

# BAPTISM

THE DOORWAY TO A NEW LIFE



BY MATTHEW A. GERMAN

## AUTHOR'S NOTES

Scripture quotations are based on the World English Bible, a translation in the public domain.

Unless otherwise indicated, bolded or underlined text in reference materials and quotes was added for emphasis by the author.

Our heavenly Father has a personal, revealed Name – Yahweh.

Though occurring 6,823 times in the original Hebrew manuscripts of the Old Testament, it has been replaced in most English versions of the Bible by a generic title – “the LORD”. Similarly, the promised Messiah of Israel has a Hebrew Name – Yahshua – which literally means “Salvation of Yah” or “Yah is Salvation”. In order to be as faithful as possible to the original Scriptures, the proper Hebrew Names and titles of Yahweh and Yahshua have been restored where applicable.

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# BAPTISM

## THE DOORWAY TO A NEW LIFE

*“Therefore if anyone is in Messiah, he is a new creation. The old things have passed away. Behold, all things have become new.” (2 Cor. 5:17)*

### INTRODUCTION

Baptism is a word that carries different connotations with different people. There are literally hundreds of different Christian denominations in the world today, and many of them have divergent views on baptism. Some differ on the exact mode of baptism (sprinkling, pouring, immersion, etc.), and many differ on the actual purpose of baptism and its relevance in today’s modern world.

As we will see from the pages of the Bible, baptism is not just some religious ritual or an after-thought of conversion. Rather, it is an essential part of the covenant-making process with the Creator of the heavens and the earth, and it represents the doorway to a brand new life in Messiah.

### BAPTISM IN WATER

John the Baptist came to prepare the way for Yahshua, the promised Messiah of Israel. He brought with him a strong message of repentance.

John came baptizing in the wilderness and preaching the baptism of repentance for forgiveness of sins. There went out to him all the country of Judea, and all those of Jerusalem. They were baptized by him in the river Jordan, confessing their sins. (Mark 1:4-5)

We find some additional details about this “baptism of repentance” in Matthew’s gospel account:

In those days, John the Baptizer came, preaching in the wilderness of Judea, saying, “Repent, for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand!” ...Then people from Jerusalem, all of Judea, and all the region around the Jordan went out to him. They were baptized by him in the Jordan, confessing their sins. But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees coming for his baptism, he said to them, “You offspring of vipers, who warned you to flee from the wrath to come? Therefore bring forth fruit worthy of repentance! Don’t think to yourselves, ‘We have Abraham for our father,’ for I tell you that God is able to raise up children to Abraham from these stones. Even now the axe lies at the root of the trees. Therefore, every tree that doesn’t bring forth good fruit is cut down, and cast into the fire.” (Matt. 3:1-2, 5-10)

The word ‘repentance’ is key and bears further consideration. Easton’s Bible Dictionary has this to say about it:

There are three Greek words used in the New Testament to denote repentance:

(1) The verb *metamelomai* is used of a change of mind, such as to produce regret or even remorse on account of sin, but not necessarily a change of heart. This word is used with reference to the repentance of Judas (Matt. 27:3). (2) *Metanoeo*, meaning to change one’s mind and purpose, as the result of after knowledge. This verb, with (3) the cognate noun *metanoia*, is used of true repentance, a change of mind and purpose and life, to which remission of sin is promised.

Evangelical repentance consists of (1) a true sense of one’s own guilt and sinfulness; (2) an apprehension of God’s mercy in [Messiah]; (3) an actual hatred of sin (Ps. 119:128; Job 42:5, 6; 2 Cor. 7:10) and turning from it to God; and (4) a persistent endeavour after a holy life in a walking with God in the way of His commandments. The true penitent is conscious of guilt (Ps. 51:4, 9), of pollution (51:5, 7, 10), and of helplessness (51:11; 109:21, 22). Thus he apprehends himself to be just what God has always seen him to be and declares him to be. But repentance comprehends not only such a sense of sin, but also an apprehension of mercy, without which there can be no true repentance (Ps. 51:1; 130:4).<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> “repentance.” Easton’s 1897 Bible Dictionary. 09 Dec. 2011. <Dictionary.com <http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/repentance>>.

The Hebrew word for repentance, *teshuvah*, derives from a word meaning “to return”. True Biblical repentance is more than simply feeling sorry for one’s sins – it is feeling so sorry for them that one turns away from the sinful behavior and goes the other way, i.e., returns to Yahweh and His ways.

Notice that the people coming to John for baptism did something – they confessed their sins (Matt. 3:6). Confession, as we will see shortly, is an integral part of repentance. In addition, John challenged the religious leaders of the day to “bring forth fruit WORTHY of repentance”; in other words, to demonstrate their repentance through their changed lives and changed behavior.

