

The History and Significance of Water Baptism

By Dr. David A. DeWitt

The Origin of Baptism

[John the Baptist drawing from gifts.cafepress.com.]



No one knows the origin of Christian water baptism. If you take a course on religion at your favorite university (and no one should ever do that), they will probably tell you Christians adopted it from pagan rituals.

Nearly all religions have initiation rituals, and some of them are water-oriented. But to go from that to saying Christianity developed that into baptism is just another liberal attempt to debunk Christianity. Early Christians avoided anything that even looked like the pagan religions. Even most liberal scholars today have abandoned this approach. The United Free Church of Scotland published a document on *The Origins Of Water Baptism*, which opened with this paragraph:

Some scholars begin their study of Baptism with a discussion of pre-Christian rites involving water, on the basis that water baptism as practiced by the early church was the climax of an evolving process. Some have begun with primitive and pagan rituals. It was popular for a time to seek the origins of Christian baptism in the “baptism” of the mystery religions which flourished in the Graeco-Roman world during the last three centuries BC. In view of the growing recognition, in recent years, that the essential context for the formulation of Christian belief and practice is to be sought within the spiritual environs of Judaism, it has become much more common to look to the Old Testament and to Jewish practice for the origins of water baptism (from www.ufcos.org.uk).

Old Testament Washings

If we look to the Old Testament, we find many commands for the use of water for purification. The first is probably the command for cleansing after they came out of Egypt. Before they received the Law, *The LORD also said to Moses, “Go to the people and consecrate them today and tomorrow, and let them wash their garments (Exodus 19:10).* Also, the Old Testament has regular ceremonial washings:

- The high priest was to wash himself on the Day of Atonement (Leviticus 16:4; Ezekiel 44:19). The Hebrew word here is the general word for “wash.”
- Ceremonial washings were required by the Israelites because of the holy character of God (Leviticus 1:9, 13; 8:6, 21; 9:14; ...).
- Washing with water was necessary after being cured of a skin disease (Leviticus 13:4).
- Washing with water was necessary after sexual uncleanness (Leviticus 15).
- Washing with water was necessary after touching a dead person or animal (Leviticus 11:25).
- The command to wash is given 28 times in Leviticus alone (NASV).
- Elisha commanded Naaman, a Syrian, to dip himself seven times in the Jordan River for cleansing from leprosy (2 Kings 5). [Jordan River picture from thewittenbergdoor.blogspot.com.]
- God promised Israel He would return them from their captivity, and He said, *Then I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you will be clean (Ezekiel 36:25).*



Mikvahs and the Jewish Rituals

From archaeology, we learn that the Jews before and after the time of Christ were carrying out these Old Testament ceremonial washings in containers called Mikvahs. The Mikvah was a like a bathtub but with water flowing in and out of it. These were common in the Essene community at Qumran, but they have also been discovered elsewhere in Israel. The Roman-employed Jewish historian Josephus spent a short time with the Essenes during his teenage years. He reported that the initiation period took 3 years. At the end of the first year, there was a ritual purification in water. But Josephus also gives the impression that these Mikvahs were used regularly, possibly several times a day, by members of the Essene community at Qumran. [Photo is a mikvah tank at Qumran from www.askabba.com.]



It has been pointed out that John the Baptist grew up in the Judean Wilderness, very near the Qumran community. Some even suggest he lived there for a time. That is unlikely, but, for sure, he knew about them. They were on the edge of the Judean Wilderness just northeast of John's birthplace.

Jewish Proselyte Baptisms

For a long time, many scholars believed that John's baptism, and hence Christian baptism, came from the Jewish ritual of baptizing Gentile converts (proselytes) to Judaism. Those promoting this view saw similarities in form, instruction, and purpose. The basic argument is that baptism was the accepted form of conversion, so it was simply adopted by John the Baptist. The difference is, in proselyte baptism, a person dipped himself or herself in water, and John was administering the baptism for people and required repentance first.

The biblical argument for this view comes from the fact that the Pharisees also came to John for baptism and the baptism of the Ethiopian eunuch in Acts 8. The Ethiopian was apparently a Jewish proselyte who had been in Jerusalem for Pentecost and was returning to Ethiopia when Philip approached him. He was aware of the concept of baptism because he asked Philip if he could be baptized.

