

BAPTISM - IN WHAT?

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John the Baptist's practice of cleansing, or "baptizing", sinners in water was not an idea peculiar to him. Rather it was a practice long known to not only the Judaeans but also the Greeks. This should be no surprise, since it is known that both the Danaan and Dorian Greek tribes were direct descendants of the Hebrew Israelites. It would be odd if they did not share many of the same customs.

While there are many examples of "baptism" – ritual cleansing in water – in Greek literature, here I will cite one. In a play, *Eumenides*, by the fifth-century B.C. Greek poet Aeschylus, his character Orestes says at lines 448-452: "It is the law that he who is defiled by shedding blood shall be debarred all speech until the blood of a suckling victim shall have besprinkled him by the ministrations of one empowered to purify from murder. Long since, at other houses, have I been thus purified both by victims and flowing streams." (Loeb Library edition of *Aeschylus*). Here we see that the Greeks believed that one may be cleansed of sin either by baptism ("flowing streams") or by the blood of sacrifice (compare Heb. 9:13).

In Judaea the Qumran sect, writers of the Dead Sea Scrolls, speak of similar rituals. While the precise dating of this sect is not known, from their eschatological literature it can be told that the Scrolls were written after Pompey's subjugation of Judaea, but before the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 A.D. Yet the sect made no mention of John the Baptist, of Yahshua Christ, or of anything Christian. In the scroll designated 1QS (*1QRule of the Community*), Columns II & III, we find the following: "And anyone who declines to enter [the covenant of Go]d in order to walk in the stubbornness of his heart shall not [enter the Com]munity of his truth, since his soul loathes the disciplines of knowledge of just judgments. He has not the strength to convert his life and shall not be counted with the upright. His knowledge, his energy and his wealth shall not enter the council of the Community because he ploughs in the mud of wickedness and there are stains on his conversion. He shall not be justified while he maintains the stubbornness of his heart, since he regards darkness as paths of light. In the source of the perfect he shall not be counted. He will not become clean by the acts of atonement, nor shall he be purified by the cleansing waters, nor shall he be made holy by seas or rivers, nor shall he be purified by all the water of ablution. Defiled, defiled shall he be all the days he spurns the decrees of God ..." 4Q414 (*4QRitual of Purification A*) also mentions a water cleansing ritual in connection with atonement.

It is observed at Matt. 23:15 that the Pharisees were proselytizing ("converting") all sorts of people into Judaism. It seems that after the absorption of the Edomites into Judaea recorded by Josephus (i.e. *Antiquities* 13:9:1) and Strabo (16.2.34) and explained by Paul (Romans chapters 9 to 11), that anything became possible. Baptism – not the cleansing of one who was already an Israelite, but rather seen as the mystical metamorphosis of one who was not – was an important part of such proselytizing. John Lightfoot, the 17th century cleric, in volume 2 on pages 55 to 63 in *A Commentary on the New Testament from the Talmud and Hebraica*, explains the details of this proselytizing: "Whensoever any heathen will betake himself, and be joined to the covenant of Israel ... and take the yoke of the law upon him, voluntary circumcision, baptism, and oblation, are required ... 'If an Israelite take a Gentile child ... or find a Gentile infant, and baptizeth him in the name of a proselyte – behold, he is a proselyte'

... First, You see baptism inseparably joined to the circumcision of proselytes ... Secondly, Observing from these things which have been spoken, how very known and frequent the use of baptism was among the Jews, the reason appears very easy why the Sanhedrim, by their messengers, inquire not of John concerning the reason of baptism, but concerning the authority of the baptizer; not what baptism meant, but whence he had a license so to baptize, John 1:25 ..." and Lightfoot goes on to explain that once a proselyte was baptized he was considered "an Israelite in all respects", the same attitude that all of the so-called 'churches' have today, taking anyone at all in off the streets and baptizing them as 'Christians'! Yet it is evident that John did no such thing, for he wouldn't baptize a viper: Matt. 3:7, Luke 3:7.

So when John the Baptist began his ministry, we see that his baptism was no novel thing to either the Greeks, the Romans (who shared the same culture), or the Judaeans. Hence Yahshua's question to the Pharisees, recorded at Mark 11:30 and Luke 20:4, concerning John's baptism was quite natural, and notice of it supports Lightfoot's comments that the Pharisees inquired not of John's baptism, but of John's authority to baptize.

