



WHITE OAK
Christian Church

Frequently Asked Questions... ...about Baptism

Frequently Asked Questions About Baptism

You are about to embark on a study of one of the most precious and important aspects of the Christian life: baptism. As such, this may be one of the most rewarding studies of your life! For more than two thousand years, followers of Jesus Christ have willingly and faithfully participated in two God-ordained sacraments that celebrate what God has done for us: communion and baptism. Both of these sacraments remind us of the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ (1 Corinthians 11:23-26; 15:3-4; Romans 6:3-5). Communion is celebrated on a regular basis and baptism is a one-time declaration of a lifetime of devotion to God.

Unfortunately, there is some confusion among people of faith about baptism. This study is designed to offer clear and straightforward answers about the most commonly asked questions people have about Christian baptism.

We based this booklet on one question. **What does the Bible teach about baptism?** Therefore, many of the scriptures about baptism are printed for you to read. Other scriptures are simply referenced by book, chapter, and verse. To receive the most from your study, we encourage you to read each passage cited.

In Psalm 119:18, King David prayed, "Open my eyes that I may see wonderful things in your Law." At the beginning of a biblical study on baptism, prayer is certainly appropriate! As you begin your study, we invite you to bow in prayer and pray something along these lines:

God, I humbly ask that You would open my mind and my heart to what Your Word teaches about baptism. As I study, may You direct my thoughts and give me insight into the scriptures I will be reading. May my heart be receptive and responsive to the leading of Your Holy Spirit. In Jesus name I pray, Amen.

WHAT IS BAPTISM?

- **It is a public declaration of a person's faith in Christ**

Baptism is a pronouncement of belief. It is like preaching a visual sermon. It is a public way of saying to everyone that you have decided to give your life to Jesus Christ.

- **It is a point of departure from your past and an entrance into the altogether new**

(2 Corinthians 5:17)

Jesus' baptism (Matthew 3:13-17) serves as the example of this. His baptism became a point of departure from His life in Nazareth (where he grew up) to the life of a traveling prophet and preacher.

- **It is the means to bringing us into union with Christ and His body, the church**

In Romans 6 we are told that we are "baptized into Christ" (v. 3) and "united with him" (v. 5). First Corinthians 12:13 says that when we were baptized we were baptized into the body of Christ, the church.

- **It is God's claim to ownership over me**

You are baptized "in the name of the Father,

Son, and Holy Spirit" (Matthew 28:19-20). To baptize in the "name of Jesus" (Acts 2:38; 8:16), or in the name of the triune God, is one and the same. We use the names of the Trinity since it was our Lord's commission to His disciples and to His church.

The phrase "in the name of" means both to call on the character and power of the one named and it means to become the "possession of" the Lord Jesus Christ.

WHAT IS THE MEANING OF BAPTISM?

Christian baptism is rich with beautiful meaning and symbolism. Consider what baptism illustrates:

- **It illustrates Christ's burial and resurrection**

"Christ died for our sins...he was buried... and he rose again." 1 Corinthians 15:3-4

"For when you were baptized, you were buried with Christ, and in baptism you were also raised with Christ." Colossians 2:12 (TEV)

- **It illustrates the cleansing of sin**

In Acts 22:16 Ananias instructed Saul (later known as Paul, the Apostle) to "Get up, be baptized and wash your sins away, calling on the name of the Lord." This is why immersion is so significant, it is a complete cleansing by which we are forgiven of all our sin. (cf. Acts 2:38).

- **It illustrates my new life as a Christian**

"When someone becomes a Christian he becomes a brand new person inside. The old life has passed away and a new life has begun!" 2 Corinthians 5:17 (TLB)

"By our baptism then, we were buried with him and shared His death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead...so also we may live a new life." Romans 6:4 (TEV)

Baptism does not make you a believer – you are baptized because you are a believer in Jesus Christ. The act of baptism alone doesn't "save" you. Christian baptism is preceded by personal faith/trust in Christ and is coupled with confession and repentance. Consider these passages:

"You are all (children) of God through faith in Christ Jesus." Galatians 3:26

"He who believes and is baptized will be saved. But he who does not believe will be condemned." Mark 16:16

