

# Why the First Believers Were Baptized (Part 1)

My previous six articles have focused on reasons that *some* believers have given for being baptized. In each case the reason was found to lack biblical support. That leads to a very important question:

Recognizing that the first believers in Jesus were baptized and that baptism was in some way associated with salvation, *why were the first believers baptized?*

Let's begin with ***the instructions that Jesus gave*** His apostles after His resurrection and before He ascended to heaven.

**And Jesus came up and spoke to them, saying, "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. 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 28:18–20**

Jesus gave His apostles three basic instructions:

- ◆ Make disciples;
- ◆ Baptize them; and
- ◆ Teach them.

From this passage we can make a simple conclusion about baptism: *Jesus expected his apostles to baptize those who were becoming disciples.* If this were the only reference to baptism, we might wonder why Jesus instructed baptism. Yet, other passages also make a connection between baptism and discipleship.

Those who were baptized by John the Baptist became disciples of John. Likewise, those baptized by the disciples of Jesus became disciples of Jesus. (John 4:1-2; Acts 19:1-5)

Consider also the instruction Jesus gave as recorded in the Gospel of Mark (16:15-16):

**And He said to them [apostles], "Go into all the world and preach the gospel to all creation. He who has believed and has been baptized shall be saved; but he who has disbelieved shall be condemned."**

Jesus expected the apostles to baptize believers, and he gave a specific reason: *The baptized believer will be saved (from condemnation).*

One fellow told me that this passage does not say that a person will be condemned if they are not baptized. Technically, yes, but let's test his conclusion. A simple illustration should do:

Some years ago a local burger joint offered a burger for only \$1 on Sunday if you brought a current church bulletin. (The regular price was about \$2.50.) So, this was the deal: On Sunday, whoever brings in a current church bulletin and a dollar will get a burger.

That seems simple enough, but wait! Using the reasoning of my acquaintance, the ad did not say that you would not get a burger for a dollar if you did not bring in a current church bulletin. On a technical point, that is true. However, would you expect to get a dollar burger if you did not bring in a church bulletin? To 'assume' that you would get a dollar burger without the bulletin would be just that, an *assumption*.

When my acquaintance made his statement about baptism, he was making a bold assumption that he could simply choose to omit baptism, though it was clearly and directly instructed. I guess he can take a chance on his reasoning, but I cannot change what is written. Belief in Jesus accompanied with baptism will save.

So, it is clear from the instruction given by Jesus that He expected believers to be baptized.

The purpose: *Discipleship and salvation.*