Yet it is clear in the New Testament that baptism in water was a commission for John, and not for Yahshua Christ. For John himself is recorded at Matt. 3:11 as stating: "I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance: but he that cometh after me is mightier than I, whose shoes I am not worthy to bear: he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost, and *with* fire" (for that fire, note Luke 12:49). This was also recorded to some extent in all three of the other gospels, at Mark 1:8, Luke 3:16, and John 1:26-34. This is again related when Luke recorded the words of Yahshua Christ at Acts 1:5: "For John truly baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost not many days hence." Yet where is the commission for anyone after John, following Christ, to baptize anyone with water? There is none! But it took the apostles some time to come to this realization.

That Yahshua Himself purposely rejected ritual cleansing is clear in the Gospel account, for instance at Mark 7:1-23, where it is explained that the Judaeans took the prescriptions of the law to extremes, and added also the "traditions of the elders." When asked by the Pharisees "Why walk not thy disciples according to the tradition of the elders, but eat bread with unwashen hands?" Yahshua is said to have responded "Well hath Isaiah prophesied of you hypocrites, as it is written, This people honoreth me with *their* lips, but their heart is far from me. Howbeit in vain do they worship me, teaching *for* doctrines the commandments of men, For laying aside the commandment of Yahweh, ye hold the tradition of men, as the washing of pots and cups: and many other such like things ye do." ("washing" here is from the Greek verb βαπτίζω, "to baptize.") Then Yahshua added: "Full well ye reject the commandment of Yahweh, that ye may keep your own tradition", and He goes on to discuss those things which truly defile a man, which come from within him, and not from without.

For some time the apostles continued to baptize people with water. This is, of course, evident at Acts 8:36-38, where Philip is found baptizing the eunuch from Ethiopia (who was obviously an Israelite living in Ethiopia, since he was found reading Isaiah and had traveled to Jerusalem to worship), and at Acts 10:44-48, where even though, "While Peter yet spake these words, the Holy Ghost fell on all them which heard the word", Peter still sought to baptize those people with water. Many Christians defending water baptism point out these two places in Acts, yet they neglect to consider the rest of the story!

Later Peter realized what had happened in Caesaria (at Acts 10:44-48), and he related it to the other apostles who were in Jerusalem: "And as I began to speak, the

Holy Ghost fell on them, as on us at the beginning. Then remembered I the word of the Prince, how that he said, John indeed baptized with water, but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost" (Acts 11:15-16). From this point on, water is not again mentioned in connection with baptism, anywhere in the rest of Acts. Rather, we shall see in the epistles of Paul and of Peter something quite different! Yet first, at Acts 18:24-26, Aquila and Priscilla met a certain man named Apollos, who "was instructed in the way of the Prince; and being fervent in the Spirit, he spake and taught diligently the things of the Prince" yet he knew "only the baptism of John." So did Aquila and Priscilla again use water baptism, to baptize Apollos in the name of Yahshua? No, they only "took him unto *them*, and expounded unto him the way of Yahweh more perfectly."

Ritual cleansing, of which the baptism of persons was a form (see it of the priests at Ex. 29:4-7; 40:12, and at Lev. 8:6), like the other "works" (rituals) of the law, had its time and place. Yet Paul tells us time and again that the "works" (rituals) of the law have been done away with, for which see Rom. 3:19-28; 4:1-9; 9:11, 32; 11:6-7; Gal. 2:16; 3:2-10; Eph. 2:15; Col. 2:14; Heb. 6:1-2 and 9:1-14. Of course, Paul did not, as so many suppose, teach that the law itself was done away with. Quite to the contrary: "... yea, we establish the law" (Rom. 3:31).

Yahshua Christ Himself has told us that it is the Word of Truth that cleanses: "Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth. As thou hast sent me into the world, even so have I also sent them into the world. And for their sakes I sanctify myself, that they also might be sanctified through the truth" (John 17:17-19).

As a matter of prophecy, Yahweh told us that He would cleanse Israel. John 17 tells us that His Word is the manner by which He sanctifies, along with the ultimate sacrifice in the body of Christ (Heb. 9:12, 10:10). Yahweh has told us "I will cleanse them from all their iniquity" (Jer. 33:8) and "I will save them out of all their dwelling places, wherein they have sinned, and will cleanse them: so shall they be my people, and I will be their God" (Ezek. 37:23). Now, how could we possibly continue to suppose that some 'priest' or 'minister', in the manner of the pagan Greeks or of the Pharisees, could cleanse us with water, if Yahweh has already cleansed us? Note Luke 11:39-41, and John 13:10-11. Unless Yahweh has cleansed us, such cleansing is futile, and the event at John 13 is symbolic of this fact. Yet He did not cleanse Judas Ish Kerioth, the Canaanite traitor. (The word "washed" at Luke 11:38 is also from the verb βαπτίζω, "to baptize.")

