

On a Mission from God: Becoming a Missional People From Noncommittal to Commissioned

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Digging Deeper (Questions are on the last page)

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Background Notes

Key Scripture Text:

Introduction

I have decided to follow Jesus;
I have decided to follow Jesus;
I have decided to follow Jesus;
No turning back, no turning back.

Though I may wonder, I still will follow;
Though I may wonder, I still will follow;
Though I may wonder, I still will follow;
No turning back, no turning back.

The world behind me, the cross before me;
The world behind me, the cross before me;
The world behind me, the cross before me;
No turning back, no turning back.

Though none go with me, still I will follow;
Though none go with me, still I will follow;
Though none go with me, still I will follow;
No turning back, no turning back.

Will you decide now to follow Jesus?
Will you decide now to follow Jesus?
Will you decide now to follow Jesus?
No turning back, no turning back.

Attributed to S. Sundar Singh

Being a Christian in India during the early part of the 20th century was not easy,¹ as Sundar Singh found out. Born into a Sikh family (1889, Patiala State, northern India) who also had deep respect for the Hindu religion, Sundar had an early exposure to the Christian message through the Ewing Christian High School in Ludhiana, where he learned English. His personal crisis began in his mid-teens at the death of his mother, a woman who guided his spiritual development as best she could. Out of despair and desperation, Sundar railed against the Christian missionaries, persecuting them and publically burning pages of the Bible. But God had other plans for Sundar Singh. Driven to the brink of suicide, he cried out for God, if He existed, to make Himself known. Jesus Christ snatched him from the jaws of death, and Sundar became a devoted follower of the Lord.

He announced his decision to his father who promptly pleaded with him to renounce his foolishness. Deep within, Sundar sensed that release would only come if he was prepared to serve Jesus as one serves a master – to publicly declare himself a follower of the very being he had publicly insulted. His father was adamant:

¹ This brief account is based on *Wisdom of the Sadhu: Teachings of Sundar Singh*, compiled and edited by Kim Comer and published as an eBook by the Bruderhof Foundation, www.bruderhof.com, 2003.

I am not an unreasonable man, my child. But if you refuse me, I will know that you are determined to dishonor your family and I will have no alternative but to disown you. You wear the bracelet of the Sikh, you wear your hair uncut as is the sign of the Sikh, you bear the name of a Sikh. Have you forgotten the meaning of the name that our fathers adopted? Have you forgotten what it means to be a Singh? You know the meaning of your name, yet act like a jackal of the desert. Why? The time has come for you to make your choice.

The account of his conversion continues:

Sundar Singh returned to his room and prayed. Then he cut off his hair.

The face of Sardar Sher Singh was dreadful to behold. Rage born of frustration, desperation and shame reddened his eyes. In the presence of the entire household, his heart heavy with grief, he led his son to the door as darkness was falling. Already death had taken his wife and one son; now he was to lose his beloved Sundar. But he saw no choice: the boy had made his decision. Now he spoke the fearful curse: "We reject you forever and cast you from among us. You shall be no more my son. We shall know you no more. For us, you are as one who was never born. I have spoken." The door closed behind him.

I will never forget the night I was driven out of my home. I slept outdoors under a tree, and the weather was cold. I had never experienced such a thing. I thought to myself: "Yesterday I lived in comfort. Now I am shivering, and I am hungry and thirsty. Yesterday I had everything I needed and more; today I have no shelter, no warm clothes, no food." Outwardly the night was difficult, but I possessed a wonderful joy and peace in my heart. I was following in the footsteps of my new master – of Jesus, who had nowhere to lay his head, but was despised and rejected. In the luxuries and comforts of home I had not found peace. But the presence of the Master changed my suffering into peace, and this peace has never left me.

To solidify his decision to follow Jesus, Sundar was baptized by Anglican missionaries in 1905 when he was sixteen years old. Thereafter he spent a committed life bringing the Gospel throughout Punjab, Kashmir, India, and even Tibet. Time after time, he laid his life on the line for Christ. And time after time, God delivered him from various trials. Sundar depended upon God exclusively for his sustenance, and God faithfully provided. Sadhu Sundar Singh was last heard of in April of 1929, when he embarked on what was to be his last missionary journey, in the foothills of the Himalayas. Nobody knows the circumstances of his death, and his body has never been found.²

Though the precise setting for the familiar hymn, cited above, is unknown, the spirit of its lyrics accurately reflects the life of its poet. *No turning back, no turning back*, the song stoutly resolves. That is also the spirit of Christian baptism. Baptism brings new converts into an identification with Jesus: they re-enact his death, burial and resurrection through this ritual. Baptism is a powerful symbolic action, witnessing to the transforming work of Jesus Christ in a person's life. This sacrament is a powerful punctuation mark within the profession of a new Christian. Through baptism, a new follower goes on record as belonging to Jesus, as one who is a Christian. In the days of the early Church, baptism could be a risky event. It was a bit like changing national citizenship, leaving behind old loyalties and publicly assuming new ones. For many people, it was making the clear pronouncement to the world: Jesus is Lord and Caesar is not.

Baptism brought people into a new relationship with God in His tri-unity, His Trinity, by declaring allegiance to not just any god, but to the true God as revealed in Jesus Christ and presently experienced through the Holy Spirit who lives within and among us. To be baptized "in the name of," meant not merely using the right words during the baptism ritual. Rather, it meant to cast one's lot with *this* God, and no other one. Other gods may once have claimed the new convert's soul, but now his own loyalty lies with *this* God. Even as Jews, they may once have followed what they *thought to be* the one true God. But now, they have seen Him afresh in the face of Jesus Christ. All of which carried risk of alienation from old ties of family and nation.

² Additional details supplied at www.scrollpublishing.com; *Sadhu Sundar Singh: Essential Writings*, selected by Charles E. Moore. The Modern Spiritual Masters Series, Plough Publishing House for the Bruderhof Foundation, Inc., Farmington, PA., 2005. p. 14.

Baptism, then, is the public symbol administered by the leaders of the mission. It is their way of asking people, "Will you follow Jesus?" And when the convert responds, it is their way of saying, "I have decided to follow Jesus, no turning back, no turning back."