"Repent and be baptized...for the forgiveness of your sins." Acts 2:38

"As they traveled along the road, they came to some water and the man said, 'Look, here is water. Why shouldn't I be baptized?' Philip said, 'If you believe with all your heart, you may.' The man answered, 'I believe that Jesus Christ is the son of God.' And he gave orders to stop the chariot. Then both Philip and the man went down into the water and Philip baptized him." Acts 8:36-38

"If you confess with your mouth, 'Jesus is Lord,' and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you confess and are saved." Romans 10:9-10

"At that time, Jesus came from Nazareth and was baptized by John in the river." Mark 1:9

- **Because Christ commands it**

"Jesus said, 'Go then, to all the people everywhere and make them disciples, baptize them in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit and teach them to obey everything I have commanded you.'" Matthew 28:19-20 (TEV)

If it was important enough for Jesus to command, isn't it important enough for us to obey? And if it is important enough for Jesus to do, isn't it important enough for us to follow?

- **Because it demonstrates you are a believer**

"Many of the Corinthians who heard him believed and were baptized." Acts 18:8

- **Because obeying Christ's command shows you know Him**

"We know that we have come to know Him, if we obey His commands." 1 John 2:3

- **Because it is the appeal we make to God for a clean conscience**

"Corresponding to that, baptism now saves you – not the removal of dirt from the flesh, but an appeal to God for a good conscience – through the resurrection of Jesus Christ." 1 Peter 3:21 (NASB)

- **Because it unites you with Christ in a very special way**

"You are all children of God through faith in Christ Jesus, for all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ." Galatians 6:26-27

- **Because you desire to be forgiven**

"Therefore let all Israel be assured of this: God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ. When the people heard this, they were cut to the heart and said to Peter and the other apostles, 'Brothers, what shall we do?' Peter replied, 'Repent and be baptized everyone of you for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.'" Acts 2:36-38

WHY BE BAPTIZED?

- **Because you want to follow Christ's example**

HOW SHOULD I BE BAPTIZED?

- **Like Jesus was baptized – by being immersed in water**

“As soon as Jesus was baptized, He came up out of the water.” Matthew 3:16

The Greek word translated “baptized/baptism” literally means to “immerse, dip under, or submerge beneath.”

For the first 1200 years of Christian history immersion was the universally accepted mode of baptism. Many of the great churches built during those years, including the Leaning Tower of Pisa, have large pools in which they immersed people.

Even Reformation leaders such as Martin Luther (Lutheran), John Calvin (Presbyterian), and John Wesley (Methodist) agreed that the accepted New Testament practice was immersion (see next column).

White Oak Christian Church is committed to “doing Bible things in Bible ways.” Therefore our practice is to baptize people by immersion.

- **Every baptism in the New Testament was by immersion**

When Jesus was baptized, the Bible uses the Greek word baptizo to describe that event.

When Jesus commanded that His disciples be baptized, he used the Greek word baptizo to instruct them how to do it.

Every baptism recorded in the New Testament was by immersion, consistently using the Greek word baptizo to describe the event.

“Then both Philip and the man went down into the water and Philip baptized him. When they came up out of the water...” Acts 8:38-39

The Apostles, consistent with Jesus’ example and command instructed new believers to be immersed into Christ, using the Greek word baptize to describe the action.

“Peter replied, ‘Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.’” Acts 2:38

- **It is the best way to picture a burial and resurrection**

“Or don’t you know that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead...we too may have new life.” Romans 6:3-4

The picture immersion portrays is compelling: just as a person lowers you into the water, Christ lowers you into the pool of His grace until every inch of your soul is clean. Buried in a watery grave, covered from head to foot with God’s love, you are washed clean by the blood of Jesus.

Consider the statements from the founders of three denominations and other church historians and scholars:

Martin Luther (Lutheran): “On this account I could wish that such as are baptized should be completely immersed into water according to the meaning of the word and the signification of the ordinance...as also without doubt it was instituted by Christ” (Works, Vol. II. p. 75, ed. 1551)

John Calvin (Presbyterian): “The very word baptize signifies to immerse, and it is certain that immersion was the practice of the primitive church.” (Institutes, Vol. XI., ch. 15, sec. 49)

John Wesley (Methodist): “We are buried with him, alluding to the ancient manner of baptizing by immersion” (Notes on N.T., Romans 6:3). “Baptized according to the custom of the first church and the rule of the Church of England, by immersion” (Journal, Vol. 1 p. 20).