The biggest problem with this view for the origin of baptism is there is no evidence of it existing in Judaism until after the beginning of Christianity. The first clear reference to Jewish proselyte baptism is in the second half of the first century in the Sibylline Oracles, dated about AD 80, and the Dissertation of Epictetus, dated about AD 90 (*Baptism in the First Four Centuries*, David Cairns, SCM, 1960, p. 24). For example, when Josephus gives a detailed account of Gentile King Izates becoming a Jewish proselyte (Izates ruled from AD 30-54), he has much to say about Izates' circumcision, but says nothing at all about him being baptized. So there is no good evidence that Jewish proselyte baptism preceded Christian baptism. Both may have originated with John the Baptist.

The Baptisms of John

The question still remains as to where John got the idea of baptizing converts. As far as anyone knows, the first clear text for water baptism is this:

John the Baptist appeared in the wilderness preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. And all the country of Judea was going out to him, and all the people of Jerusalem; and they were being baptized by him in the Jordan River, confessing their sins (Mark 1:4-5; the same account is in Matthew 3).

The first reference in the Gospel of John describes some representative from the Pharisees.

They asked him, and said to him, "Why then are you baptizing, if you are not the Christ, nor Elijah, nor the Prophet" (John 1:25)?



Questions:

- Did the Pharisees know and accept baptism as a means of conversion before John?
- Was baptism something John refined from the Essenes at Qumran?
- Was the concept of baptism something revealed to John by God?
- Was baptism something John created on his own as a means of demonstrating repentance?
- Was baptism John's version of Old Testament washings for those who were unclean?

[John the Baptist drawing from spindleworks.com.]

The reality is, we will never know. But there are some things we can be pretty sure of:

1. John did not get his baptism from the pagan world. No sincere Jew would do that.
2. John did not just copy Jewish ceremonial washings because the washings needed to be repeated, and John's baptism was a one-time event. (For example, the apostles were not re-baptized when they began to follow Jesus or after Pentecost.)
3. John did not just copy proselyte baptism because:
 - a. He administered it, whereas the Jewish rites were self-administered.
 - b. He called for repentance to enter the kingdom of heaven, but proselyte washing was to join Judaism, and as mentioned above.
 - c. Proselyte baptism may have historically followed John's baptism.
4. The Qumran (and apparently other communities) used a dipping process in a mikvah tub of moving water as an initiation rite and for ceremonial cleansings.
5. John was a Levite priest by birth and would be keenly aware of all the Old Testament ceremonial washings for purification.
6. John lived in the Judean Wilderness, near the Qumran community, so he would be aware of their mikvah tub washings.

Therefore, it is reasonable to suppose that John put together the things he knew about Old Testament cleansing and what people understood as a means of salvation, then added a message of repentance. But even if this was John's idea, it was under the influence of the revelation of God. After calling himself a voice crying in the wilderness preparing the way for the Messiah, John reports:

As for me, I baptize you with water for repentance, but He who is coming after me is mightier than I, and I am not fit to remove His sandals; He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire (Matthew 3:11).

- Therefore, John knew the Messiah was coming, and that he was preparing the way for Him.
- Therefore, John had some revelation from God.
- Therefore, baptism itself may have been a revelation from God.

Water Baptism in the New Testament

It seems to me there are at least three views of baptism which can be identified in the New Testament. That does not mean they contradict or that there is confusion on the subject. It only means that there are at least three different aspects of baptism discernable in the New Testament. The three are:

1. Baptism for salvation
2. Baptism for identification
3. Baptism after salvation

Baptism for Salvation

This is the use of baptism by John the Baptist and the Apostle Peter. John's baptism was a call to repentance (Matthew 3:2). For example, John did not allow baptism for the unrepentant Pharisees and Sadducees (Matthew 3:7). John did not believe dipping in water would wash away sin (a view known as *baptismal regeneration*). Only God could wash away sin, and He would only do that when a person repents. But for John, the indication of that repentance, the method a convert used to make that statement of repentance, was water baptism. So with John, baptism was for salvation.

