The Inaugural Sign of Faith in Christ
Acts 10:44-48, 16:30-34, 19:1-5

From the time of Jesus, Christians committed to the Bible as the Word of God and to the Great Commission are committed to baptism as the inaugural, outward sign of a person's coming to Christ. The Bible depicts baptism as the immersion of a person in water to demonstrate their faith in Jesus. Acts 10:44-48, 16:30-34, & 19:1-5 provide a consistent pattern from which we can discern the nature and significance of baptism.

First, the biblical word means "to immerse in water." There should be no question that Biblical baptism is full immersion. Sprinkling or pouring water was only used in emergencies until 1100 years after Christ. In the Bible, people were immersed.

Second, baptism was reserved for those who had personally and willfully chosen to become followers of Christ. The 1st record of a church leader speaking of baptizing babies was nearly 200 years after Jesus. Baptism in Scripture didn't precede faith; it followed faith in Jesus.

Each of the stories in Acts also shows other, individual aspects of the significance of baptism. In the case of the centurion, Cornelius, it was a privilege signifying full acceptance into the church, the family of God—a kind of opening of the front door. In the case of the jailer, it offered a moment of catharsis—a chance to show, see, and feel that in Jesus, sins are washed away. In the case of the disciples of John the Baptist, it was a sign of an irreversible commitment.

Salvation takes place when a person says to God, "I'm trusting in Jesus for my salvation." It's an internal thing. Baptism is an external sign. It serves as a kind of line in the sand to step over for all to see. That's what makes baptism so important and special. After you've told the Lord that you love and trust Jesus as your Savior, now you want everyone else to know and see for themselves it's true.