This week's study unfolds during a weekend which celebrates commitment to Jesus Christ through Christian baptism. We mark the conclusion of our series, *On a Mission from God*, by witnessing several people profess their faith publically. That was, after all, the nature of baptism in the life of the church from the earliest days. As we shall see, baptism took the form of *dramatic oath* by which new converts swore allegiance to a new Lord, having renounced the old ones. Baptism dramatizes commitment in the boldest of ways, offering opportunity for personal testimony and re-enacting the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ who has thereby become the Lord of the Christian.

It's hard to imagine *mission* without commitment. From our popular culture, we are reminded of the familiar words, "Your mission, if you decide to accept it..."³ Our mission as Christians begins the very moment we hand over our lives to Jesus Christ, trusting him alone for salvation and placing ourselves into his service to the world. *If you decide* are words which make fence-straddling impossible. Baptism serves as a marvelous opportunity to respond to Jesus' challenge:

No one can serve two masters, for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and money (Matthew 6:24; Luke 16:13).

Acknowledging the Lordship of Jesus before other human beings belongs to the heart of being a Christian:

32 So everyone who acknowledges me before men, I also will acknowledge before my Father who is in heaven,
33 but whoever denies me before men, I also will deny before my Father who is in heaven (Matthew 10:32-33;
Luke 12:8-9).

The Good Conscience (1 Peter 3:20-22)

20 ...God's patience waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was being prepared, in which a few, that is, eight persons, were brought safely through water. 21 Baptism, which corresponds to this, now saves you, not as a removal of dirt from the body but as an appeal to God for a good conscience, through the resurrection of Jesus Christ, 22 who has gone into heaven and is at the right hand of God, with angels, authorities, and powers having been subjected to him (1 Peter 3:20-22).

Water was a frequent salvation-image in the Old Testament. It sometimes turned up in unlikely places. How often do we hear a sermon about baptism which takes the story of Noah and the ark as its text? To the ancients, water was a formative and generative symbol which referred to both Creation and Judgment. Genesis 1 depicts God's creative activity as occurring within the context of water, a substance initially "without form and empty" and called simply "the deep." But it was over the deep formless waters that God's Spirit brooded like a mother bird taking notice for the safety of her nest. Water was the birthplace for Creation.

But to this hopeful image of Creation, Peter adds the story of the Flood, the place of Judgment. The patient Creator God waited for human restoration at a time in history when His good Creation had become the scene of revolt and violence (see Genesis 6). Only a "few persons" found salvation while the old world fell under judgment. For them "the ark was prepared" to bring them "safely through water." Read in this way, the story of Noah and the Flood reveals twin concepts: *salvation* and *judgment*. Water carries the ark safely to its landing on Mount Ararat, buffeted by a torrential downpour and furious waves. The same water plunges the unrighteous rebels against God's purposes into the depths.

From this dramatic re-creation of an ancient story, Peter derives the powerful truth that "baptism...now saves you..." Peter's readers would have known both the story of Noah and the fact of their own baptism. From the

³ As heard in the classic version of *Mission Impossible*.

first, Peter derives an illustration of truth, namely, that water was a medium for saving lives. From the second, he reminds his audience what baptism *means*. Persons who are baptized, *like Noah and his family*, are saved by God through the medium of water — in baptism. He does not say that *water baptism* is the true source of salvation any more than *Genesis* teaches that flood waters *in themselves* saved Noah. Had not God arranged that the same waters which destroyed the world also saved Noah, no one would have been rescued, and the whole world would have perished. Yet, God so ordered the dual role of the flood such that the one and the same medium achieved two distinct though opposite purposes.

The truth of the matter is that baptism depicts two distinct realities: something is plunged to its death while something else rises in new life. But Peter sharpens that point even further when he writes that baptism is “an appeal to God for a good conscience.” What does he mean? The underlying Greek helps us clarify this important explanation. The word “appeal” is from *eperōtēma* which means “that which is asked for, a request, an appeal, pledge, promise.” The idea of “pledge” fits the context well, since at the time of early Christian baptism, a series of questions were put to the recipient of baptism and to which they were to offer honest and unambiguous answers. The root of this word in Greek is “ask.” Some basic questions are posed at baptism in the Christian tradition. The baptismal liturgy asks that we make six promises:

1. Renounce Satan and the forces of wickedness
2. Renounce the evil powers of this world
3. Renounce sinful desires that draw you from God
4. Turn to Jesus Christ and accept Him as Savior
5. Put whole trust in God
6. Promise to obey and follow Him as Lord

That is paramount to asking, “Will you refuse any longer to follow the devil?,” and, positively, to transfer allegiance to another, that is, to Jesus Christ.

From the fourth century come portions of a baptismal liturgy in which baptism by immersion in water involves three distinct questions asked as the candidate for baptism is baptized in the name of Father, Son and Holy Spirit:

You were questioned, “Do you believe in God the Father Almighty?” You said, “I believe,” and were immersed, that is, were buried. Again you were asked, “Do you believe in our Lord Jesus Christ and his cross?” You said, “I believe,” and were immersed. Thus you were buried along with Christ; for he who is buried along with Christ rises again with him. A third time you were asked, “Do you believe in the Holy Spirit?” You said, “I believe,” and a third time were immersed, so that your threefold confession wiped out the manifold failings of your earlier life.⁴

Each successive immersion punctuates with a question the loyalty of the candidate to his faith in the Triune God. That is what Peter means by *eperōtēma* — a pledge. It is equivalent to a sacred vow or oath taken in the presence of God and witnesses. The text further ties this pledge to “a good conscience,” from the Greek *suneidēsis*. If the conscience serves to govern the whole moral life of a human being — and that is its usual meaning — then baptism is the Christian resolve to live one’s life in wholehearted obedience to Jesus Christ. The Greek word emphasizes that of which someone is consciously aware. We have an English saying, “He went into the matter with his eyes wide open,” and this captures the sense of *knowing participation* in some activity. Whatever the whole person approves, knowingly, belongs to the life of his *conscience*.

Sometimes legal documents will contain verbiage to the effect that a deposition, agreement or other testimony is entered upon with full consciousness of its truth and without intent to mislead or deceive. For the Christian,

⁴ *De Sacramentis* 2, 7 cited in J.N.D. Kelly, *Early Christian Creeds*, Third Edition, Continuum, 2006.

baptism is a solemn and binding oath that commits to following Jesus without mental reservation and with full commitment.

Peter does not mean that baptism *in itself* saves or that it is capable of ridding the “flesh” (Greek: *sarx*) of its defilement. Baptism is not magic, though it contains wonderful mystery. The power of baptism does not lie in some hidden property in water but, writes Peter, “through the resurrection of Jesus Christ.” The term for “through” is *dia* and points to the *instrument* through which something happens. Water is the *medium* but the resurrection life of Jesus Christ is the *instrument*.