Paul realized that the baptism of the Spirit was through the Word, and at Eph. 5:25-27 he wrote: "... just as Christ has also loved the assembly, and had surrendered Himself for it, in order that He would consecrate it, cleansing it in the bath of the water in the Word, that He may present it to Himself in honor, the assembly not having a blemish or a wrinkle or any of such things, but that it would be holy and blameless" (my own translation). So we see that a cleansing in "the bath of the water of the Word" is the way to be cleansed, and not in some ritual with actual water. Peter writes in agreement at 1 Peter 3:21: "The like figure whereunto *even* baptism doth also now save us (not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward Yahweh,) by the resurrection of Yahshua Christ," And Paul again, instructing Titus, "Not from works of those in righteousness, things which we have done, but according to that mercy of His, He has preserved us through a bath of rebirth and renewal of the Holy Spirit, which He poured out upon us richly through Yahshua Christ our Savior" (Titus 3:5-6, my own translation). And so hopefully it has been established that with Christ, baptism is through the Word, and the sanctification of Israel is in the Truth and in the Holy Spirit.

The American Heritage College Dictionary defines “sacramentalism” as “The doctrine that observance of the sacraments is necessary for salvation and that such participation can confer grace.” The word “sacrament” is defined “a. In the Eastern, Roman Catholic, and some other Western Christian churches, any of the traditional seven rites instituted by Jesus that confer sanctifying grace. b. In most other Western Christian churches, the two rites, Baptism and the Eucharist, instituted by Jesus to confer sanctifying grace.”

The early organized ‘church’ identified the seven so-called ‘sacraments’ seen in Catholicism, which many of the Protestant ‘churches’ have since reduced to two, in order to help justify a need for their priesthood: for only trained ‘priests’ can administer their ‘sacraments’, as the ‘church’ would have one believe. Yet we need not strive to demonstrate that they are twisting the Word: for Yahweh administers grace to the children of Israel, not some ‘sacrament’ or some ‘priest’, and He administers it freely – not upon any conditions! For this see John 1:16-17; Rom. 3:24; 5:15, 17; 11:6; 1 Cor. 1:4; Eph. 4:7; 1 Pet. 1:10; 3:7; 4:10; 5:12, and many other places. Never is the grace of Yahweh said to be contingent upon the believing Israelite’s performing any action in ritual. This I subscribe to the “Nicolaitans”, or “people-conquerors” as the Greek word means literally, who are mentioned at Rev. 2:6 and 2:15. For these are the professional priesthood who would appoint themselves rulers over our faith if given the chance – something Paul himself would not do (2 Cor. 1:24). Rather, the children of Israel have liberty from all of these things, in Yahshua Christ (Isa. 61:1; Luke 4:18; Rom. 8:21; 1 Cor. 10:29; 2 Cor 3:17; Gal. 2:4; 5:1, 13; 1 Pet. 2:16). Binding one to the performance of “sacraments” is contrary to the will and the Truth of Yahweh.

It is also apparent, that the Catholic baptism ritual as we know it, also called a “christening”, came not from the Bible but instead was an adaptation of the ancient naming ritual of our pagan Germanic ancestors. The Romish ‘church’ adopted many things pagan in their “conversion” of pagans to Christianity, which in truth rather paganized the true Christian assemblies. *The American Heritage College Dictionary* defines “christen” as “1.a. To baptize into a Christian church. b. To give a name to at baptism. 2.a. To name. b. To name and dedicate ceremonially ...” That this custom was extant among the pagan Germans is found in the Edda. Here from *The Poetic Edda* translated by Lee M. Hollander, University of Texas Press, p. 121, from the Rígspula, or The Lay of Ríg, stanza 7:

“Gave Edda birth to a boy child then,
(in clouts she swathed) the swarthy - skinned one.
Thrall they called him, and cast on him water
(dark was his hair and dull his eyes).”

A footnote accompanying line 3 of this stanza states in part “This is the old Germanic baptismal ceremony of ‘name-fastening’ ... See ‘Hávamál,’ St. 158.” In The Sayings of Hár, or Hávamál, at stanza 158 we seem to have the baptism rite connected to the idea of eternal life. From *The Poetic Edda*, p. 39:

“That thirteenth I know if a thane’s son I shall
 wet with holy water:
never will he fall, though the fray be hot,
 nor sink down, wounded by the sword.”