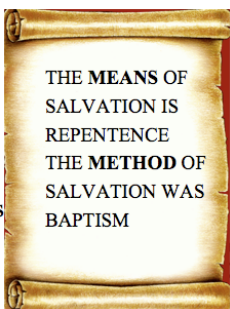
Peter's brother Andrew was a disciple of John the Baptist before he followed Jesus. Andrew called Peter after John pointed out Jesus as the Messiah. So Peter may have also been a disciple of John before he followed Christ. Anyway, for sure he was familiar with John's ministry. On the Day of Pentecost we read:

*Peter said to them, “**Repent**, and each of you **be baptized** in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you will **receive the gift of the Holy Spirit**. “For the promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off, as many as the Lord our God will call to Himself.” And with many other words he solemnly testified and kept on exhorting them, saying, “**Be saved** from this perverse generation!” So then, those who had received his word were **baptized**; and that day there were **added** about three thousand souls (Acts 2:38-41; emphasis mine). [Drawing of Peter's sermon from www.wcg.org.]*



Peter, like John the Baptist, sees baptism as a method of salvation. Notice, repentance is connected to baptism, which is connected to both being saved and receiving the Holy Spirit. Later, Peter explains his use of baptism. He writes:

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).



It seems that Peter, like John, sees baptism as the method used for salvation. But Peter explains that it is not the water (the washing away of dirt from the flesh) which saves you, but *an appeal to God for a good conscience—through the resurrection of Jesus Christ*. The **means** of salvation is the appeal to God, and the **method** is baptism. The *appeal to God for a good conscience* in 1 Peter 3 is the repentance of Acts 2. It is clear that the means of salvation could not be baptism because there are many salvation passages which don't mention it (John 1:12; 3:16; 5:24; Acts 16:31; Ephesians 2:8-9; etc). So Peter uses baptism the same as John the Baptist, as a method, but not a means, of salvation.

We would also conclude that this is the view of baptism held by Philip and the Ethiopian eunuch. After the Ethiopian was convicted of his need for Christ, as a result of Philip teaching him from the Scripture, we read:

As they went along the road they came to some water; and the eunuch said, "Look! Water! What prevents me from being baptized?" (Acts 8:36; see also Acts 8:12-16).

This statement tells us:

1. The Ethiopian was aware of baptism as a method of receiving Christ.
2. He saw baptism as a Christian thing, not a Jewish thing. That is, he made a distinction between Jewish washings, or becoming a Jewish proselyte, and Christian baptism.
3. Both Philip and the Ethiopian saw baptism as the method for receiving Christ.

We can, therefore, conclude that for John the Baptist, Peter, and Philip, baptism was for salvation.

Baptism for Identification

When Jesus came to John for baptism, it confused the whole subject. It even, or especially, confused John. We read:

Then Jesus arrived from Galilee at the Jordan coming to John, to be baptized by him. But John tried to prevent Him, saying, "I have need to be baptized by You, and do You come to me?" But Jesus answering said to him, "Permit it at this time; for in this way it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness." Then he permitted Him. After being baptized, Jesus came up immediately from the water; and behold, the heavens were opened, and he saw the Spirit of God descending as a dove and lighting on Him, and behold, a voice out of the heavens said, "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well-pleased" (Matthew 3:13-17).

[Jesus' Baptism picture from www.pdimages.com.]



Notice:

1. The baptism of Jesus was His own idea, at His own initiative.
2. Jesus' baptism did not have the same meaning or purpose as John's ministry of baptism. Jesus had no sin to repent of, so John did not understand it, and tried to prevent it.
3. Jesus' explanation: *for in this way it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness*, is unclear. It may connect John's ministry to Elijah's (Matthew 17:11-13) or it may fulfill Isaiah's prophecy about the Spirit coming upon the Messiah (Isaiah 11:2), which John says he saw as a descending dove (John 1: 32-34), but neither are certain.
4. What Jesus' baptism does do is connect Jesus' ministry with John's ministry. Of all the ministries and theologies being taught in Israel, Jesus identified Himself only with John's.
5. God the Father and the Spirit recognized Jesus' baptism as a uniquely significant event. Here and at the Mount of Transfiguration (Matthew 17:5), God declared Jesus to be *My beloved Son, in whom I am well-pleased*.
6. There is nothing here to suggest Jesus is establishing an ordinance or a sacrament. There is no command like: "Do this in remembrance of Me."

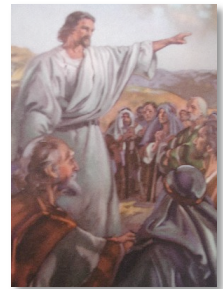
It is possible to say: "We follow Jesus in baptism." By that, we mean we identify with Jesus, as He identified with John. We already have a sinless position if we have received Christ before we are baptized. Of course, Christ was sinless by nature, and we are sinless because of our salvation. Nonetheless, we are like Christ (in a sense) at His baptism, because we have a position of sinlessness before God (because of the blood of Christ – Hebrews 10:14).