Part of Peter’s appeal to the resurrection lies in the new life it makes possible. But he takes it considerably farther. Following the resurrection of Jesus, he ascended into heaven where he sits at the right hand of God the Father — something which the creeds consistently affirm. The point of Jesus’ ascension is to establish his authority and rule as King. With the ascension of Jesus, he has become King over the kingdom of heaven. Peter describes this by saying:

1. He has gone into heaven.
2. Is at the right hand of God.
3. Angels, authorities and powers are subject to him.

In baptism we celebrate the exaltation of Jesus as King. Through baptism we make the following profession of faith: “Jesus is Lord.” And we declare that he is Lord of not only heaven but also of earth. The moment we enter the waters of baptism with the profession on our lips and in our hearts, we give notice to the world around us that we belong to the Lord Jesus and have renounced all other loyalties. We also put the powers of this world on notice that their power will soon pass, their time will soon be up, and their days are numbered. Because Jesus sits at God’s right hand, earthly authorities no longer have ultimate authority over us. If Jesus is Lord, then Caesar is not.

Baptism announces both Salvation and Judgment. Through baptism we dramatized our identification with the Jesus who died but is alive forevermore — and we with him. At the same time we announce that the old world has fallen under the judgment of God, much in the same way as Noah and his family pronounced judgment on the old world through the flood, and then announced the arrival of new creation when the ark docked on Ararat and they emerged as the new earth’s residents.⁵

Emerging from the waters of baptism, the Christian awakens within God’s New Creation, announcing to the world that God’s Kingdom has already dawned. Swearing allegiance to Jesus as Lord, the Christian declares his commitment to work *for the kingdom*, even as he constantly prays, “Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.” And to that theme we now turn.

Commitment to the Kingdom

Your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven (Matthew 6:10; Luke 11:2)

At the dawn of the 20th century, prior to the first world war, many Christians imagined that human progress was the same as the arrival of God’s kingdom. This belief had its roots in the myth of progress birthed during the 19th century. Not everyone who believed in human progress believed in the Gospel. Secular forms of the kingdom existed even during the enlightenment of the 18th century. However, a series of crises in the modern world prompted a reassessment of the form God’s kingdom would eventually take. One term frequently applied was *eschatological* — from the Greek word *eschatos* which means “the end” or “the last.” The emphasis fell on the suddenness and the abruptness of God’s coming kingdom. Even as Jesus unexpectedly rose from the dead in *the present time* — an event only imagined *at the end of days* — so also the arrival of the kingdom would

⁵ Peter will later further develop his imagery of water as belonging both to *creation* and *judgment* (see 2 Peter 3:5-6).

assume the form of *crisis* rather than simple *progress*. Faced with enormous decisions about human survival, God's people would need to become *people of the end* as well as *people of new creation*.

The church is the *eschatological* people of God, birthed by the dying and rising Jesus who already sits at God's right hand. They live in the *last days* of the old world while all the time bearing witness to the *first days* of the new creation. By living the life of Jesus even now, Christians provide evidence of what God's new world will look like when it finally comes. To say that we are *eschatological* people means that we are, in the present, showing to the world the hopeful signs of God's wonderful future plans for His world.

This also offers insight into the ways baptism functions as a *sign* of the future. When we are baptized, we become signs of God's dawning kingdom. One way to express this is to recite Paul's famous announcement:

Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come (2 Corinthians 5:17)

The phrase "in Christ" closely comports with what happens in baptism. In a dramatic re-enactment of Jesus' death and resurrection, we are united with him and become part of his body as the people of God. Theologians refer to this as the *corporate identity* of Jesus and his followers. What happened to Jesus now happens to us. Or, to borrow the language of the *Our Father*, what happens "in heaven" also gets implemented "on earth." In explicit terms, Paul makes this connection:

What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin that grace may abound? 2 By no means! How can we who died to sin still live in it? 3 Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? 4 We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life. 5 For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we shall certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his. 6 We know that our old self was crucified with him in order that the body of sin might be brought to nothing, so that we would no longer be enslaved to sin. 7 For one who has died has been set free from sin. 8 Now if we have died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with him. 9 We know that Christ being raised from the dead will never die again; death no longer has dominion over him. 10 For the death he died he died to sin, once for all, but the life he lives he lives to God (Romans 6:1-10).

Notice the juxtaposition "just as Christ" with "we too."

1. If we are baptized into Christ, then we are baptized into his death.
2. If we are buried with Christ in the baptism of death, then we are raised with Christ in newness of life.
3. If we are united in Christ's death, then we are united in Christ's resurrection.
4. If our old self is crucified with Christ, then we are no longer slaves to sin.
5. If we have died with Christ, then we will also live with him.
6. If Christ is raised from the dead, then he will no longer die again since death no longer has dominion over him.

Baptism, under this framework, becomes the announcement that death no longer has kingdom authority ("dominion") over Christ, but he has authority over it. Through baptism, we announce new life to the world, but we also announce the kingdom authority of Jesus over the "last enemy, death" (see also 1 Corinthians 15:26). This defeat of death, along with all false claimants to the throne, finds support throughout the New Testament. Baptism portrays an ordeal — a war — in which Jesus does battle with the forces of evil and defeats them. What circumcision symbolized in the Old Testament, baptism does in the New Testament. One passage illustrates this point:

11 In him also you were circumcised with a circumcision made without hands, by putting off the body of the flesh, by the circumcision of Christ, 12 having been buried with him in baptism, in which you were also raised with him through faith in the powerful working of God, who raised him from the dead. 13 And you, who were dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, God made alive together with him, having forgiven us all our trespasses, 14 by canceling the record of debt that stood against us with its legal demands. This he set aside, nailing it to the cross. 15 He disarmed the rulers and authorities and put them to open shame, by triumphing over them in him (Colossians 2:11-15).

When we are baptized, we bear witness to “the powerful working of God” in our lives and to the forgiveness of our sins. Paul uses distinct legal language to describe how the death of Christ cancelled the debt of sin. He also makes clear that “rulers and authorities” have been “disarmed” and “shamed” by the triumph of Christ over them. Once again, baptism is seen as the witness of Christ’s supreme authority not only in heaven but on earth.