F. Brenner (Roman Catholic): “Thirteen hundred years was baptism generally and ordinarily performed by the immersion of a man under water” (Work on Baptism, Augusti, Denkwurd, VII. p. 62).

Philip Scaff (Presbyterian): “Immersion, and not sprinkling, was unquestionably the original form of baptism. Baptism is to immerse in water” (History of Apostolic Church, pp. 568-569).

IS THE FORM OF BAPTISM IMPORTANT?

Many people find it difficult to believe that the prescribed form or way of being baptized is important to God. They would contend that outward symbols are irrelevant to God; He is only interested in what is in the heart. It is true that God is most concerned about our heart condition, but He often uses prescribed forms to test and demonstrate the sincerity of our hearts (i.e. our faith, trust, confidence, loyalty, obedience).

In the Old Testament cases are recorded where people ignored the form of the sacrifice and offered animals forbidden by law or had the form right but their meaning, or hearts, were all wrong (Malachi 1:8, Amos 5:21-25).

These truths can be seen in the New Testament as well in Mark 7:8-9,13 with Jesus' harsh indictment of the Pharisees:

"'You have let go of the commands of God and are holding on to the traditions of men.' And he said to them: 'You have a fine way of setting aside the commands of God in order to observe your own traditions! Thus you nullify the word of God by your tradition that you have handed down. And you do many things like that.'"

Could Jesus make the same statements to us today if we, like the Pharisees, choose to obey those traditions or forms we are comfortable with, and disregard the forms that don't suit us? They may differ from our past traditions, but inconvenient, or even humbling...but if our Lord prescribed a certain form (i.e. immersion as the way of being baptized) do we really want to disregard His clear and specific request and command?

WHO SHOULD BE BAPTIZED?

- **Every person who has believed in Christ**

According to the Scriptures, those who believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God should be baptized. The Ethiopian Eunuch asked Philip:

"Why shouldn't I be baptized?" Philip replied, "If you believe with all your heart, you may." Act. 8:36

Every person in the New Testament who was baptized first believed in who Jesus was – the Christ, the Son of the Living God. He or she also believed what Jesus did...died on the cross, was buried in a tomb, and was raised back to life

three days later.

Popular author and speaker Max Lucado has written, "We are never told to be baptized and then believe, but to come to belief, to trusting faith, and then display that decision by associating ourselves with Christ in baptism. Baptism is the initial step of a faithful heart. This decision requires significant levels of maturity." (Baptism: The Demonstration of Devotion, 1995). Note these additional scriptures.

"Those who accepted his message were baptized." Acts.2:41

"Simon himself believed and was baptized." Acts 8:13

"But when they believed Philip as he preached the Good News...and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women." Acts 8:12

- **Those who have repented of their sin**

Closely connected to belief is repentance. Peter exhorted the people at Pentecost to "Repent...and be baptized" (Acts 2:38).

Repentance means to have a change of mind. It means to make a U-turn or to do an about-face. You were going down the road of destruction, death and hell; but you repented, you turned around, changed your direction, changed your mind. Therefore, baptism is for believers who have repented of their sin.

SHOULD AN INFANT BE BAPTIZED?

Since baptism is for those who have believed and repented, we do not practice infant baptism. An infant cannot believe. An infant cannot repent. Therefore, we do not practice infant baptism.

Lewis Foster, a respected scholar who was on the translating committee for both the New King James and the New International Version of the Bible, explains the origin of sprinkling and pouring as forms of baptism:

"Although other practices have been introduced as substitutes, history sustains that these (pouring and sprinkling) are changes from the original practice of immersion. The earliest historical example of pouring occurred in about A.D. 250. This was administered because of Novation's illness and

was later called into question (Eusebius, Hist. eccl. 6, 43, 14-15). Earlier references to practices other than immersion either give preference to immersion or do not deny the originality of immersion. The Roman Catholic Church is the earliest source of authority for a change from immersion. Clement V formally recognized sprinkling (but water must flow) as valid baptism in 1305." (New Testament Teaching On Baptism. The Christian Restoration Association, 1960).

WHY DO SOME PRACTICE INFANT BAPTISM?

The practice of infant sprinkling began because of the development and distortion of two doctrines. One is called "baptismal regeneration" which says that the act of baptism alone actually washes away one's sins, or regenerates the person. The doctrine of "baptismal regeneration" is a false doctrine and it is not taught in the Bible.

