

The Baptism of Jesus

WWJ: Message Seven (000312PM)

One of the richest studies for a disciple of Jesus is to follow His days in the Gospels. If you read closely the New Testament record you find a reference to specific days in the ministry of Jesus.

By comparing the four gospel accounts we find there are 52 “days” chronicled in the life of our Lord Jesus Christ. The first one was one of the most celebrated. We call it Christmas. On that night God sent a celestial sound and light show to herald the birth of the King of the Universe into human affairs. The Eternal One became an infant, and was born in a stable! The last day is His ascension to heaven.

The Life of Christ may be divided into seven key days which together frame the entire earthly life of Christ!

His Birth: Bethlehem

His Baptism: Jordan River

His Temptation: Wilderness

His Transfiguration: Mt. Hermon

His Crucifixion: Golgotha

His Resurrection: Garden Tomb

His Ascension: Mt. Of Olives

In Mark 1 we find the second key day of the Life of Christ. It was the day the small door leading to the carpenter’s shop closed for the last time. Gone would be the hours of wonder-filled talks the local folks had enjoyed with the kindest man they ever had met. No more would the wide eyes of children be seen looking wistfully off as stories from the Scriptures of David and Elijah and Moses were shared seemingly with an eyewitness aura about them.

As the meek and lowly Carpenter headed toward the Jordan, He had to wind His way through the crowds. His cousin John was preaching at the River’s edge. A group of scowling Pharisees was standing off to the side as the Baptist fiery words aimed at them told of their utter viper-like lack of contrition was excluding them from his baptism of repentance. Looking back at the crowds John was struck by the serenity of One confidently striding to the waters edge. As he looked into the eyes of Jesus he saw for the first time in any man such purity, holiness and truth that the same lips that denied the wicked false religionists now were disqualifying himself. In the presence of Jesus John saw his own sinfulness. But today after a protest, John yielded to the Master that day and baptized the Christ.

This is not only the 2nd of the 7 big days in Christ's life; it is also the 17th of the 250 "events" detailed in the Four Gospels. Here are the others:

BIRTH AND PREPARATION OF JESUS CHRIST		Matthew	Mark	Luke	John
1.	Luke's purpose in writing	1:1-4			
2.	God became a human being				1:1-18
3.	The ancestors of Jesus	1:1-17		3:23-38	
4.	An angel promises the birth of John to Zacharias			1:5-25	
5.	An angel promises the birth of Jesus to Mary			1:26-38	
6.	Mary visits Elizabeth			1:39-56	
7.	John the Baptist is born			1:57-80	
8.	An angel appears to Joseph	1:18-25			
9.	Jesus is born in Bethlehem			2:1-7	
10.	Shepherds visit Jesus			2:8-20	
11.	Mary and Joseph bring Jesus to the temple			2:21-40	
12.	Visitors arrive from eastern lands	2:1-12			
13.	The escape to Egypt	2:13-18			
14.	The return to Nazareth	2:19-23			
15.	Jesus speaks with the religious teachers			2:41-52	
16.	John the Baptist prepares the way for Jesus	3:1-12	1:1-8	3:1-17	
17.	John baptizes Jesus	3:13-17	1:9-11	3:21, 22	

When Jesus was baptized He was "fulfilling all righteousness" as Matthew 3:15 states it. So baptism was Jesus identifying Himself with sinners. On the Cross, he would bear their sins; and His perfect righteousness will be imputed to them (2 Cor. 5:21). But in God's perfect plan this act of baptism was a necessary part of the work of Jesus for those who would be saved. So this first public event of Christ's ministry was rich in meaning:

- 1) Christ's Baptism pictures His death and resurrection (cf. Luke 12:50);
- 2) Christ's Baptism pictures the significance of Christian baptism;
- 3) Christ's Baptism pictures His first public identification with those whose sins he would bear (Is. 53:11; 1 Pet. 3:18); and
- 4) Christ's Baptism pictures a public affirmation of His being the Messiah by the testimony of God who spoke from heaven.¹

Lets read about this second major "Day" in the Life of Christ! Our text is Mark 1:9-11.

So why did Christ seek baptism?

¹John F. MacArthur, Jr., *The MacArthur Study Bible*, (Dallas: Word Publishing) 1997.