Now if Christ has triumphed over the evil powers and if we united with him (as symbolized in baptism), then baptism becomes our entrance into the victorious life — the life where sin is defeated and God’s righteous life starts taking shape in our lives. But this is more than mere symbol; it is concrete reality. God does for us in Jesus Christ what He promised to do for His people on the “last day” (the *eschaton*). We are the first-fruits of his coming kingdom. The church is His down payment on what He plans to do for the whole world. Much as Noah and his family emerged from the ark to populate the new world after the flood, so we emerge from the waters of baptism, dramatizing our commitment to the kingdom which God is even now bringing to earth.

A few words about the term “sacrament” are in order here. When we say that baptism is a *sacrament*, we are saying something about the dedication of our lives to the service of God. The Latin word *sacramentum* originally referred to an oath taken by all Roman legionaries on entering the Roman army. On the rare chance of punishment by Decimation, the surviving legionaries were often required to renew this military oath, which was the foundation of Roman military discipline. It was created by Augustus during his military reforms in the early first century. Such punishment was applied to deserters or cowards. Divided into groups of ten, a *decimatio*, each group would draw lots and the person on whom the lot fell would be executed by the other nine. The remaining soldiers were required to take the *sacramentum*. It is important to note that the lots fell regardless of guilt, innocence or rank. Conceivably, an innocent soldier might bear the guilt for something he did not do — the innocent dying in place of the guilty.

As applied to Baptism and the Lord’s Supper (Eucharist), they are “sacraments” which declare oaths of allegiance to the dying and rising Lord whose innocent life paid the debt of the guilty. Fresh from the waters of baptism, followers of Jesus swear anew their allegiance to the one who died for them and rose again. Their baptism is equally an act of consecration. Meredith Kline, writing about baptism as the “oath-sign of the new covenant,” says: “Christian baptism is thus the New Covenant sign of consecration and discipleship. It is immediately evident in the great commission (Matthew 28:18-20) that consignment under the authority of Christ is the chief thing in Christian baptism. For there baptizing the nations takes its place alongside teaching them to obey Christ’s commandments in specification of the charge to disciple them to him who has been given all authority in heaven and earth.... Baptism is a sacrament in the original sense of *sacramentum* in its etymological relation to the idea of consecration, and more particularly its employment for the military oath of allegiance.”⁶

Through baptism, we swear public allegiance to our covenant Lord in whose service we gladly find ourselves. Once sinners, having deserted God’s human creation, we are now brought back into the cohort of God’s coming kingdom, part of His advance guard announcing the forgiveness of sins to a world held captive to the enemy’s will. Our message, the Gospel, is the royal announcement that Jesus is Israel’s Messiah and Lord of the world. On earth God has established a colony of heaven with all the privileges of kingdom children in the service of the King. We confess that, on our own, we cannot *build the kingdom*, but we can certainly implement it through the achievements of Jesus Christ. Because God promises resurrection life to us, we are confident that the work we do here will last forever, and none of our labor is “in vain” (see 1 Corinthians 15:58) when done “in the Lord.”

God’s new world has already dawned, and the Christian community, united through baptism, is the sign that it has. What God does in and through baptized believers, He fully intends to implement throughout the whole world. While it is true that our work here for the advancement of the kingdom is marked by suffering, we also

⁶ Meredith G. Kline, *By Oath Consigned*, Eerdmans, 1968, p. 79-81.

know that the Holy Spirit shares that suffering, as does the creation itself which waits for God to finish in us what He has begun (see Romans 8:18ff).

What do we mean when we use the word “kingdom” and apply it to what God is doing in the world? When we think of “kingdom,” images spring to mind of titles and lands and power, of armies too, all the symbols of authority. But Jesus of Nazareth shows us what God’s kingdom is like. It’s different from all others. He invites us to become his subjects on earth and in heaven. Scholars point out that “kingdom” refers more to “reign” than to “realm;” more to a “person” than to a “place.” That can be an oversimplification. The kingdom of God is His *reign over His realm*. By submitting to the rule of Jesus Christ we come under his reign in advance of the rest of his creation. We must grapple with these questions: Who reigns over us? Who makes the decisions that affect us day by day? The government? Our bosses? Ourselves? Our desires? If we are to live in God’s kingdom, Jesus of Nazareth says the he must reign over us.

What would *justice* look like in a world where God is once more King? If God reigned on earth as He does in heaven, would peace break out? Would justice rule? Would all this world’s wrongs be righted? Did not Jesus of Nazareth ask us to pray for and to work for such justice day after day? It’s an invitation, a desire expressed: “come.” Something from deep inside, the call wells up, “come.” Let it be soon, may it be now, may your kingdom come, father God, for too long we’ve waited, for too long we’ve longed. Come quickly Jesus of Nazareth and bring God’s kingdom with you.

Our will is our desire, our drives, all the things we wish for and work for, all the things we want to make happen. So what is God’s will? It’s His desire: all the things He wants to make happen. Our will is to make His will our own will. In every town, in every country, on every continent, in fact, over all the earth there’s a battle being waged, a struggle between good and evil, and the battlefield is the human heart. If God wins the battle, His kingdom comes on earth. The world inside affects the world outside.

A popular song says “Heaven’s a place on earth.”⁷ But we know that heaven is where God is in charge, where He is supreme ruler. He is a king with an agenda. He plans to reign on earth and in heaven, so we pray, “May your kingdom come.”

Baptism: Digging Deeper⁸

The foundation for baptism was laid in the Old Testament, while its outworking as the gift of New Creation appears in the New Testament. Christ's own baptism began his public ministry and functioned as an act of public commissioning at the hand of John the Baptizer. What follows is an overview of baptism, taking its sources from Jewish and early Christian materials.

Old Testament Background

History of the Jewish *Mikveh*

The term *mikveh* in Hebrew literally means any gathering of waters, but is specifically used in Jewish law for the waters or bath for the ritual immersion. The building of the *mikveh* was so important in ancient times it was said to take precedence over the construction of a synagogue. Immersion was so important that it occurred before the high Priest conducted the service on the Day of Atonement, before the regular priests participated in

⁷ By Belinda Carlisle.

