

Water Baptism

- Is Water Baptism essential or is it optional
 - What is the Scriptural manner of Water Baptism?
 - If one is christened as an infant does he need adult baptism?

If Water Baptism is to be by *immersion*, then why doesn't the Bible plainly state that Water Baptism is to be by immersion? The answer is -- that it does -- because the word "*baptism*" means exactly that -- it means, "*to immerse*."

JESUS' FIRST RECORDED UTTERANCE OF PUBLIC MINISTRY



When Jesus was baptized in water, He said to John, who baptized Him, "*Let it* -- [referring to being baptized in water by immersion] -- *be so on this occasion **for we ought to fulfill every religious duty***" (Matthew 3:15 Weymouth Translation)

This statement is the first recorded utterance of our Lord's public ministry and in it He established the *fact* and *mode* of Water Baptism.

JESUS' LAST RECORDED UTTERANCE OF PUBLIC MINISTRY

In the very last recorded utterance of our Lord's public ministry He commands the perpetuation of adult Water Baptism when, in Matthew 28:19, He said to His followers, "*Go ye therefore, and teach all nation, **baptizing them*** -- [that is believers] -- *in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.*" With this plain command of our Lord, how can Water Baptism ever be optional?

Jesus not only commanded His followers to baptize their converts (Matthew 28:19), but He also commanded them to "*teach*" their converts to "*observe all things which He had commanded them,*" that is, **they were to teach others to baptize.**

The early followers of Christ, living in the powerful light of Christ's farewell charge, were quick to follow up salvation with Water Baptism. Peter, on the day of Pentecost, being fully controlled by the freshly outpouring Spirit of truth, taught those listening to his message the importance of Water Baptism in conjunction with salvation (Acts 2:38) and, also during his visit of Cornelius' house, **commanded** that those who had received the gift of the Holy Spirit be baptized in water (Acts 10:38).

Careful reading of the book of Acts, which records the history of the early church, will show that **all** new converts were baptized in water.

Water Baptism, by immersion, contains the Gospel message and makes this message so simple and easy to understand for every new convert to be able to proclaim his faith in Christ's death, burial and resurrection. However, it must be kept in mind that because baptism depicts, and safeguards, God's plan of salvation, **IF** man changes the form of baptism he changes its purpose and meaning.



If one takes a child, who is unaccountable, and sprinkles -- or pours -- water on his head to baptize him, he teaches an entirely different plan of salvation than that which is in God's Word. He says to the world, by this act, that man does not need to trust in Christ's death and resurrection alone for salvation -- he implies that one does not need a change of heart to be *saved* -- but, rather, that "*man's works can save him.*"

The loss of the safeguard of the doctrine of Water Baptism is responsible for the tendency toward teaching salvation by works, instead of by the death and resurrection of Christ, because, when man changes the *form* of Water Baptism he loses the picture of the basis of salvation, that is --- **the death and the resurrection of Jesus Christ.**

Water Baptism, by immersion, constantly reminds one that only the death and resurrection of the Son of God is sufficient for one's salvation. "*If thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus and shalt believe in thy heart **THAT GOD HATH RAISED HIM FROM THE DEAD** thou shalt be saved*" (Romans 10:9).

Jesus gave the Church only two ordinances -- ***The Lord's Supper*** and ***Water Baptism!*** When these are carried out as He commanded, they are testimonials of "*His Gospel,*" that proclaims -- that He died for our sins and rose for our justification, in order that we might be declared "*justified*" before Almighty God.

In every public apostolic address throughout the whole book of Acts, when the climax is reached, they proclaimed "*that God raised Jesus from the dead.*" It is imperative for one's salvation, not only that he believes "*in his heart*" the fact of Christ's death and resurrection, but, also, that he confess this fact of his trust in Christ's death and resurrection **OPENLY** (Romans 10:9)

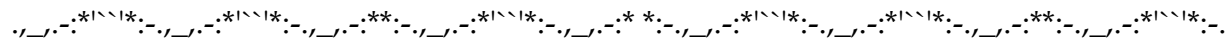
Water Baptism by immersion does just that!

