

**Acts 8 : 38, 39:** "They went down both into the water . . . They came up out of the water."

Obviously, if sprinkling or pouring had been the New Testament method, candidates for baptism would not have needed to go near a lake or river. A cup or small bottle of water would have been sufficient!

(c) **The Way Christ's Disciples Interpreted His Command about Baptism**

**Rom. 6 : 4, 5:** "Buried" . . . "Planted" . . . "Risen".

**Col. 2 : 12:** "Buried" . . . "Risen".

Paul is using simple, unmistakable word-pictures here. But the acts of "sprinkling" or "pouring" bear not the slightest resemblance to being "buried", "planted", or "raised"!

A further, tangible evidence for baptism by "immersion" in the early Church is the fact that the oldest Christian churches in the world, some of which have been standing in Italy, Greece and North Africa for 1,500 years, have large, sunken baptismal fonts, suitable for complete immersion!

### 3.—THE MEANING OF BAPTISM

Just as the New Testament is clear about the **Mandate** and the **Method**, it is equally explicit about the **Meaning** of baptism. The most detailed explanation of the deeper, spiritual meaning of baptism is given in **Rom. 6 : 4-13**.

v 3: "Baptised into Christ's death."

vv 4, 5: "Buried with Him by baptism."

vv 4, 5: "Raised with Him to newness of life."

vv 6-10: "Crucified with Him, that henceforth we should not serve sin."

vv 11-13: "Dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God."

Further insights are given in other New Testament passages:

**John 3 : 5:** "Born again of water and of the Spirit."

**Gal. 3 : 27:** "Baptised into Christ . . . put on Christ."

**Col. 2 : 12:** "Buried with Him . . . risen with Him."

**Col. 3 : 1-3:** "If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above."

From these Scriptures we draw the following conclusions concerning the meaning of baptism:

It is an acted memorial of the death, burial and resurrection of Christ.

It is a graphic dramatisation of true conversion.

It is the formal adoption ceremony into the family of God.

It is a public witness that we have become lifelong disciples of Jesus Christ.

It is the only legitimate doorway to membership in the Christian Church.

*NOTE: An understanding of these facts forestalls all controversy about "INFANT BAPTISM". It is automatically excluded, as having no meaning whatsoever in the Scriptural context. ACCORDING TO THE NEW TESTAMENT, CHRISTIAN BAPTISM HAS MEANING ONLY FOR THOSE WHO ARE OLD ENOUGH TO UNDERSTAND AND EMBRACE THE GOSPEL MESSAGE—TO BELIEVE, REPENT, AND BE TRULY "BORN AGAIN". These are the New Testament prerequisites for baptism. Apart from them, though conducted at any age, it is a piece of empty and meaningless ritual. There is no magical, saving virtue in the water of baptism itself. It has symbolic value only, and is meaningless apart from personal faith in, and commitment to, Christ. (See Mark 16:16; Acts 2:37, 38; 8:37).*

**Conclusion** Acts 22 : 16: "And now, why tarriest thou?"

This quiet challenge comes home to the heart of everyone who learns the truth about baptism. It is the public seal of our discipleship, and God is honoured by prompt obedience.

As we ponder this question, let us remember that the pathway down into the waters of baptism is sanctified by the footsteps of the Master Himself. It is always safe to follow where Jesus leads the way. He trod this path, and He will be by our side as we follow in His steps today.