⁸ Sources for this background material on baptism include: Ron Moseley, "The Jewish Background of Christian Baptism," from *The Institute For Advanced Studies In The Jewish Roots Of The Christian Faith*; C.K. Barrett, *The New Testament Background: Selected Documents*, New York: Harper and Row, 1961; Henry Thiessen, "Baptism," *Lectures in Systematic Theology*, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1949, pp.422-426; Millard J. Erickson, "The Initiatory Rite of the Church," *Christian Theology*, Grand Rapids: Baker, 1983, pp. 1089-1105. Three articles on "Baptism" by R.P. Roth, Paul Jewett, and John Murray appear in *The Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible*, Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1975, pp. 464-469. Another solid piece of scholarship is *Baptism in the New Testament*, by G.R. Beasley-Murray, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1962.

the Temple service, before each person entered the Temple complex, before a scribe wrote the name of God, as well as several other occasions.

The *Mishnah* attributes to Ezra a decree that each male should immerse himself before praying or studying. There were several Jewish groups that observed ritual immersion every day to assure readiness for the coming of the Messiah. The Church Fathers mentioned one of these groups called Hemerobaptists which means "daily bathers" in Greek. Among those used to regular immersion were the Essenes and others that the Talmud calls *tovelei shaharit* or "dawn bathers."

On the third day of creation we see the source of the word *mikveh* for the first time in Genesis 1:10 when the Lord says, "...to the gathering (*mikveh*) of waters, He called seas." Because of this reference in Genesis the ocean is still a legitimate *mikveh*.

The Mikvaot Around The Temple

The New Testament tells us that many of the early church's daily activities were centered around the Temple. Historically, we know that there were many ritual immersion baths (*mikvaot*) on the Temple Mount including one in the Chamber of Lepers situated in the northwest corner of the Court of Women (*Mid.* 2:5). Josephus tells us that even during the years of war (66-73 A.D.) the laws of ritual immersion were strictly adhered to (*Wars*, 4:205). The Temple itself contained immersion baths in various places for the priests to use, even in the vaults beneath the court (*Commentary to Tam.* 26b; *Tam.* 1:1). The High Priest had special immersion pools in the Temple, two of which are mentioned in the *Mishnah*. We are told one of these was in the Water Gate in the south of the court and another was on the roof of the Parva Chamber (*Mid.* 1:4; *Mid.* 5:3). There was an additional place for immersion on the Mount of Olives which was connected with the burning of the red heifer (*Par.* 3:7). A special ramp led to the *mikveh* on the Mount of Olives from the Temple Mount, which was built as an arched way over another arched way to avoid uncleanness from the graves in the valley below. Recent archaeological excavations have found 48 different *mikvaot* near the Monumental Staircase leading into the Temple Complex.

Three Basic Areas

According to Jewish law there are three basic areas where immersion in the *mikveh* is required:

1. Immersion is required for both men and women when converting to Judaism. There were three prerequisites for a proselyte coming into Judaism: Circumcision, baptism, and sacrifice (Maimonides, *Hilkh. Iss. Biah* xiii. 5).
2. Immersion is required after a woman has her monthly period (Lev. 15:28).
3. Immersion is required for pots and eating utensils manufactured by a non-Jew (*Encyclopedia of Jewish Religion* p-263).

Besides these, there are other times when it is customary to be immersed in the *mikveh* such as the occasion before Yom Kippur as a sign of purity and repentance and before the Sabbath in order to sensitize oneself to the holiness of the day.

The Six Descending Orders of Ritual Immersion

There are six descending orders of ritual baths in the *Mishnah* (Oral Laws of how to accomplish the written Law) and the highest order is that of a spring or flowing river. We see Jesus understanding and fulfilling this order in Matthew 3:16 as He comes to be baptized in the Jordan River "fulfilling all righteousness." This highest order was called Living Water and illustrated the forgiving of sins, therefore, we hear Jesus using this term concerning Himself (John 4:10-11).

The Water Restrictions

There were also six basic restrictions on the water used in the *mikveh* including such rules as:

- (1) the *mikveh* can not contain other liquid besides water.
- (2) The water has to be either built into the ground or be an integral part of a building attached to the ground.
- (3) The *mikveh* can not be flowing except for a natural spring, river or ocean.
- (4) The water can not be manually drawn.
- (5) The water can not be channeled to the *mikveh* by anything unclean.
- (6) The *mikveh* must contain at least 40 *sa'ah* or approximately 200 gallons of water.

The term *sa'ah* is an ancient Biblical measurement equivalent to approximately five gallons. All six requirements come from the original Hebrew words found in Leviticus 11:36. Rabbi Yitzchok ben Sheshes said the amount of 40 *sa'ah* was derived from the idea that the largest normal human body has a volume of 20 *sa'ah*, therefore the amount of water needed to "nullify" this body is double this amount or 40 *sa'ah*.

Why Be Immersed?

To the ancient Jew, the *mikveh* was a process of spiritual purification and cleansing, especially in relation to the various types of *Turmah* or ritual defilement when the Temple was in use. Although God has not revealed all the meaning of the *mikveh*, it is obvious because of the amount of space given to it in Scripture, and the effort of Jesus to fulfill it, the command is of utmost importance. All commands of the Lord fall into three categories:

1. The moral or ethical laws that are necessary for man to live in harmony are known as *Mishpatim* and are literally translated "judgments".
2. The rituals and festivals which reawaken us to important religious truths such as Sabbath, holidays, the *Tefillin* and the *Mezuzah* that remind us of God's presence are known as *Edos* and are literally translated "witnesses".
3. The third group often has no explicit reason given for their existence except for Israel's identification as God's chosen people to the other nations (Deuteronomy 4:6). This group of laws are known as *Chukim* and are literally translated as "decrees". Among the decrees of this group are the dietary laws as well as ritual immersion.

How Immersion Was Done

Jewish baptism has never been taken lightly, but in ancient times immersion was to be performed in the presence of witnesses (*Yebam.* 47b). The person being baptized made special preparations by cutting his nails, undressed completely and made a fresh profession of his faith before the designated "fathers of the baptism" (*Kethub.* 11a; *Erub* 15a). This is possibly where churches, sometime later, got the term Godfathers. The individual stood straight up with the feet spread and the hands held out in front. The candidate would totally immerse themselves by squatting in the water with a witness or baptizer doing the officiating. Note the New Testament points out the fact that Jesus came up straightway out of the water (Matthew 3:16).

The earliest drawing of Christian baptism was found on the wall of a Roman catacomb in the second century showing John standing on the bank of the Jordan helping Jesus back to shore after self immersion.