1. GOD WAS APPROVING OF THE PREPARED CHRIST. Psalm 2:7 "I will declare the decree: The LORD has said to Me, 'You [are] My Son, Today I have begotten You. (NKJV)
2. JOHN WAS INTRODUCING THE PROMISED SAVIOR. John 1:29 The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him, and said, "Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world! (NKJV)
3. JESUS WAS IDENTIFYING WITH US THE FALLEN HUMAN RACE Hebrews 2:17 Therefore, in all things He had to be made like [His] brethren, that He might be a merciful and faithful High Priest in things [pertaining] to God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people. (NKJV)
4. THE SPIRIT OF GOD WAS EMPOWERING THE WORK OF REDEMPTION. Hebrews 9:14 how much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without spot to God, cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living God? (NKJV)

WHAT ARE THE MODES OF BAPTISM?

The Christian church knew no form of baptism but immersion until the Middle Ages, when the Roman Catholic church-which itself had previously always baptized by immersion introduced the practice of sprinkling or pouring. The great Catholic theologian Thomas Aquinas (1225-1274) said, "In immersion the setting forth of the burial of Christ is more plainly expressed, in which this manner of baptizing is more commendable." The Catholic Church did not recognize other modes until the Council of Ravenna, held in France in 1311. It was from the Catholic Church that Lutheran and Reformed churches inherited the form of sprinkling or pouring. The Church of England did not begin the practice of sprinkling until 1645. The Eastern Orthodox Church has never permitted any mode but immersion.²

There are differences of long standing concerning the mode of baptism. Part of the problem is that the word *baptism* is actually an untranslated word; having been incorporated into English through transliteration of the Greek word *baptisma* (verb, *baptizo*). Another part of the confusion is as to how the thousands in Jerusalem around Pentecost could have been immersed. Look at Acts **2:41 those who ... received his word were baptized. . . about three thousand**. Peter's use of a specific number suggests records were kept of conversions and baptisms. Archeological work on the south side of the temple mount has uncovered numerous Jewish *mikvahs*, large baptistry-like facilities where Jewish worshipers would immerse themselves in ritual purification before entering the temple. More than enough existed to facilitate the large number of baptisms in a short amount of time.

Over the centuries three modes of baptism have been developed and are being practiced today: sprinkling, pouring, and immersion. The defense for each of the modes

²MacArthur, John F., *The MacArthur New Testament Commentary*, (Chicago: Moody Press) 1983.

is as follows.

- (1) **POURING OR AFFUSION.** Historically, pouring was applied by the one baptizing pouring water three times over the head of the one being baptized—once for each member of the Trinity. It is argued that pouring best illustrates the work of the Holy Spirit bestowed on the person (Acts 2:17–18). Phrases such as “went down into the water” (Acts 8:38) and “coming up out of the water” (Mark 1:10), it is claimed, can relate to pouring just as well as immersion. The *Didache*, written early in the second century, stated,
“But concerning baptism, thus shall ye baptize. Having first recited all these things, baptize in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit in living (running) water. But if thou has not living water, then baptize in other water; and if thou art not able in cold, then in warm. But if thou hast neither, then pour water on the head thrice in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.”
The inference is that although the early church employed immersion, it allowed for pouring. It appears that both of these modes were in existence as early as the second century. Further support for the pouring mode is claimed from early pictorial illustrations showing the baptismal candidate standing in the water with the minister pouring water on his head. And finally, in the household baptisms of Cornelius (Acts 10:48) and the Philippian jailer (Acts 16:33) it would appear more likely that pouring rather than immersion was employed.
- (2) **SPRINKLING OR ASPERSION.** In the early centuries sprinkling was reserved for the sick or those too weak to receive public baptism by immersion or pouring. Sprinkling was not accepted in general usage until the thirteenth century. Two precedents are often cited in support of sprinkling. In the Old Testament, Levites were cleansed when water was sprinkled on them (Num. 8:5–7; 19:8–13). Hebrews 9:10 refers to these ritual cleansings as “baptisms” (translated “washings” in the NASB). In the third century, Cyprian declared that it was not the amount of water nor the method of baptism that cleansed from sin; rather, where the faith of the recipient was genuine, sprinkling was as effective as another mode.
- (3) **IMMERSION.** It is generally acknowledged that the early church immersed the people coming for baptism. A lexical study of *baptizo* indicates it means to “dip, immerse.” Oepke indicates *baptizo* means “to immerse” and shows how the word has been used: “to sink a ship,” “to sink (in the mud),” “to drown,” and “to perish.” This basic meaning accords with the emphasis of Scripture: Jesus was baptized by John “in the Jordan” and He came up “out of the water” (Mark 1:9–10; cf. Acts 8:38). On the other hand, the Greek has words for *sprinkle* and *pour* that are not used for baptism. The many pools in Jerusalem would have been used for immersion and would likely have been used to immerse a large group like the 3,000 on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2:41). It is also known that proselytes to Judaism were self-immersed, and immersion was also the mode practiced by the early church. Immersion best