It should be no surprise that the Teutonic peoples should have such practices and beliefs, since they themselves were descended from the “lost” Israelites of the Assyrian deportations.

True “sanctification” is explained in the Bible, though sadly so few understand it. First, the word translated in the A.V. “sanctification”, but also “holiness” is ἁγιασμός (*hagiasmos*, Strong’s #38). The adjective ἅγιος (*hagios*, #40) is “holy”, or often used as a Substantive (a noun) is “saint.” The verb ἁγιάζω (*hagiazō*, #37) is in the A.V. “to hallow”, “to be holy”, or “to sanctify.” Thayer defines the verb in part “to separate from things profane and dedicate to God” with which Liddell & Scott concur, having the primary definition of the adjective, in the secular (pagan) Greek sense, “devoted to the gods, sacred, holy.” And so it may be evident that something sanctified, sacred, holy, pure, etc. is something separated and devoted to Yahweh.

The only people Yahweh had ever sanctified to Himself were those in the loins of Isaac, who was offered to Yahweh on the altar by his father Abraham and at Yahweh’s request. Once something is offered to a deity in the ancient world, it is perceived as belonging to the deity! Although it may not appear so on the surface, the placing of Isaac upon the altar was only a ceremony which dedicated all of Isaac’s offspring to Yahweh for His own purposes. The Israelites and the Edomites both came from Isaac. Out of these, the Israelites became to Yahweh a “peculiar” (special) treasure above all people (Exod. 19:5), a relationship which still stands to this day (1 Pet. 2:9) and which always shall stand (Rev. 21:12; 22:2). Only the Israelites, the “vessel unto honor” and “vessels of mercy” of Romans 9:21-23, were cleansed by Yahshua as He promised (Jer. 33:8; Ezek. 37:23 et al.) and so only the long-dispersed Nations of Israel are the subject of Peter’s vision related in Acts chapters 10 and 11. Esau and the Edomites, also in the loins of Isaac, are the “vessel unto dishonor” and the “vessels of wrath fitted to destruction” of Romans 9:21-23, for Paul is contrasting Jacob and Esau throughout this chapter and parts of chapters 10 and 11 continue the theme, where Paul is explaining that he only cares for the true Israelites in Judaea, and not for the others, for they are not his “kinsmen according to the flesh.”

How could any ‘priest’ or ‘minister’ cleanse (baptize) with water that which Yahweh has already sanctified and cleansed? How may one seek cleansing with water, when we are told that sanctification and cleansing are through the word (John 17:17; Eph. 5:26; 1 Pet. 3:21)? Out of the mouths of two witnesses, even three, is not this matter established?

The universalist “churches” can not teach the truth: that only the children of Israel – whom Paul calls the descendants of Isaac down through the flesh, and not any “spiritual” so-called Israelites – are cleansed, sanctified, and therefore redeemed by Yahshua Christ. So instead they cling to the baptism of John – in water – and vainly pretend to cleanse any beast who comes along, attempting to admit every foul creature into the Kingdom. Of these ‘priests’ and ‘ministers’ Paul speaks in Hebrews “How much more severe a punishment do you suppose he who has trampled upon the Son of Yahweh would be accounted worthy? And who regarded as common the blood of the covenant in which he was sanctified? And who insulted the Spirit of that favor? (Heb. 10:29, my own translation).

I would not forsake having been cleansed by the Word, and sanctified in the Spirit, for the vain ritual offered by the traditions of men. While the baptism of John had its purpose, time and place, it is far exceeded by the baptism of Christ Yahshua, and as John himself told us that it would be. *William R. Finck, Jr.*

Once we recognize all these things, we must then identify the baptism “ by the washing of the Word.” After Christ, it was nearly 1500 years before the Word of Yahweh was introduced by-and-large among the populace making it well-nigh impossible for such

a cleansing before that time. Therefore, the general “washing by the Word ” can only have been achieved during the last 500 years. Now that we have our open Bibles before us, we no longer have an excuse for not receiving this prophesied type of baptism which took the place of water baptism, and the only way it can be received is to be completely submerged in His Word.

Without realizing that one is a genetic descendant of Jacob, there is little incentive to read and study the Word and receive such a baptism. But thank goodness for the prophesied “ latter rain ”, which can only be the fully “ washed ” and corrected Israel Identity Message (wrongly dubbed C.I.).

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