Ancient sages teach that the word *mikveh* has the same letters as Ko(v)Meh, the Hebrew word for "rising" or "standing tall," therefore we see the idea of being baptized "straightway."

Although it is the Jewish belief that repentance is necessary, purification from defilement is done primarily through water, while other effects of sins are covered by blood (Romans 4:7; note the "almost all things" in Hebrews 9:22). The concept of immersion in rabbinic literature is referred to as a new birth (*Yeb.* 22a; 48b; 97b; *Mass. Ger.* c.ii).

Six other important aspects of ancient Jewish immersion

1. Immersion was accompanied by exhortations and benedictions (Maimonides *Hilkh. Milah* iii.4; *Hilkh. Iss, Biah* Xiv .6). A convert would reaffirm his acceptance of the Torah by declaring, "I will do and I will hear" which was a phrase from the *oath* that was originally taken by the priests not to forsake the Torah (Deuteronomy 29:9- 14). This ritual demonstrates the willingness of the convert to forsake his Gentile background and assume his Jewish identity by taking on the status of one who keeps the commandments. According to a number of Jewish sages, *mayim*, which is the Hebrew word for "water", shares the same root as the word *mah*, meaning "what." This teaching points out that when a person immerses in water, he is nullifying the fleshly ego and is asking, "what am I?" in the same manner that Moses and Aaron did in Exodus 16:7 when they said to the Lord, "we are what?"
2. The Jewish baptism candidates were often immersed three times. The idea of total immersion comes from the Scripture in Leviticus 15:16 when it says, "he shall wash all his flesh in the water." One reason it was customary to immerse three times was because the word *mikveh* occurs three times in the Torah.
3. According to Jewish law the immersion had to have a required witness. The Biblical phrase "in the name of" was an indication of the required witness. In several New Testament references such as I Corinthians 1:13, 15; Matthew 21:25; Acts 1:22; and Acts 19:3 we see early baptism mentioned in conjunction with the name of individuals such as John and Paul. Further information on this can be found in Jewish literature concerning proselyte baptism where it indicates his baptism required attestation by witnesses in whose name he was immersed.
4. The immersion candidate was not touched by the baptizer in Jesus' day. Because Leviticus 15:16 says "He shall wash all his flesh in the water," Judaism stresses that the entire body must come in contact with the water of the *mikveh*. To insure the immersion was valid, no clothing or individuals could touch the candidate. Any such intervention that prevented the water from reaching a part of the body was known as *Chatzitzah* and rendered the immersion invalid. Although the *mikveh* was more spiritual than physical, often the bath had two sets of steps, one entering and another leaving so as not to defile what had been purified.
5. The baptismal water (*Mikveh*) in rabbinic literature was referred to as the "womb of the world", and as a convert came out of the water it was considered a new birth separating him from the pagan world. As the convert came out of these waters his status was changed and he was referred to as "a little child just born" or "a child of one day" (*Yeb.* 22a; 48b; 97b). We see the New Testament using similar Jewish terms as "born anew," "new creation," and "born from above." According to Dr. Arnold Fruchtenbaum rabbinic literature uses the term "born again" to refer to at least six different occurrences. Note each of these life changing experiences: (a) When a Gentile converts to Judaism. (b) When an individual is crowned king. (c) At age 13 when a Jewish boy chooses to embrace God's covenant and be numbered with the believers. (d) When an individual gets married. (e) When an individual becomes a rabbi. (f) When an individual becomes the head of a rabbinical school.
6. Jewish law requires at least three witnesses made up of qualified leaders to be present for certain immersions (*Yebam* 47b). Ordinarily a member of the Sanhedrin performed the act of observing the proselytes immersion, but in case of necessity others could do it. Secret baptism, or where only the mother brought a child, was not acknowledged.

Repentance Without Baptism

One of the most important teachings in Judaism is that of repentance. According to both Scripture and rabbinic literature, no matter how great the sin, if a person repents and forsakes the sin before God he can be forgiven. As we see in the case of John, Jesus, and all New Testament writers, repentance was always involved. The Jerusalem Talmud states, "nothing can stand before repentance" (*Yebamos* 47b). According to Dr. David Flusser, the Dead Sea Scrolls as well as the New Testament teach that water can purify the body only if the soul has first been purified through repentance and righteousness.

Water and Blood Both Illustrate God's Cleansing In Judaism

Both water and blood are used constantly in the Torah and the New Testament as the two main agents to illustrate God's cleansing. The Jews believe that uncleanness is not physical, but rather a spiritual condition as

related in Leviticus 11:44 where it states by wrong actions one can make the "soul unclean." Therefore, the purification through ritual immersion, as commanded in Scripture is basically involved with the soul, rather than the body. Note how both water and blood are cited in Scripture.

With regard to blood:

- (1) Blood is used in cleansing in relation to the Passover Lamb (Exodus 12).
- (2) Blood is used in cleansing in relation to the Day of Atonement (Leviticus 16).
- (3) Blood is used in cleansing in relation to the Feast Offerings (Leviticus 23).
- (4) Blood is used in cleansing in relation to the five Levitical Offerings (Leviticus 1-7).
- (5) Blood is used in cleansing in relation to the atonement for the soul (Leviticus 17:11-14).

With regard to water:

- (1) Water is used in cleansing in relation to the separation and the ashes of the Red Heifer (Numbers 19).
- (2) Water is used in cleansing in relation to the consecration to priestly ministry (Leviticus 8:6).
- (3) Water is used in cleansing in relation to the cleansing of the leper (Leviticus 14:1-8).
- (4) Water is used in cleansing in relation to the different washings of the Law (Hebrews 9:10).
- (5) Water is used in relation to the remission of sins (Acts 2:38); Titus 3:5; Mark 16:16; Acts 22:16; Romans 6:3; I Peter 3:20-21; Ephesians 5:26; John 19:34; I John 5:6; Hebrews 9:19- 23).

Summary

A detailed study of the Jewish background of Christian baptism shows that it is vitally important, but God doesn't always tell us why. Obviously, the convert could repent and have a part in the life to come without it, but the emphasis seems to be pointing to the taking on of a new "believer" status illustrated as a "new birth" by immersion. In any covenant with the Lord the three items of God's Word, the blood, and a token are always present (Genesis 17:11). Jesus was always cautious to have three witnesses in everything He did (I John 5:7-8). In the Old Testament circumcision was considered the token of God's covenant, and in the New Testament we see the same wording concerning baptism as it is referred to as "circumcision made without hands" (Colossians 2:11-12). Whatever religious denomination, all believers should agree that immersion has its roots in the Jewish *mikveh* of Jesus' day, and it is of utmost importance for each of us to fulfill this righteous deed.