illustrates the truth of death and resurrection with Christ in Romans 6.3

REMEMBER WHAT NEW TESTAMENT BAPTISM IS:

Christian Baptism is an ordinance immediately instituted by Christ himself, and designed to be observed in the Church until the end of the age. Baptism means identification. In New Testament baptism it involves identification with Christ in His death and resurrection. Being baptized in the name of Christ (Acts 2:38) stresses association with Christ. Although Romans 6:4–5 refers to Spirit baptism and not water baptism, the passage nonetheless illustrates the meaning of water baptism. It is a public declaration that the believer has been united to Christ by faith in His death and resurrection. Immersion is the most appropriate mode of baptism, not only because the Greek word behind it connotes immersion but even more importantly because that is the only mode that symbolizes burial and resurrection.

1. **BAPTISM ALWAYS PORTRAYS *my new relationship with God***. Matthew 28:19-20 Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: 20 Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, [even] unto the end of the world. Amen. (KJV)
2. **BAPTISM ANNOUNCES MY PLEDGE *of allegiance to Christ, as I am baptized into the name of the Triune God, and fellowship with Him***. 1 Corinthians 12:13 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. (KJV) Galatians 3:26-27 For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus. 27 For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ. (KJV)
3. **BAPTISM ALWAYS PARALLELS *a confession of faith*** [Acts 2:38, 41; 8:12; 9:17-18; 10:45, 48; 16:30-33]
4. **BAPTISM WAS ALWAYS PART *of the obedience of faith***. Faith demands action, and an immediate action is baptism!
5. **BAPTISM WAS ALWAYS PRESENTED *as a command***. An unbaptized Christian is alien to the NT. Baptism was not an option, it was obedience to a command.
6. **BAPTISM WAS ALWAYS ONLY FOR THOSE WHO HAD ALREADY PERSONALLY *confessed Christ***. Only believers were baptized. No infants or children that could not confess Him for themselves were baptized!
7. **BAPTISM WAS ALWAYS TO PORTRAY *purification***. [Acts 2:38; 22:16; Titus 3:5; Hebrews 10:22; 1 Peter 3:21; Revelation. 1.5]

IS ANYONE SAVED BY BAPTISM?

3 Enns, Paul, *The Moody Handbook of Theology*, (Chicago, Ill.: Moody Press) 1996.

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Acts 18:25 the way of the Lord. Despite his knowledge of the Old Testament, Apollos did not fully understand Christian truth. John's baptism was to prepare Israel for the Messiah's arrival. Apollos accepted that message, even acknowledging that Jesus of Nazareth was Israel's Messiah. He did not, however, understand such basic Christian truths as the significance of Christ's death and resurrection, the ministry of the Holy Spirit, and the church as God's new witness people. He was a redeemed OT believer (v. 24).⁴

When Paul arrived back in Ephesus, he met twelve men who professed to be Christian "disciples" but whose lives gave evidence that something was lacking. Paul asked them, "Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?" (Acts 19:2, NIV, NASB, NKJV) The question was important because *the witness of the Spirit is the one indispensable proof that a person is truly born again* (Rom. 8:9, 16; 1 John 5:9–13), and you receive the Spirit when you believe on Jesus Christ (Eph. 1:13).

Their reply revealed the vagueness and uncertainty of their faith, for they did not even know that the Holy Spirit had been given! As disciples of John the Baptist, they knew that there was a Holy Spirit, and that the Spirit would one day baptize God's people (Matt. 3:11; Luke 3:16; John 1:32–33). It is possible that these men were Apollos' early "converts" and therefore did not fully understand what Christ had done.