The other distortion has to do with the doctrine of "original sin." Some in the church came to believe that an infant was born not only with a sinful nature (i.e. "original sin"), but also with original guilt. To them, this meant that an infant was condemned and guilty before God at birth simply because of the sin nature he inherited from Adam's disobedience (see Romans 5:12-13, 19); he was personally guilty of Adam's sin. Thus, if the child died he was destined for hell. Since some in the church believed that baptism actually saved the candidate, they began to do the next logical thing: they baptized babies believing that the act of baptism secured the child's forgiveness and salvation from condemnation.

We believe the New Testament clearly teaches baptism to be a personal response of a repentant believer in Jesus Christ. This is only possible for someone who has reached a point of maturity. Only then can he understand his separation from God because of his personal sin, and therefore understand his need to believe and trust in Jesus Christ (Acts 16:30-31), confess Christ as Lord (Romans 10:9-10), repent of his sin (Acts 3:19), and respond in obedience to Christ by being baptized (Acts 2:37-38). This point of maturity is not defined in the Bible as a certain age. Therefore the point of maturity and accountability for each person will vary.

Many denominations continue to sprinkle infants

even though there is no New Testament teaching (or example) for such a practice. Some consider it to be an act of dedication for the parents. Others see it as a sort of down payment for the infant's salvation. They say that the infant is being baptized that he/she may one day be saved, rather than to save him/her. Still others believe infants are children of God because their parents have made a commitment to Christ and are Christians.

However, we do not believe there is any biblical reason or need to have a baby baptized by any means.

WHAT HAPPENS TO CHILDREN WHO DIE BEFORE THE POINT OF MATURITY?

We believe that these children will be received into the eternal presence of Christ. The Bible teaches that eternal condemnation comes to those who have willfully sinned.

Galatians 5:19-21 describes the willful "acts" or "deeds" produced by our sinful nature. A person is guilty of these acts/deeds when they are carried out, not before (see also Ephesians 5:3-6 and Colossians 3:5-10).

Specifically, the Bible teaches that it is the sin of unbelief that causes a person to fall under God's condemnation (John 3:17-20; 8:24). A young child does not have the ability to understand the message of Christ and therefore seek repentance. As I Thessalonians 1:8-10 indicates, it is an unwillingness to obey the gospel (i.e. making a personal faith-response to the gospel message) that brings "everlasting destruction." It is those who know the truth about God and then ignore that truth who are deserving of death (see Romans 1:18-32). This is willful sin.

Deuteronomy 1:26-46 describes a time when the Israelites willfully rebelled against God. As a result, God sentenced that entire generation to die in the desert. However, He exempted young children from that fate precisely because they had no part in the willful disobedience toward Him, for they had no way of knowing good from evil (Deuteronomy 1:39).

The Bible teaches that before the point of maturity all children belong to God; He even calls children born to those who despise him "my children" (Ezekiel 16:20-22). God lays full claim to children, for in their innocence they belong to Him (Matthew 18:1-14).

No infant is capable of ignoring God's truth. A young child cannot understand what God has revealed and then reject that truth. Upon the event of their tragic death, children will be received into the presence God.

WHAT IF I WAS SPRINKLED AS AN INFANT/CHILD? WHAT SHOULD I DO?

First, you should be grateful that you had parents who cared enough about you to set you apart for God. Because of their devotion, you have an opportunity to complete their prayer by willingly submitting to Christ in His call to you to be immersed.

Second, being immersed is not a sign of disrespect for what your parents did, nor is it an act of condemnation toward them. The very opposite is true: it should be seen as the fulfillment of their prayers and best desires for you.

Be thankful for the heritage of concerned parents, but don't be negligent of your responsibility as an adult to make your personal commitment and obedience to God in baptism (Philippians 2:12-13).

CAN A CHILD BE BAPTIZED?

Yes! However, keep in mind that Biblically speaking, baptism is appropriate only for those who have made a personal decision to trust in Christ alone for their salvation.

At White Oak Christian Church, we do not baptize children unless they are mature enough to place their faith in Christ and understand the true meaning of baptism and receive Christ as their Lord and Savior. An excellent tool designed to help parents ensure that their child is mature enough and ready to respond to Christ in baptism is a study entitled, **FaithShift For Kids**. This excellent class is offered several times each year. Information is available from the Children's Department.