New Testament Teaching on Baptism

In both the Old and New Testaments God enters into a relationship with his covenant people. A covenant includes both promises and responsibilities by both partners. A special ceremony seals the covenant through a distinctive sign. For the Old Testament people of God, that sign was circumcision (Genesis 17:1-14; Exodus 24:1-12). In the death and resurrection of Jesus, God renewed his covenant and brought into being a renewed covenant people, called the *ekklēsia* ("the church") (Jeremiah 31:31-34; 1 Corinthians 11:23-26). The baptism of infants and adults, both male and female, is the sign of this covenant. In baptism the church witnesses that it is joined in covenant to God; through baptism new persons are initiated into that covenant. The covenant connects God, the community of faith and the person being baptized. But it is the grace of God which begins the covenant relationship and allows the people and the individual to respond in faith. Through Jesus' continuing presence on earth in the Holy Spirit, the church is maintained as the community of the new covenant. For this community, baptism is both by water and the Spirit (John 3:5; Acts 2:38). It is the dramatic enactment of the death and resurrection of Jesus through the Spirit (Acts 2; Romans 6:1-11; 8:9-14). The Spirit is called the "seal" as the identifying "mark" that a person belongs to God (2 Corinthians 1:21-22).

Since the days of the early church, baptism by water and baptism by the Spirit have been connected (Acts 19:17). Christians are baptized with both, sometimes by different sign-actions. Water is administered in the name of the triune God (Father, Son, Holy Spirit), while the Holy Spirit is invoked with the laying on of hands, in the presence of the congregation. Water provides the central symbolism for baptism. The richness of its meaning for the Christian community is told in the great story of the Bible which speaks of the waters of creation and flood, the liberation of God's people by passage through the sea, the gift of water in the wilderness,

and the passage through the Jordan River to the promised land. In baptism we identify ourselves with this people of God and join the community's journey to God. The use of water in baptism also symbolizes cleansing from sin, death to old life, and rising to begin new life in Christ.

Christ forms the church as his body by the power of the Holy Spirit (1 Corinthians 12:13, 27). Baptism is the sacrament of initiation and incorporation into the body of Christ. An infant, child or adult who is baptized becomes a member of the universal church: it is the rite of the whole church performed in the presence of the congregation assembled. The whole church, through a series of promises, affirms its own faith and commits itself as spiritual mentor and support for the one being baptized. Baptism is not merely an individualistic, private, or domestic occasion.

Baptism brings us into union with Christ, with each other, and with the church in every time and place. Through this sign and seal of our common discipleship, our equality with Christ is made manifest (Galatians 3:27-28). We affirm that there is one baptism into Christ, celebrated as our basic bond of unity in the many communions that make up the Body of Christ (Ephesians 4:4-6). The power of the Spirit in baptism does not depend on the mode by which water is administered, the age or psychological disposition of the baptized person, or the character of the minister. It is God's grace that makes the sacrament whole. One baptism calls for various churches to overcome their divisions and visibly show their unity. Our oneness in Christ calls for mutual recognition of baptism in these communions as a means of expressing the unity that Christ intends (1 Corinthians 12:12-12).

Baptism proclaims the forgiveness of our sins (Acts 2:38) and our right relationship with God, that we are a justified people, freed from the guilt and penalty of sin. It is a form of repentance and the acceptance of Christ's atonement made real in our lives by the Holy Spirit.

Baptism celebrates the new life Christ makes possible for us (2 Corinthians 5:17; John 3:5; Titus 3:5).

New birth into life in Christ, signified by baptism, is the beginning of that process of growth in grace and holiness through which God brings us into closer relationship with Jesus Christ, and shapes our lives increasingly into conformity with the divine will. Sanctification is a gift of the gracious presence of the Holy Spirit, a yielding to the Spirit's power, a deepening of our love for God and each other. Baptism is the doorway to the sanctified life. The sacrament teaches us to live in the expectation of further gifts of God's grace. Baptized believers and the community of faith are committed to showing the world what the new humanity looks like. They also look forward to the coming reign of God on earth. Baptism is fulfilled only when the believer and the church are wholly conformed to the image of Christ.

The baptizing of a person, whether as an infant or an adult, is a sign of God's saving grace. That grace—experienced by us as initiating, enabling and empowering—is the same of all persons. All stand in need of this grace and none can be saved without it. The difference between the baptism of adults and that of infants is that the Christian faith is consciously being professed by an adult who is baptized. A baptized infant comes to profess her or his faith later in life, after having been nurtured and taught by parents or other responsible adults within the faith community. Infant baptism is the prevailing practice in situations where children are born to believing parents and brought up in Christian homes and communities of faith. Adult baptism is the norm when persons find or renew faith later in life.

Infant baptism has been the historic practice of the overwhelming majority of the church throughout the Christian centuries. While the New Testament contains no explicit mandate, there is ample evidence for the baptism of infants in Scripture (Acts 2:38-41; 16:15,33) and in early Christian doctrine and practice. Infant baptism rests firmly on the understanding that God prepares the way of faith before we request or even know that we need help (prevenient grace). The sacrament is a powerful expression of the reality that all persons come before God as no more than helpless infants, unable to do anything to save ourselves, dependent on the

grace of God. Through the church, God claims infants as well as adults to be participants in the gracious covenant of which baptism is the sign. But baptism does not magically impart salvation apart from an act of personal faith.

Ordinarily, baptism occurs only once. Even if the person falls into sin and away from the church, returning requires repentance and renewal of the covenant, but not necessarily re-baptism. Some traditions may view Adult Baptism as a covenant renewal or reaffirmation of one's infant baptism. Scripture gives no clear indication about the need for re-baptism. However, it does affirm that there is but "one baptism", even as there is "one Lord and one faith" (Ephesians 4:5). Every time a person is baptized in the presence of the faith community, all baptized persons have an opportunity to reaffirm, in the hearts, their own baptism. Much like the practice of renewing marriage vows, baptized persons may renew the covenant with God without actually going through the waters of the sacrament a second time.