It is important to note that God's pattern for today is given in Acts 10:43–48: sinners hear the Word, they believe on Jesus Christ, they *immediately* receive the Spirit, and then they are baptized. The Gentiles in Acts 10 did not receive the Spirit by means of water baptism or by the laying on of the Apostles' hands (Acts 8:14–17).

The fact that these men did not have the Spirit dwelling within was proof that they had never truly been born again. But they had been baptized by John's baptism, the same baptism that the Apostles had received! (see Acts 1:21–22) What was wrong with them?

Paul explained to them that John's baptism was a baptism of repentance that *looked forward* to the coming of the promised Messiah, while Christian baptism is a baptism that *looks back* to the finished work of Christ on the cross and His victorious resurrection. John's baptism was on "the other side" of Calvary and Pentecost. It was correct for its day, but now that day was ended. Keep in mind that John the Baptist was a prophet who ministered under the old dispensation (Matt. 11:7–14). The Old Covenant was ended, not by John at the Jordan, but by Jesus Christ at Calvary (Heb. 10:1–18). The baptism of John was important to the Jews of that time (Matt. 21:23–32), but it is no longer valid for the church today. In a very real sense, these twelve men were like "Old Testament believers" who were anticipating the coming of the Messiah. Certainly Paul explained to the men many basic

⁴John F. MacArthur, Jr., *The MacArthur Study Bible*, (Dallas: Word Publishing) 1997.

truths that Luke did not record. Then he baptized them, for their first “baptism” was not truly Christian baptism. 5

BAPTISM WAS AN IMPERATIVE IN THE 1ST CENTURY!

New Testament baptism had its origin in the command of Christ to make disciples and baptize them (Matt. 28:19). In the origination of this ordinance there is a particular order established; the first act was to make disciples, then those disciples were to be baptized. This is the pattern that is carried out in the book of Acts.

- ✓ Peter commanded that his hearers should first repent, then be baptized (Acts 2:38). Only those who heard the gospel, understood and responded to it through faith and repentance, could be baptized. The result was that the people received the Word, then were baptized (Acts 2:41).
- ✓ Those who responded to Philip’s message first believed, then were baptized (Acts 8:12),
- ✓ similarly with the Ethiopian (Acts 8:38),
- ✓ with Paul (Acts 9:18),
- ✓ the Caesarean Gentiles (Acts 10:48),
- ✓ Lydia (Acts 16:14–15),
- ✓ the Philippian jailer (Acts 16:32–33),
- ✓ and Crispus (Acts 18:8).

All of these references indicate that baptism follows belief; repentance and faith precede the ordinance of baptism.

For a moment let me take you on a survey of the record of Acts. One observation will strike you if you notice the pattern; baptism is always mentioned in the closest possible association with conversion.

- ✓ As soon as the three thousand souls converted at Pentecost, they were immediately baptized (Acts 2:41).
- ✓ As soon as the Ethiopian believed in Christ, he stopped his chariot so that he could be baptized (8:38).
- ✓ As soon as Paul received back his sight after his conversion, he was baptized (9:18).
- ✓ As soon as Cornelius and his household were saved, Peter “ordered them to be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ” (10:48).
- ✓ As soon as unbelievers in Corinth were being won to Jesus Christ, they were also being baptized (18:8).
- ✓ As soon as Paul found some disciples of John in Ephesus who had only been baptized for repentance, he told them about Jesus, the one for whom John was merely preparing the way, and when they believed “they were baptized in the

name of the Lord Jesus” (19:1-5).

- ✓ In the context of the Great Commission, baptism is synonymous with salvation, which is synonymous with becoming a disciple. As already emphasized, discipleship *is* Christian life, not an optional, second level of it.⁶

Listen to the leading theologians, Bible Dictionaries and Theology works. "Baptism has no part in the work of salvation, but it is a God-ordained and God-commanded accompaniment of salvation. Jesus said, "He who has believed and has been baptized shall be saved; but he who has disbelieved shall be condemned" (Mark 16:16). Jesus made clear that it is disbelief, not failure to be baptized, that precludes salvation; but He could not possibly have made the divine association of salvation and baptism more obvious than He does in that statement."

What was on the Apostles' minds as they lived out what Jesus had taught them? Peter's exhorted his unbelieving hearers at Pentecost: "Repent, and let each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ" (Acts 2:38). This means that salvation, and the obedience that follows were as closely associated as possible.