We must also recognize the fact that, although the apostles baptized people, Jesus did not. We read:
Therefore when the Lord knew that the Pharisees had heard that Jesus was making and baptizing more disciples than John (although Jesus Himself was not baptizing, but His disciples were), He left Judea and went away again into Galilee (John 4:1-3).

If the statement *Jesus Himself was not baptizing*, means Jesus did not baptize anyone, then He did not re-baptize His disciples. Some, like Levi/Matthew, who were unlikely to have been baptized by John, were likely baptized by the apostles.

After His resurrection Jesus gave His disciples what we often call “The Great Commission”:

Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age” (Matthew 28:19-20). [Great Commission picture from www.newlife-ag.com.]



It is possible that Jesus was telling the apostles to dip or immerse converts in water in the name of each person of the Trinity. In that case, there are three commands: *Go, baptize, and teach*.

But it is also possible He was telling the apostles to dip or immerse their disciples into the teaching about the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Then it would read: *As you go, baptize, that is, teach*. Baptism then would be a metaphor (as in Mark 10:38-39; Acts 1:5; 11:16), not an ordinance for the church. But since it seems that the apostles practiced baptism of all their converts (Acts 2:41; 8:12; 16:15; etc.), we can assume it should be done, whether or not the Great Commission commands it.

Baptism After Salvation

This seems to be the view of the Apostle Paul. Paul himself was baptized after he was saved (Acts 9:18). And when the Philippian jailer received Christ, it went like this:



... and after he brought them out, he said, “Sirs, what must I do to be saved?” They said, “Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved, you and your household.” And they spoke the word of the Lord to him together with all who were in his house. And he took them that very hour of the night and washed their wounds, and immediately he was baptized, he and all his household (Acts 16:30-33). [Philippian Jailer picture from www.gardenofpraise.com.]

Even Peter was willing to baptize the Gentile converts in Caesarea, after they were saved. We read:

“Surely no one can refuse the water for these to be baptized who have received the Holy Spirit just as we did, can he?” And he ordered them to be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ (Acts 10:47-48).

When Paul encountered the twelve uninformed disciples in Ephesus, we read:

He said to them, “Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?” And they said to him, “No, we have not even heard whether there is a Holy Spirit.” And he said, “Into what then were you baptized?” And they said, “Into John’s baptism.” Paul said, “John baptized with the baptism of repentance, telling the people to believe in Him who was coming after him, that is, in Jesus.” When they heard this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus (Acts 19:2-5).

This is the only instance in the New Testament of re-baptism. These 12 men were believers in the Old Testament sense. They became believers through John the Baptist, before the Church Age began in Acts 2, so they had not yet received the Holy Spirit. They had not even heard of the Holy Spirit, and it is not clear what they knew about Jesus, because after their encounter with Paul, *they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus*. These men were re-baptized, not because they did not believe their first baptism was illegitimate, but because the Holy Spirit had come, beginning the Church Age. So baptism here seems to be connected to becoming part of this Church Age. At any rate, it is baptism after salvation. [Picture of Paul and the 12 re-baptized disciples of John the Baptist from www.bibleuniversity.com.]



Baptism in the “Didache” – the Teaching of the Twelve

This work is supposed to be the teaching of the twelve apostles on various subjects. It was probably not written by the twelve apostles, and it was never considered a canonical book. Nonetheless, most biblical scholars consider it a Christian book, originally written around 60-80 AD, with additions made in 100-150 AD. It is on a par with our Christian books, a more-or-less good book, but not authoritative. The Didache recognizes two sacraments: baptism and the Eucharist (or Lord’s Supper). It specifies a preference for baptism in running water, or by pouring water over the head if running water is unavailable. No mention is made of infant baptism or sprinkling.

From the Apostles to Augustine – the 100s to the 400s

This era saw pouring become the dominant form of baptism (although emersions continued). These centuries also saw the introduction of infant baptism taught, for example, in the *Apostolic Tradition of Hippolytus of Rome* (about 170-236 AD). Infant baptism was also supported by leaders, such as Justin Martyr and Irenaeus. Infant baptism remained unchallenged in the church until the Protestant Reformation. Augustine (354-430) debated Pelagius on baptism. Augustine insisted that baptism was necessary for salvation (*baptismal regeneration*). Many saw baptism as forgiving sins, therefore, some believed sins committed after baptism were not forgiven. This led to some, like Constantine, being baptized on their deathbed. [The picture is the baptism of Augustine of Hippo as represented in a sculptural group in Troyes cathedral (1549) from Wikipedia on *Baptism*.]