Baptism is a crucial threshold that we cross on our journey in faith. Through baptism we are incorporated into the ongoing history of Christ's mission, and we are identified and made participants in God's new history in Jesus Christ and the new age that Christ is bringing. We await the final moment of grace, when Christ comes in victory at the end of the age to bring all who are in Christ into the glory of that victory. Baptism has significance in time and gives meaning to the end of time. In it we have a vision of a world recreated and humanity transformed and exalted by God's presence. We are told that in this new heaven and new earth there will be no more temple, for even our churches and services of worship will have had their time and ceased to be, in the presence of God, "the first and the last, the beginning and the end" (Revelation 21-22).

Until that day, we are charged by Christ to "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age" (Matthew 28:19-20). Baptism is at the heart of the gospel of grace and at the core of the church's mission. When we baptize we say that we understand as Christians about ourselves and our community: that we are loved into being by God, lost because of sin, but redeemed and saved in Jesus Christ to live new lives in anticipation of his coming again in glory. Baptism is an expression of God's love for the world, and the effects of baptism also express God's grace.

Concluding Thoughts

Baptism is practiced universally throughout the Christian community, having been commanded by Jesus within the Great Commission as the initial commissioning of disciples. We normally reserve the word "ordination" for consecration to the Gospel ministry as deacons or elders. However, within the church, every member is consecrated a "priest" and together form a "royal priesthood and holy nation." In an eloquent text from his first letter, Peter writes:

5 You yourselves like living stones are being built up as a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ....9 But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light (1 Peter 2:5, 9).

Proclaiming "the excellencies of him who called you" is our mission, Peter tells us. The Greek word *aretē* refers to "moral excellence, goodness, redemptive acts, power of God." Our mission means making clear to the world the true character of God, shining like light in the darkness from which Christ has delivered us. Baptism is our lively witness to this transfer of residence from darkness to light. It is also the dramatic consecration of our lives to the priestly service of making God known.

Just as the priests of the Old Testament were consecrated to their service, so we too, through the initiatory rite of baptism, embark on the Christian mission, joining with countless other Christ followers who belong to the people of God. Again, the Old Testament helps us see this graphically, as Paul describes baptism in light of the Exodus:

1 I want you to know, brothers, that our fathers were all under the cloud, and all passed through the sea, 2 and all were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea, 3 and all ate the same spiritual food, 4 and all drank the same spiritual drink. For they drank from the spiritual Rock that followed them, and the Rock was Christ (1 Corinthians 10:1-3).

Using the twin symbols of *cloud* and *sea*, Paul draws the comparison between Israel at the Exodus and the New Israel in Christ. The cloud referred to the special "pillar of cloud" which served as a shelter and protection of God's people from the heat of the blazing sun as they made their journey through the wilderness toward Canaan — the land of promise. When leaving Egypt, God united His people under covenant protection as they passed through the waters of the Red Sea. That sea was both a symbol of salvation and of judgment. To the pursuing hosts of Pharaoh's army, the parted waters became a prison for his defeated warriors who fell beneath the overwhelming flood. To Israel, the same waters invited them to cross the path of rescue safely to the other side. So with baptism. United as the people of God, in the shadow of sin and death, God rescues us by cloud and sea also, but this time it is the cross and resurrection of Jesus which are in view.

Having shared this momentous experience, Israel underwent its own version of baptism. As a result, God would later tell Moses:

4 You yourselves have seen what I did to the Egyptians, and how I bore you on eagles' wings and brought you to myself. 5 Now therefore, if you will indeed obey my voice and keep my covenant, you shall be my treasured possession among all peoples, for all the earth is mine; 6 and you shall be to me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation. These are the words that you shall speak to the people of Israel (Exodus 19:4-6).

God's people became a nation of "priests" by virtue of their shared symbolic baptism in the cloud and the sea. This story, Paul tells us above, is a type of our baptism where the waters represent our union as God's people, commissioned as holy nation and holy priesthood on behalf of the world.

Glory to God. Amen.

Digger Deeper: *On a Mission from God: Becoming a Missional People — From Noncommittal to Commissioned*
(Bob Brown)

To gain a deeper understanding of *On a Mission from God: Becoming a Missional People — From Noncommittal to Commissioned*, carefully read the selected passages below. To aid you in your study, we invite you to visit the website <http://notes.chicagofirstnaz.org>, or pick up a copy of the *Background Notes* at the **Information** desk, or from your ABF leader. Now consider the following questions, as you ask the Lord to teach you.

1. Suggest three purposes for Christian baptism. If you have already been baptized, how did baptism function in your life? Were there any tangible results which followed that experience? If you have not been baptized, what expectations might you have as you consider taking this important step?
2. According to Matthew 28:18-20, what purpose did Jesus give for baptism? What is the relationship between baptism and being a disciple?
3. Baptism is about public testimony and commitment. Using the following passages as your basis, discuss the importance of commitment in the Christian life: Matthew 6:24=Luke 16:13; Luke 12:8-9.
4. To what does Peter compare baptism in 1 Peter 3:20-22. How is that an appropriate comparison? According to this passage: What does baptism *do*? What does baptism *show*?
5. In baptism we announce to the world that our loyalties have changed. In what way?
6. How does baptism dramatize the words of Matthew 6:10 (Luke 11:2), "Your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven"?
7. Relate 2 Corinthians 5:17 to what we *proclaim* in our baptism.
8. Paul discusses the meaning of baptism in Romans 6:1-10. Briefly summarize his main points.
9. Why does Paul compare baptism to circumcision in Colossians 2:11-15? How does baptism function under the New Covenant as circumcision did under the Old Covenant?
10. Returning to Matthew 28:18-20, discuss the meaning of the phrase "in the name of" as it applies to the words spoken during our baptism. Refer to the following scriptures for additional insight into the meaning of that phrase: 1 Corinthians 1:13, 15; Matthew 21:25; Acts 1:22; 19:3.
11. How is baptism a matter of both *water* and *Spirit*? See John 3:5; Acts 2:38; 19:17; 1 Corinthians 12:13, 27.
12. What connection does Titus 3:4-7 make between "washing" and "the Holy Spirit"? Do you think Paul had baptism in the background as he wrote this passage?
13. From Ephesians 4:5 we learn that there is "One Lord, One Faith, One Baptism." Explain why these three are brought together, and what does that tell us about baptism as *commitment*?
14. Why are we baptized "in the name of" the Triune God — Father, Son and Holy Spirit? Think about the relationship you have to each member of the Trinity as you give your answer.
15. In what way is baptism a form of *commissioning* for *mission*?