The same association shows up in Paul's writings. Listen to his description of unity in Christ: "There is one body and one Spirit, just as also you were called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all who is over all and through all and in all" (Eph. 4:4-6).

"A person is saved by God's grace alone working through his faith as a gift of God (Eph. 2:8). But by God's own declaration, the act of baptism is His divinely designated sign of the believer's identification with His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. Baptism is a divinely commanded act of faith and obedience."

We need to exhort all who come to faith in Jesus that they should be baptized as soon as possible. This does not assure, ratify or confirm their salvation. Rather it is their public testimony to salvation in obedience to their newfound Lord. When we are called to Christ, we are called not only to salvation but also to obedience. The first public act of which should be baptism in His name⁷.

Baptized for the remission of sins? 'For' can mean "because of" or "in order to". Jesse James was not wanted 'for' robbery, he was wanted "because of" So we are not baptized for our sins to be forgiven, but because they have been. So the waters of baptism symbolize to those who enter: cleansing blood (I P 3:21; I J 1:7) and the enveloping spirit (I Cor 12:13) as we have participation in the atoning death and glorious resurrection of our Savior (Morris, Rev. p 465.)

⁶ MacArthur, John F., *The MacArthur New Testament Commentary*, (Chicago: Moody Press) 1983.

⁷ Adapted from Matthew by MacArthur, John F., *The MacArthur New Testament Commentary*, (Chicago: Moody Press) 1983.

APPENDIX

WHAT WAS PETER TALKING ABOUT?

3:20 disobedient ... in the days of Noah. Peter further explains that the abyss is inhabited by bound demons who have been there since the time of Noah, and who were sent there because they severely overstepped the bounds of God's tolerance with their wickedness. The demons of Noah's day were running riot through the earth, filling the world with their wicked, vile, anti-God activity, including sexual sin, so that even 120 years of Noah's preaching, while the ark was being built, could not convince any of the human race beyond the 8 people in Noah's family to believe in God (see *notes on 2 Pet. 2:4,5; Jude 6,7*; cf. Gen. 6:1–8). Thus God bound these demons permanently in the abyss until their final sentencing. **saved through water.** They had been rescued in spite of the water not because of the water. Here, water was the agent of God's judgment not the means of salvation (see *note on Acts 2:38*).

3:21 an antitype which now saves us. In the NT, an antitype is an earthly expression of a spiritual reality. It indicates a symbol, picture, or pattern of some spiritual truth. Peter is teaching that the fact that 8 people were in an ark and went through the whole judgment, and yet were unharmed, is analogous to the Christian's experience in salvation by being in Christ, the ark of one's salvation. **baptism... through the resurrection of Jesus Christ.** Peter is not at all referring to water baptism here, but rather a figurative immersion into union with Christ as an ark of safety from the judgment of God. The resurrection of Christ demonstrates God's acceptance of Christ's substitutionary death for the sins of those who believe (Acts 2:30,31; Rom. 1:4). Judgment fell on Christ just as the judgment of the flood waters fell on the ark. The believer who is in Christ is thus in the ark of safety that will sail over the waters of judgment into eternal glory (cf. Rom. 6:1–4). **not the removal of the filth of the flesh.** To be sure he is not misunderstood, Peter clearly says he is not speaking of water baptism. In Noah's flood, they were kept out of the water while those who went into the water were destroyed. Being in the ark and thus saved from God's judgment on the world prefigures being in Christ and thus saved from eternal damnation. **the answer of a good conscience toward God.** The word for "answer" has the idea of a pledge, agreeing to certain conditions of a covenant (the New Covenant) with God. What saves a person plagued by sin and a guilty conscience is not some external rite, but the agreement with God to get in the ark of safety, the Lord Jesus, by faith in His death and resurrection (cf. Rom. 10:9,10; Heb. 9:14; 10:22).

The reality of forgiveness precedes the rite of baptism (v. 41). Genuine repentance brings from God the forgiveness (remission) of sins (cf. Eph. 1:7), and because of that the new believer was to be baptized. Baptism, however, was to be the ever-present act of obedience, so that it became synonymous with salvation. Thus to say one was baptized for forgiveness was the same as saying one was saved. Every believer enjoys the complete remission of sins (Matt. 26:28; Luke 24:47; Eph. 1:7; Col. 2:13; 1 John

2:12).

WHAT ABOUT ACTS 2:38?