SHOULD A PERSON EVER BE RE-BAPTIZED?

Re-baptism is only encouraged for those who lack confidence in their initial baptism experience because they don't remember it, they were coerced, or their heart was not right with God at the time. Anyone who has fallen into a pattern of sin after having received Christ and

having been baptized should repent and seek forgiveness, but re-baptism is not necessary (Acts. 8:13-24).

DOES THE ACT OF BAPTISM ITSELF SAVE A PERSON?

No. Scripture is abundantly clear that only Jesus saves (Acts 4:12). The work of salvation is a finished work by Christ on the cross (Hebrews 9:24-28; 10:10-14). Baptism has no redemptive powers of its own. There is nothing special about the water in the river, pond, or baptistry.

Tragically, some people believe they are going to heaven when they die just because they have been baptized. They have no genuine personal faith, have never made a personal decision to receive Christ as Savior and Lord, and are banking on a hollow ceremony to save them. If baptism itself could save, why did Jesus die on the cross? If we could be saved merely by being immersed, would Jesus have had to die for our sins? No. If a person's faith is in the sacrament and not the Savior, he is trusting in a powerless ritual.

WHAT IF A PERSON IS NOT BAPTIZED? CAN HE OR SHE BE SAVED?

The Bible never specifically answers or addresses this question. It is never answered because no one ever asked, "Do I have to be baptized to be saved?" After the Gospel was an accomplished fact (i.e. Jesus had been crucified, buried, and raised back to life), the pattern of teaching in the New Testament is clear: upon placing their faith in Jesus Christ, people were instructed to be baptized. It is noteworthy that each time they responded without questioning the necessity of baptism.

This being true, consider this question, "Why isn't the person baptized?" There are three possible answers:

- **I never understood baptism**

Perhaps you were never instructed to be baptized. Maybe you've never been challenged to consider the issue. That's entirely possible. If this is the case, we urge you to give thought to what God says about baptism. This doesn't negate your faith up to this point. Part of maturity is an openness to understand and be obedient to new areas of the Christian walk.

- **I don't want to**

Let's analyze this response for a moment. God humbled himself by leaving heaven and being born in a stable. The God of the universe eats human food, feels human feelings, and dies a sinner's death. He is spat upon, beaten, stripped naked, and nailed to a cross. He takes our eternal condemnation on himself in our place. He then offers us the forgiveness of all our sins as a free gift and asks that we say yes to Him in baptism and someone responds, "I don't want to." Such a response does not make sense. Resistance of this kind points to a deeper problem of the heart. Such a person does not need a study of the sacrament. He needs a long, honest examination of the soul. The incongruity of disobedience puzzled even Jesus.

"Why do you call me 'Lord, Lord,' and do not do the things I ask?" Luke 6:46

Believers not only offer their sins, they yield their wills to Christ. In a real sense then, baptism could be viewed as the initial test of a believing heart. If one won't obey Christ in baptism, why would he obey Christ in anything else? The highest motive of doing anything is because God asks you to do it. The heart of the repentant believer says, "If you want me to be baptized in a pile of leaves, I'll do it. I may not understand every reason, but neither do I understand how you could forgive someone like me." If one is resistant to Christ's command to be baptized, one might wonder if there is genuine faith and a spirit of repentance. Someone who understands the command of Christ to be baptized and refuses to obey should not consider himself to be submitted to Christ.

- **What if I die before I can get baptized?**

What of the ones who die before they have a chance? What if I place my faith in Christ to save me and then before I can be baptized a swarm of killer bees attacks me and I die?

The answer to these kinds of extreme and hypothetical questions can be found in the character of God demonstrated to the thief on the cross (cf. Luke 23:39-43). Is it possible for an un-baptized believer to be saved? Yes, it is possible. However, it is extremely rare that an individual is unable to be baptized because he dies right after placing his faith in Christ.

Should every believer be baptized? Yes, absolutely. Should someone placing his faith in Christ be baptized as soon as possible (cf. Acts 2:41, 8:35-38, 16:30-34)? Yes, absolutely.

WHEN SHOULD I BE BAPTIZED?

As soon as you have believed in Jesus Christ as God's Son and Savior of the world.