The Middle Ages

As with most things, very little changed concerning baptism in the Middle Ages. Baptism was considered a sacrament. Several sacraments were added and subtracted from the church until the western church ended up with the seven sacraments of the Roman Catholic Church. But baptism was always among them. Although emersion (dipping some of the body) and submersion (dipping the whole body) remained common, affusion (the pouring of water over the head) became the primary means of baptism. So the facilities used for administering baptism varied greatly. Both the eastern and western churches considered it essential to baptize in the name of all three persons of the Trinity.

The Protestant Reformation to the Present

Martin Luther (1483-1546) [picture from www.sundayschoolcourses.com] considered baptism to be a sacrament. He saw baptism as a “means of grace” through which God creates and strengthens “saving faith.” Luther believed salvation was by faith alone, but God supplied that faith in connection with



baptism. He believed that even though baptized infants cannot declare their faith, they have it anyway when they are baptized. Therefore, Lutherans believe baptism *works forgiveness of sins, delivers from death and the devil, and gives eternal salvation to all who believe this as the words and promises of God declare* (The Sacrament of Holy Baptism, Luther's Small Catechism, 1529). In his "Large Catechism," Luther declares infant baptism to be God-pleasing because baptized infants are reborn and sanctified by the Holy Spirit.

Swiss reformer Huldrych Zwingli (1484-1531) [picture from jwest.wordpress.com] disagreed with both Luther and the Anabaptists on the significance of baptism. Zwingli declared baptism to be a form of worship (what Protestants tend to call an ordinance), not an occasion of receiving a blessing from God (generally called a sacrament). Zwingli saw baptism as an initiation ceremony, which had symbolic value but not saving value. But he also defended baptizing infants. The following is a good summary of Zwingli's debate with the Anabaptists and the Catholics on infant baptism:



*In October 1523, the controversy over the issue [of infant baptism] broke out during the second Zürich disputation and Zwingli vigorously defended the need for infant baptism and his belief that **rebaptism** was unnecessary ... Zwingli outlined his disagreements with both the Catholic and the Anabaptist positions. He accused the Anabaptists of adding to the word of God and noted that there is no law forbidding infant baptism. He challenged Catholics by denying that the water of baptism can have the power to wash away sin. Zwingli understood baptism to be a pledge or a promise, but he disputed the Anabaptist position that it is a pledge to live without sin, noting that such a pledge brings back the hypocrisy of legalism. He argued against their view that those that received the Spirit and were able to live without sin were the only persons qualified to partake in baptism. At the same time he asserted that rebaptism had no support in scripture. The Anabaptists raised the objection that Christ did not baptise children, and so Christians, likewise, should not baptise their children. Zwingli responded by noting that kind of argument would imply women should not participate in communion because there were no women at the last supper. Although there was no commandment to baptise children specifically, the need for baptism was clearly stated in scripture ... Infants should be baptised because there is only one church and one baptism, not a partial church and partial baptism* (en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Zwinglianism).



The Anabaptists (meaning re-baptizers) totally rejected the concept of infant baptism held by Luther, Zwingli, and the Roman Catholics. They re-baptized believers (formerly baptized as infants) only when they were old enough to articulate their faith. They taught that since infants cannot confess their faith, they are not really baptized, and they are still in need of salvation by faith. Therefore, infant baptism can be a cause of people going to hell thinking they are right with God because they were baptized as infants.

The Anabaptists were severely persecuted. But as the Reformation developed, the Baptists, Mennonites, Amish, Churches of Christ, Pentecostals, Charismatics and most independent Bible churches, Bible colleges and independent Bible seminaries held to a view similar to the Anabaptists concerning believer baptism and infant baptism. [Drawing of an Anabaptist baptism from www.allposters.co.uk.]

John Calvin (1509-1564) and the Covenant theologians see baptism as a replacement for Old Testament circumcision.

In this view, Baptism is thus seen as the functional replacement and sacramental equivalent of the Abrahamic rite of circumcision and symbolizes the internal cleansing from sin... [Quote from en.wikipedia.org, Calvin picture from www.teachersparadise.com.]