By the act of Water Baptism, by immersion, one demonstrates his faith -- (confesses his belief) -- in the fact that Christ died for *his* sins, was buried, and rose again for *his* justification.

If any vandal should seek to tear down the Bunker Hill monument, we would cry out, "*Never let it be destroyed, because it perpetuates the memory of our nation's birth! Ever let it stand!*"



God gave us Water Baptism by immersion, as a monument of our faith and, because it perpetuates the memory of, and is a memorial to, Christ's death and resurrection, we, too, should cry out, "*Never let it be destroyed. Ever let it stand!*"



2. As an adult believer, one should be baptized in water, by immersion, because baptism proclaims "*outwardly*" what took place "*inwardly*" at the time of one's salvation.

Because there is a death and resurrection that takes place *spiritually* in one's life when he is "*born-again*" of the Spirit, a *spiritual* baptism takes place as a result of the divine operation of God, and, as a result, one is baptized by the Holy Spirit, into the Mystical Body of Jesus Christ.

At Water Baptism, this "*inward*" action of the Holy Spirit's baptizing one into the Mystical Body of Christ is expressed "*outwardly*" as a sign, or physical display, as the minister baptizes one into water by immersion.

One cannot see faith, however, one can see baptism!

When one is baptized, by immersion, he is identifying with Christ's death and is saying, "*When Christ died it was as if I died --- I am crucified with Him -- my old nature is dead to the world and alive to God because I am identified with Christ's death and resurrection*" (See Galatians 2:20, Ephesians 2:5-6 and Romans 6:11). - And, in order to be alive to God one must be dead to self, as one goes down into the water of baptism, it is not only

symbolic of Christ's death, but it is also symbolic of one's own death -- *a complete laying down of one's own self-life into death!*

Buried in the Likeness of Christ's Death

Jesus said, in Luke 12:50, "I have a baptism to be baptized with." Since, at the time He made this statement, John, the Baptist, in the Jordan River, had already baptized him in water the "baptism" that Jesus is referring to here is the "baptism into death." Despite the fact that His will, surrendered to His Father's will and plan, was already "buried" and that he was already dead to self, He, nevertheless, as the dark hour of Gethsemane and Calvary drew near, longed to finish His sacrifice.

On another occasion, when Jesus' two disciples asked to sit, the one at His right hand and the other at His left, in Christ's kingdom (Mark 10:35-37), Jesus again emphasized this concept of *dying to self*, when He answered them "Ye know not what ye ask, are you able to be baptized with the baptism that I am (being) baptized with?" (Matthew 20:22). Here again, when Jesus speaks of "baptism," He is referring to His "baptism into death" and He is showing His followers that they, too, are to share in this "baptism into death," of which Water Baptism is symbolic.

Romans 6:3-5 states, "Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into His death? Therefore we are buried with Him by baptism into death...we have been planted together in the likeness of His death." Another important Scripture that shows Water Baptism is to be a symbolic of death is found in 1 Corinthians 15:29, that says, "Else what shall they do which are baptized for the dead? If the dead are not raised at all, why then are they baptized for the dead?"

A misunderstanding of the meaning of this text has led some to interpret this passage as referring to what they call, "*substitutionary baptism,*" where some, whose friends had died without baptism, were being baptized, representatively, *for* them. However, one person can no more consecrate himself for another person than he can transfer his natural, or spiritual, life to another person.

A correct view of what constitutes real baptism
will show the inconsistency of any such procedure
as a "*substitutionary baptism.*"

It was because assaults had been made upon the faith of some Christians at Corinth as to their belief in the "*resurrection of the dead,*" that the Apostle Paul is sustaining, and elaborating upon in this passage of 1 Corinthians 15:12-29.

Note closely verse 29! As part of Paul's refuting the position that there was no resurrection of the dead, he argues the fact that these Christians had been baptized, and that their baptism signified, or symbolized, death. And to illustrate the inconsistency of this erroneous new position by some, that there was no resurrection of the dead, Paul

Diorama of Water Baptism