2:38-39. Peter's answer was forthright. First they were to **repent**. This verb (metanoēsate) means "change your outlook," or "have a change of heart; reverse the direction of your life." This obviously results in a change of conduct, but the emphasis is on the mind or outlook. The Jews had rejected Jesus; now they were to trust in Him. Repentance was repeatedly part of the apostles' message in Acts (v. 38; 3:19; 5:31; 8:22; 11:18; 13:24; 17:30; 19:4; 20:21; 26:20).

A problem revolves around the command "be baptized" and its connection with the remainder of 2:38. There are several views:

- (1) One is that both repentance and baptism result in remission of sins. In this view, baptism is essential for salvation. The problem with this interpretation is that elsewhere in Scripture forgiveness of sins is based on faith alone (John 3:16, 36; Rom. 4:1-17; 11:6; Gal. 3:8-9; Eph. 2:8-9; etc.). Furthermore Peter, the same speaker, later promised forgiveness of sins on the basis of faith alone (Acts 5:31; 10:43; 13:38; 26:18).
- (2) A second interpretation translates 2:38, "Be baptized . . . on the basis of the remission of your sins." The preposition used here is *eis* which, with the accusative case, may mean "on account of, on the basis of." It is used in this way in Matthew 3:11; 12:41; and Mark 1:4. Though it is possible for this construction to mean "on the basis of," this is not its normal meaning; *eis* with the accusative case usually describes purpose or direction.
- (3) A third view takes the clause **and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ** as parenthetical. Several factors support this interpretation:
 - a. The verb makes a distinction between singular and plural verbs and nouns. The verb "repent" is plural and so is the pronoun "your" in the clause **so that your sins may be forgiven** (lit., "unto the remission of your sins," Therefore the verb "repent" must go with the purpose of forgiveness of sins. On the other hand the imperative "be baptized" is singular, setting it off from the rest of the sentence.
 - b. This concept fits with Peter's proclamation in Acts 10:43 in which the same expression "sins may be forgiven" (aphesin hamartiōn) occurs. There it is granted on the basis of faith alone.
 - c. In Luke 24:47 and Acts 5:31 the same writer, Luke, indicates that repentance results in remission of sins.⁸

⁸ Walvoord, John F., and Zuck, Roy B., *The Bible Knowledge Commentary*, (Wheaton, Illinois: Scripture Press Publications, Inc.) 1983, 1985.

WHAT ARE THE DIFFERENT VIEWS OF BAPTISM?

1. **A MEANS OF SAVING GRACE** (baptismal regeneration). In this view baptism “is a means by which God imparts saving grace; it results in the remission of sins. By either awakening or strengthening faith, baptism effects the washing of regeneration.”
 - ✓ The Roman Catholic view is that faith is not necessary; the rite itself, properly performed, is sufficient.
 - ✓ The Lutheran view is that faith is a prerequisite. Infants should be baptized and may possess unconscious faith or faith of the parents.
2. **A SIGN AND SEAL OF THE COVENANT.** This is the view of Reformed and Presbyterian churches. The sacraments of baptism and the Lord’s Supper are “signs and seals of an inward and invisible thing by means whereof God works in us by the power of the Holy Spirit . . . like circumcision in the Old Testament, baptism makes us sure of God’s promises.... The act of baptism is both the means of initiation into the covenant and a sign of salvation.”
3. **SYMBOL OF OUR SALVATION.** The view of Baptists and others is that baptism is only an outward sign of an inward change. It serves as a public testimony of faith in Christ. “It does not produce any spiritual change in the one baptized.... Baptism conveys no direct spiritual benefit or blessing.” Moreover, it is to be conducted only with believers. Hence, this third view is the only view that holds only believers should be baptized. The first two views state that, along with adult converts, children (infants) should or may be baptized.
4. **INFANT BAPTISM.** Infant baptism, which is practiced by Roman Catholics, Anglicans, Presbyterians, Methodists, and Lutherans, is defended on several grounds. It is related to covenant theology. As infants in the nation Israel were circumcised and thereby brought into the believing community, so infant baptism is the counterpart of circumcision, which brings the infants into the Christian community. It is related to household salvation (cf. Acts 16:15, 31, 33–34; 18:8). Some understand the statement, “when she and her household had been baptized” (Acts 16:15) to mean infants were baptized