

BAPTISM

When people commit to a decision, they sign a contract. It might be to buy a house, or perform a job, or end a dispute. Marriage is a commitment. These contracts carry legal implications. In Biblical times, a commitment was often called a covenant and its legal aspects considered an ordinance. In certain cases, especially Biblical times, the parties making a covenant perform a ceremony. Marriage is an example of an agreement in which the parties still perform a ceremony.

When someone truly believes in Jesus, they want to change their lives and become His disciple. The word *disciple* comes from *discipline* and implies that those who become Jesus' disciples adopt His discipline. That is why Jesus said, *"If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me."* (Matt 16:24). Disciples change their behavior by denying their natural thought-processes and inclinations to live like Jesus wants. They do His will instead of their own.

When a people decide to repent, they make an agreement. They make that contract in a ceremony called baptism. When the crowd of Jews on Pentecost saw the Holy Ghost rest on the apostles and were convicted by Peter's preaching, they asked, *"Men and brethren, what shall we do?"* Then Peter said to them, *'Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit'"* (Acts 2:37-38). They believed Peter's words and Peter, like John the Baptist and Jesus, told them to repent. Then, he admonished them to make an agreement to deny themselves and follow Jesus by being baptized..

Paul explained that baptism symbolized the repentant believer's willing death. He wrote, *"Do you not know that as many of us as were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death? Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death"* (Rom 6:3-4). He added, *"Knowing this, that our old man was crucified with Him, that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves of sin"* (Rom 6:6). When a person repents and is baptized, he agrees to deny himself and take up his cross to follow Jesus.

Baptism is an agreement with Jesus. Not only does the repentant believer agree to change how he lives, but Jesus makes an agreement, too. First, He forgives all their sins. Second, He promises to raise up that person after this life. Paul explained, *"Just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. For if we have been united together in the likeness of His death, certainly we also shall be in the likeness of His resurrection"* (Rom 6:4-5).

Those tired and frustrated by living as they want can find relief from their failures and disappointments. Like Saul, who fought Christianity and became blind, anyone can find a new life by confessing Jesus and being baptized. What Ananias told Saul applies to everyone. He said, *"Now why are you waiting? Arise and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on the name of the Lord"* (Acts 22:16).