

God gives His church sacred rituals and ceremonies for a specific purpose. These rituals symbolically teach important aspects of the truth of the gospel as it is in Jesus! God is **not** pleased when man tampers with what He has instituted.

Some sincere Christians say that we should observe “*A Day of Worship*” (Sunday) in remembrance of the resurrection of Christ. However, this not only contradicts a clear *Thus Says The Lord*, but it ignores **the only biblical** ritual given to the early church to commemorate the death, burial and resurrection of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. That is found in Romans 6:3-5, where the ordinance of baptism is described by the Apostle Paul:

*“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: that like as Christ **was raised up from the dead by the glory of the father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his **resurrection**.”***

The message of the Holy Spirit today is still the same: “*Why are you waiting? Arise and be baptized, and wash away your sins...*” Acts 22:16

THE VOICE OF PROPHECY SPEAKS

WHAT BIBLE PROPHECY SAYS ABOUT YOUR FUTURE

LESSON # 12 MAKING A NEW START

In Acts 22:7-8, Jesus asked Saul why he was persecuting Jesus by persecuting the church. Then Jesus told Saul to go to Damascus to hear “all” things that were “*appointed*” for him to do. Saul was blinded by “a bright light” and could not see, and was in a dark room for three days to “think” about what he had done against the disciples of Jesus, The Messiah. Then the prophet Ananias said, “why are you waiting? Arise and be baptized,...calling on the name of the Lord.” *See: Acts 22:16* You see, Baptism was the doorway to a new life for Saul. His conscience needed to be cleansed! Saul the persecutor would become Paul the Apostle. God knows that we all need a “new start”.

Baptism by immersion beautifully symbolizes death to sin and beginning a new life in Christ! God sent the prophet, John the Baptist, to boldly institute this rite by preaching the necessity of repentance! *See: Matthew 3:5-6* Even Jesus, The Holy One of God, asked to be baptized, “*to fulfill all righteousness*” *See: Matthew 3:14-15*. Jesus had no sinful past but was baptized to show His identity with the human race and leave a perfect example for us to follow. This was the beginning of Jesus’ public

ministry. Compare this with Jesus' last command just before His ascension. *See: Matthew 28:19,20*

What "mode" of baptism is there in the Bible, you ask? Just One! *See: Ephesians 4:5*

In Acts 8:30-39 we see the New Testament evidence for the practice of the early church after the cross of Calvary, and what was the result for the Ethiopian? "...*(he) went on his way rejoicing!*" That is what happens when we bury the of life of sin and start a new life in Christ.

In fact historical records show that baptism by immersion was the mode until the 12th and 13th century. **Quote:** "*For several centuries after the establishment of Christianity baptism was usually conferred by immersion; but since the 12th century the practice of baptizing by infusion has prevailed in the Catholic Church, as this manner is attended with less inconvenience than baptism by immersion...The church exercises her discretion in adopting the most convenient mode, according to the circumstances of time and place.*" –The Faith of Our Fathers, 94th edition, p. 277.

But you say, "*How important is it to be baptized?*" The Bible says, "*Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved...*" Mark 16:16

How should a Christian prepare for baptism? There are **Three Steps**. **1.)** Jesus said, they should "be taught" *everything I have commanded you....* (Matt.28:20) Teaching precedes baptism! But there is something more important than knowledge. You must be willing to obey. **2.)** There must be total belief and a commitment of one's life to Christ as Saviour and Lord. "...*If you believe with*

all your heart, you may..." Acts 8:38 **3.)** Repentance. *See: Acts 3:19* You should confess all sins and repent.

You see, you become a new person from the inside out. This means to be changed, reborn and converted! Baptism is the way that a person **seals** his/her acceptance of the sacrifice given by the Father and made by the Son. In some ways, this ceremony of baptism takes the place of circumcision to the Jewish people as a sign of their being sealed to God.

It was at the baptism of Jesus that the voice of God was heard, saying, "...*This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased.*" Matthew 3:17 This marked the beginning of Christ's public ministry and so, baptism is the public testimony of the believer which marks the beginning of his new life with Christ as His Saviour. *See: Galatians 3:27*

Baptism to the one who has accepted Christ as his/her sacrifice, shows their faith in the three great facts of that sacrifice:

1. We are baptized into His **death**. *See: Romans 6:3*
2. We are **buried** with Him. *See: Romans 6:4*
3. We walk in **newness of life**. *See: Romans 6:4.*

This is all culminated in the statement of Paul in Romans 6:11 "...*reckon yourselves dead to sin, but alive to God...*" This is like the wedding ceremony for an engaged couple.