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 <u>state</u> 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 <u>for we ought to fulfill every religious duty</u>" (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 RECOIRDED UTTERNACE 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, <u>baptizing them</u> — [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.

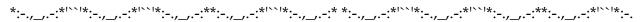
The early followers of Christ, living in the powerful light of Christ's farewell charge, were quick to follow up salvation with Water Baptism. Peter, on the day of Pentecost, being fully controlled by the freshly outpouring Spirit of truth, taught those listening to his message the importance of Water 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.

See Acts <u>2:38 & 41</u> -- <u>8:12 & 38</u> -- <u>9:18</u> -- <u>10:47-48</u> -- <u>16:15 & 33</u> -- <u>18:8</u> -- <u>19:1-7</u> -- and -- <u>22:16</u>

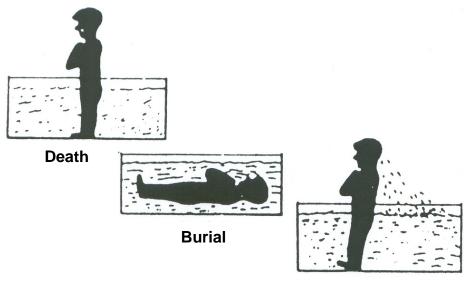
WHY IS BAPTISM BY IMMERSION SO IMPORTANT?

The purpose of this study on the subject of Water Baptism is to enable the believer to understand the *spiritual* significance of this Christ-ordained rite so that he will not only come to fully appreciate the deep and beautiful meaning that God intended to be imbedded in this magnificent emblematic act of faith, but, also, so that he might obtain the blessing and benefit that is such a part of this ordinance that Jesus left us.



As an adult believer one should be baptized in water, by immersion, because water baptism depicts God's plan of salvation and, therefore, becomes a way in which one can "preach" of his faith in Christ's death and resurrection.

Because Water Baptism, by immersion, depicts a grave, or burial, when the believer goes down into this <u>water grave</u>, he is literally depicting Christ's death — "we are buried with Him in baptism" (Colossians 2:12). And, as the believer comes up out of the water – this watery grave – he depicts the resurrection of Jesus Christ — "that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in the newness of life, we shall be also in the likeness of His resurrection" (Romans 6:4-5).



Resurrection

Water Baptism, by immersion, demonstrates the believer's faith in Christ's resurrection by an act that is closely symbolic of that which he enacted for us – that is, His *RESURRECTION!*

Water Baptism, by immersion, contains the Gospel massage 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, <u>IF</u> 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 they heart <u>THAT GOD HATH RAISED HIM</u> <u>FROM THE DEAD</u> 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 "<u>that God raised Jesus from the dead</u>." 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 <u>OPENLY</u> (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 <u>spiritually</u> in one's life when he is "born-again" of the Spirit, a <u>spiritual</u> 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 -- <u>a complete</u> <u>laying down of one's own self-life into death!</u>

Buried in the Likeness of Christ's Death

Jesus said, in Luke 12:50, "I have a <u>baptism</u> 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 <u>into death</u>." 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, <u>for</u> 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."

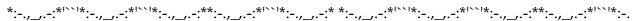
It was because assaults had been made upon the faith of some Christians at Corinth as to their belief in the "resurrection of the dead," that the Apostle Paul is sustaining, and elaborating upon in this passage of 1 Corinthians 15:12-29.

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

inquires wherein would be the wisdom, or value, of such a consecration to death, (as baptism suggests), *if* this new theory that the dead did not rise, were true.

The Apostle poses the argument that, if there is no resurrection of the dead, then those who have died in Christ have perished, and, if such be the case, and there is no future hope beyond the grave, then why should Christians consecrate their lives unto death?

Paul assures these believers, that, when they submitted to Water Baptism, by immersion, they had consecrated themselves to be "dead with Christ" — they were baptized unto His death, as a result, dying to their old, Adamic nature, they, therefore, would share in the glorious resurrection with Christ, the Second Adam, the Giver of Life! (1 Corinthians 15:45)



As an adult believer, one should be baptized in water, by immersion, because baptism declares one's total subjection to Christ, one's willingness to obey every command of Christ Jesus.

Like the wedding ring, that is an "outward" symbol of one's solemn promise to love and be devoted to their mate, Water Baptism is an "outward" sign – or symbol – of one's solemn promise to love and be devoted to Jesus Christ.

1 Corinthians 10:2 speaks of all Israel being "baptized" into Moses when they passed through the Red Sea because, when they passed through the Red Sea, it meant that they were willing to go all the way with Moses. Crossing the Red Sea brought them to the place of "no return," -- they had "burned all their bridges behind them" -- they were "baptized unto Moses."

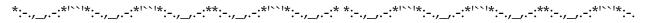
Likewise, when one follows Jesus Christ through the waters of baptism, he, too, is pledging himself to Jesus Christ as his Leader, and publicly avowing to go all the way with Jesus Christ — to be in total subjection to Him all the days of his life.

Water Baptism is a step of obedience that compliments and completes the picture of Christ's death and resurrection. "He that believeth <u>and is baptized</u> shall be saved (Mark 16:16).

If a believer has been instructed and has the light of God's Word on Water Baptism he must, if he is to have close and intimate fellowship with Christ, obey Christ's command to be baptized because, according to 1 Samuel 14:22-23, disobedience is on the level with *witchcraft* and, as this passage goes on to say, "Obedience is better than sacrifice."

1 Peter 3:21 speaks of baptism as providing one with a "good conscience toward God" because, as water *outwardly* cleanses and removes filth and grime, Water Baptism, by demonstrating what one believes to be his through the death and resurrection of

Jesus Christ, is a sign of <u>spiritual cleansing</u>, as *inward* cleansing and a peace before God that comes from the knowledge that one has obeyed Him.



4. As an adult believer, one should be baptized in water, by immersion, because baptism is an act of <u>IDENTIFICATION</u> with Christ.

In the early days of the Church, baptism was a declaration that the believe was *definitely* a part of that group of despised and hated people who were called Christians, the "cost" of baptism was, often, persecution, be ostracized from one's family, and shunned by neighbors and friends, and maybe even *death*!

The act that was the final declaration of *identification* with Christianity was Water Baptism because, as long as one just "gathered with" Christians, he was tolerated, however, when once he submitted to Water Baptism, he declared to all the world, "I take my stand with thee folks. I belong to this despised group. I am now identified with Christ" and, upon being so identified, the believer then entered into the fellowship of the sufferings of Christ.

Without submitting to public baptism, one might be able to keep his faith strictly a secret and thus avoid unpleasantness and suffering, however, once he submitted to public baptism, he had burned his bridges behind him, and, therefore, there was now only one way to go – *FORWARD!*

HAPPINESS DEPENDS UPON ONE'S OBEDIENCE TO GOD'S COMMANDS

- In the Bible, note the many references to the *REJOICING* that came either in connection with, or after, one's baptism!
- In Acts 2:41 we are told that, "they that GLADLY received the Word and were baptized" and, then in verse 46 goes on to tell us that, afterward they ate together, "with GLADNESS and singleness of heart."
- In Acts 8:39 we are told that when the eunuch was baptized he "went on his way REJOICING!"
- In Acts 16:34 we are told that, after the Philippian jailer was baptized, he "REJOICED GREATLY."
- In Matthew 3:13-17, when Jesus is baptized in water, His Father speaks from heaven and says, "This is My beloved Son, in Whom I am well pleased." If God was well pleased when His Son was baptized, He certainly is, likewise, well pleased when we are baptized!

Diorama of Water Baptism

