptised with the baptism of JOH." (Luke 7:29). The Word of God tells us that not only JOH the Baptist, who is spoken of here, but the Lord Jesus Christ, a greater than JOH, commanded His followers to be baptised.
6. It is dangerous to reject baptism. "But the Pharisees and lawyers rejected the counsel of God against themselves, being not baptised of him." (Luke 7:30). To refuse baptism is to refuse the counsel of God.
7. To show the answer of a good conscience toward God. ". . . baptism doth also now save us (not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God) by the resurrection of Jesus Christ." (1PE 3:21).
8. Baptism required much water. Sprinkling will not do! "And JOH also was baptizing in Aenon near to Salim, because there was much water there: . . ." (JOH 3:23).
9. We must forsake traditions which make the Word of God of none effect, and follow the Lord Jesus Christ. MAR 7:13-14, "We ought to obey God rather than men." (ACT 5:29).
10. To find salvation we must repent. Repentant people do what Jesus said. He is "the Author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey Him." (Hebrews 5:9). Jesus said, "If a man love Me, he will keep My words: . . .", and "Ye are My friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you" (JOH 14:23, and 15:14).

What is the meaning of water baptism?

- It is an outward, physical expression of an inward, spiritual reality.
- It is a public declaration of a Christian's desire to be a disciple of Jesus Christ.
- The baptized person becomes identified with the *death* (going into the water), *burial* (going under the water), and *resurrection* (coming up) out of the water of Jesus Christ. Baptism represents the death of the old sin-filled person and the birth of the new person in Christ (ROM 6:3-11; COL 2:12).

Is water baptism necessary for salvation?

- Absolutely not!
- Water baptism is a public confession that saving faith has already taken place.
- There are no righteous works a man can do to be saved (EPH 2:8-9; 2 Tim. 1:9; Titus 3:5).
- Faith or belief in Jesus Christ is the only requirement for salvation (Jn. 3:16; ACT 16:31; ROM 10:9). The thief on the cross illustrates this graphically.
- The *Gospel of JOH*, whose express purpose is to clarify this meaning of faith, never teaches that baptism is necessary for eternal life.
- The *Book of ROM*, the manual of doctrine in the Bible, never designates baptism as necessary for justification. It is by faith and faith alone (ROM 5:1)
- Paul summarizes the gospel in 1CO 15: with no mention of baptism.
- Paul said, "Christ did not send me to baptize, but to preach the gospel" (1CO 1:17. Baptism is not a part of the gospel.
- Gentiles in ACT 10:47-48 already possessed the Holy Spirit (were already saved (ROM 8:9) prior to their baptism.
- Baptism is not a *requirement* for salvation, but should be a *result*.

Why should a Christian receive water baptism?

- Jesus Christ commanded it. Christian should be baptized as an act of *obedience* to express the reality of their love for Christ (Mt. 28:18-20; Jn. 14:15)
- Jesus Christ exemplified it. He was baptized to *identify* Himself with the message of JOH the Baptist and become *associated* with all those who were baptized.
- Jesus Christ is honored by the firm testimony of belief and submission to Him. Baptism is not necessary for *salvation*, but it is for *obedience*.

Should infants receive water baptism?

- NO! No person should be baptized who is not able to *understand* and *respond* to the gospel of Jesus Christ.
- A genuine belief in Jesus Christ must precede water baptism.
- Salvation springs from the *new birth*, not *natural birth* (Jn. 1:12-13; 3:5-7).
- There are no explicit references to infant baptism in the New Testament.
- Water baptism does not bring salvation, but only pictures a spiritual relationship which begins with salvation.

What is the proper method of water baptism?

- *Total immersion* seems to have been the universal practice in New Testament times.
- The primary meaning of the original Greek word "to baptize" is "to dip or immerse."
- There are other Greek words for "sprinkle" or "pour," but these are never used in the New Testament in relation to baptism.
- *Total immersion* most clearly shows the meaning of baptism as identification with Jesus Christ in His *death*, *burial*, and *resurrection* (ROM 6:3-4; COL 2:12)
- There was always the need for a *body of water* to be present in New Testament baptisms (Mk. 1:9-10; Jn. 3:23; ACT 8:36-39). No one in the New Testament was ever baptized beside a well or basin of water.