Reverend Bryn MacPhail writes:

Calvin declares that “infants cannot be deprived of it [baptism] without open violation of the will of God” (Inst.4, 16, 8). He reasons this primarily through paralleling circumcision and baptism, asserting that Scripture testifies to the fact that baptism is for the Christians what circumcision was previously for the Jews (Inst.4, 16, 11). [From www.reformedtheology.ca/baptism.html.]

In general, the more liturgical, covenant, amillennial churches, such as the Eastern Orthodox, the Roman Catholics, the Protestant Lutherans, Presbyterians, Reformed, Anglican and Episcopal churches believe baptism:

- Should be done by the clergy of the church or his designated representative
- Should include infants
- May be done by sprinkling
- Is directly related to a person’s salvation
- Is an essential part of becoming a member of their specific church

In general, the more Bible preaching, dispensational, premillennial churches, such as the Baptists, Brethren, Pentecostals, Assemblies of God, and independent Bible churches believe baptism:

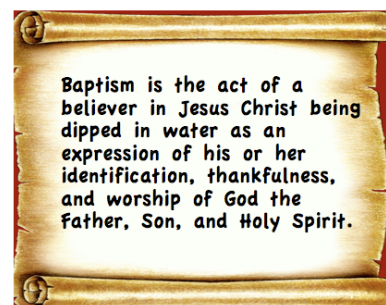
- Can be done by any believer
- Should include those who can articulate their faith, not infants
- Should be done by emersion/submersion in water (pouring is possible, but not sprinkling)
- Is a testimony of one’s faith, not bringing about one’s salvation
- May or may not involve local church membership

The Meaning of Water Baptism

A Personal Conclusion

It seems to me that several conclusions can be made about the subject of water baptism:

1. Water baptism is an acceptable Christian practice, taught by nearly every Christian leader all through the centuries. Every New Testament church-age believer, as far as we know, was baptized (the thief on the cross was before the church age), and baptism was never discouraged.
2. Water baptism must be distinguished from salvation. It does not accomplish salvation, nor is it necessary for salvation. Most passages defining salvation do not mention water baptism (for example, John 1:12; 5:24; 14:6; 17:3; Acts 4:12; 16:31; Romans 1:17; 3:19-28; 6:23; 10:9-17; Ephesians 2:8-9; Titus 3:5-7; 1 Peter 3:21; and Revelation 22:17). Paul said, *For Christ did not send me to baptize, but to preach the gospel* (1 Corinthians 1:17).



3. Baptism is not for local or institutional church membership. New Testament water baptism is never associated with membership in any particular group (except possibly incorrectly so in Corinth – 1 Corinthians 1:15-17). Paul wrote: *For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free, and we were all made to drink of one Spirit* (1 Corinthians 12:13).
4. Water baptism does not make people better, more spiritual, or closer to God. There is no morally positive significance in any mechanical act, per se. The New Testament never claims that baptism is a sacrament that automatically brings upon us a blessing of God. Rather, it is an ordinance whereby a believer expressed identification, thankfulness, and worship. Closeness to God is based on spiritual, moral, and theological qualities, not on mechanical acts. (See, for example, Matthew 5–7; 1 Corinthians 13; Galatians 5; 1 Corinthians 6:9-10.) [The first four points adapted from the Relational Concepts, Inc. brochure *Water Baptism* by Clark Blanchard (www.relationalconcepts.org).]
5. The word for baptism, βαπτίζω (*baptidzo*) means to dip or immerse. However, it seems, from the Didache and many cave and catacomb drawings, that pouring water over the head was common in the early church. This was probably the case when there was not sufficient water available for emersion. I have no definite opinion on pouring as a means of baptism.
6. There is no instance of sprinkling or baptizing children in the Bible. Those wishing a biblical justification for either point to household baptisms (Acts 16:15, 31-33) and Old Testament sprinklings (Ezekiel 36:25). Old Testament sprinkling ceremonies are hardly justification for sprinkling baptisms in the church. Household baptisms are better evidence, but there is no proof there were infants in those households. Infant baptism itself is never specified or encouraged in the New Testament. Also, it does carry the danger of a person incorrectly thinking they are saved and right with God simply because they were baptized as an infant. So I suggest believer baptism.
7. Water baptism for believers is:
 - Following Jesus into baptism, in the sense that we are identifying with Him, as He identified with John's ministry and message.
 - Following the example of the apostles in the New Testament church, who baptized all believers in Jesus Christ.