"Those who accepted his message were baptized...that day." Acts 2:41

"But when they believed...they were baptized, both men and women." Acts 8:12

"Then Philip began with the scripture and told him the good news about Jesus. As they traveled about the road, they came to some water, and the man said, 'Look, here is water! Why shouldn't I be baptized right now?' Philip said, 'If you believe with all your heart, you may.' The man answered, 'I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God.' So they went down into the water and Philip baptized him." Acts 8:35-38

The Bible teaches we are saved by grace through faith (Eph. 2:8). In the New Testament church a person's baptism was always the immediate expression of faith, not separate from it. At White Oak Christian Church, our desire is to restore the original intent and practice of baptism found in the Scriptures. Therefore we encourage people to be baptized at the point they are ready to make a commitment to Christ.

As soon as you have decided to receive Christ into your life, you can and should be baptized – there is no reason to delay being baptized. If you wait until you are "perfect" you'll never feel "good enough!"

I'M READY TO BE BAPTIZED, NOW WHAT?

To schedule a baptism, call the church office and ask to speak with someone from the Outreach Office, or mark your Connection Card in the weekend program and we will call you.

Baptisms are performed in any of our worship services or can be done immediately following services on Sunday morning.

If you would like to be baptized in front of a smaller, more intimate group (a few friends, family members, etc.) you can schedule your baptism for any day/evening of the week. We are very flexible and eager to help in any way that we can.

WHAT SHOULD I WEAR WHEN I AM BAPTIZED?

You will be given an "I Have Decided" t-shirt to wear. You can simply bring a pair of dark shorts or slacks to wear with it. Remember to bring dry clothes to wear after the baptism. Private changing rooms are provided along with hair dryers and plenty of clean towels.

WILL I HAVE TO SAY ANYTHING?

Yes. You will be asked to repeat the words of the Good Confession as a public profession of your personal faith in Jesus Christ: "I believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the Living God, my Lord and my Savior."

CAN MY FAMILY BE BAPTIZED TOGETHER?

Yes! If each family member fully understands the meaning of baptism, and each one has personally placed his/her trust in Christ for salvation, we encourage families to be baptized at the same time. It is a wonderful expression of commitment. Young children who wish to be baptized are asked to meet with our Children's Minister for a pre-baptism conversation.

However, it is important to remember that baptism is a personal decision, not a family tradition. It is unwise to delay your baptism while waiting on other family members to make their own decision to accept Christ, particularly children. This puts an undue pressure on them, and delays your obedience and response to Christ.

DO I HAVE TO BE IMMERSUED TO BECOME A PARTNER OF WHITE OAK CHRISTIAN CHURCH?

It is a requirement that everyone becoming a partner of White Oak Christian Church be an immersed believer in Christ. If you were immersed at an earlier point in your life, it is not necessary to be re-immersed to become a partner of White Oak Christian Church. However, if you have never been immersed, we ask that you be baptized the way Jesus commanded and demonstrated himself, even though you may have been "confirmed" as a child.

SOME CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

We want to teach and practice everything the Bible teaches about baptism. We are not interested in making it more important than Scripture does. On the other hand, we are not willing to make it any less important, either. We believe that the answers provided in this study reflect what the Bible clearly teaches in regard to this sacrament.

Don't allow baptism to be something it is not. Apart from the cross it has no significance. If you are trusting the water to save you, you have missed the message of grace.

Don't prevent baptism from being what God intended. It is a precious symbol of God's grace. It is a beautiful illustration of our union with Christ. It is a willing plunge into the power and promise of Christ. In baptism God signs and seals our conversion to Him. This is no optional command of Christ. This is no trivial issue. Baptism is a holy event. It is not to be taken lightly. The ritual of washing (Acts 22:16) signifies our admission that apart from Christ we are dirty, but in Christ we are pure. The ritual of burial (Romans 6:1-5) signified that we are willing to die to sin and self and that we can be made alive again because of Him. Christ's death becomes my death. Christ's resurrection becomes my resurrection.

For all we may not understand about baptism, we can be sure of this: baptism is a holy moment commanded by Jesus to be obeyed by all who place their faith in Him.

Never forget the words of Christ at His own baptism:

"Let it be so now; it is proper for us to do this to fulfill all righteousness." Matthew 3:15