Yahshua would eventually pay the ultimate price – His own death – for the sins of those who will repent and put their trust in Him. Though He lived a sinless life and had no need to repent, He nevertheless set us an example by being baptized Himself:

“I [John the Baptist] indeed baptize you in water for repentance, but He who comes after me is mightier than I, whose shoes I am not worthy to carry. He will baptize you in the Holy Spirit and fire. His winnowing fork is in His hand, and He will thoroughly cleanse His threshing floor. He will gather His wheat into the barn, but the chaff He will burn up with unquenchable fire.” Then Yahshua came from Galilee to the Jordan to John, to be baptized by him. But John would have hindered Him, saying, “I need to be baptized by You, and you come to Me?” But Yahshua, answering, said to him, “Allow it now, for this is the fitting way for us to fulfill all righteousness.” Then he allowed Him. Yahshua, when He was baptized, went up directly from the water: and behold, the heavens were opened to Him. He saw the Spirit of Yahweh descending as a dove, and coming on Him. Behold, a voice out of the heavens said, “This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.” (Matt. 3:11-17)

This passage brings out several important points: first, that Yahshua the Messiah not only submitted to baptism but actually insisted upon it, in order to “fulfill all righteousness”; second, that this was well-pleasing in the Father’s sight; and third, that John brought a baptism of water for repentance but said that Yahshua would bring a different type of baptism – a baptism of the Holy Spirit and fire. This final point will be discussed in detail later.

## **BAPTISM SYMBOLIZED IN THE OLD TESTAMENT**

Baptism was not a brand new concept in the days of Yahshua; in fact, it was typified many centuries earlier by the washings prescribed under the Levitical priesthood (see Exodus 29:4 and 30:18-20, for example).

In addition, the events involving an infant Moses symbolized baptism – he was saved from the wrath of Pharaoh by being placed in a basket in the Nile River, and then he was raised up out of those waters and rescued by Pharaoh's daughter. (Exodus 2:1-10).

We can also see a clear example of baptism in the encounter between the prophet Elisha and Naaman, captain of the host of the king of Syria (2 Kings 5:1-14). Naaman was afflicted with leprosy, but when he was obedient to Elisha's instruction to dip himself seven times in the Jordan River, he was supernaturally healed (v14).

Two major events in the Old Testament also pictured baptism:

### **The Flood**

...who before were disobedient, when the longsuffering of Yahweh waited patiently in the days of Noah, while the ark was being prepared. In it, few, that is, eight souls, were saved through water. This is a symbol of baptism, which now saves you – not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward Yahweh, through the resurrection of Yahshua Messiah... (1 Peter 3:20-21)

By faith, Noah, being warned by Yahweh about things not yet seen, moved with holy fear, prepared an ark for the saving of his household, through which he condemned the world, and became heir of the righteousness which is according to faith. (Hebrews 11:7)

Noah believed Yahweh and by faith obeyed Him. As a result Yahweh saved Noah from the waters of death. The apostle Peter stated that this was a symbol of baptism, emblematic of the cleansing of an individual on the inside.

### **The Red Sea Crossing**

According to Scripture the ancient Israelites were actually baptized into Moses:

Now I would not have you ignorant, brethren, that our fathers were all under the cloud, and all passed through the sea; and were all baptized to Moses in the cloud and in the sea; and all ate the same spiritual food; and all drank the same spiritual drink. For they drank of a spiritual rock that followed them, and the rock was Messiah. (1 Cor. 10:1-4)

By faith, they passed through the Red Sea as by dry land. When the Egyptians tried to do so, they were drowned. (Hebrews 11:29)

Moses and the ancient Israelites also obeyed Yahweh by faith, passing through the sea. In doing so they were saved from Egypt, which is a symbol for sin (see Hebrews 11:25). NOTE: Exodus 14 contains the entire story of their escape through the Red Sea.

## THE NEW TESTAMENT AND YAHSHUA

Water baptism was actually prevalent during New Testament times, and this was not simply due to the influence and ministry of John the Baptist. In fact, archaeologists have discovered numerous large stone containers in the vicinity of the Temple Mount in Jerusalem. Referred to in Hebrew as a *mikvah* – literally ‘gathering [of waters]’ – one of these containers typically held at least 120 gallons of water. These ritual baths were used for the purpose of spiritual purification.

During the annual festivals<sup>2</sup> of Yahweh, tens of thousands of Jewish pilgrims would flock to the city. Scholars believe that the Pools of Bethesda and Siloam, to the north and south of the Temple Mount, were designed at the time of Herod the Great in order to accommodate the ritual purification needs of these large multitudes.

We have seen that Yahshua was baptized by John and that there are Old Testament allusions to baptism identified in the New Testament. But what did Yahshua actually have to say about baptism? We can glean a lot from some of His last instructions on this earth to His disciples:

Yahshua came to them and spoke to them, saying, “All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go you therefore,

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<sup>2</sup> To learn more about the awesome meaning of these festivals, request our free booklet entitled “The Biblical Holy Days – An Overview”

and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things which I commanded you. Behold, I am with you always, even to the end of the age. Amen.” (Matthew 28:18-20)

Obviously Yahshua expected His followers not only to make converts but disciples, people who would be baptized and taught to obey His commandments. He would empower them by the Holy Spirit to do just that, which He alluded to when He said “I am with you always, even to the end of the age.”

We find some additional interesting details in Mark’s account of these instructions:

He said to them, “Go you into all the world, and preach the gospel to the whole creation. He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who disbelieves will be condemned. And these signs will accompany those who believe: in My Name they will cast out demons; they will speak with new tongues; they will take up serpents; and if they drink any deadly thing, it will in no way hurt them; they will lay hands on the sick, and they will recover.” So then the Master Yahshua, after He had spoken to them, was received up into heaven, and sat down at the right hand of Yahweh. They went out, and preached everywhere, the Master working with them, and confirming the word by the signs that followed. Amen. (Mark 16:15-20)

Notice how belief is explicitly connected to baptism. According to the apostle Peter, baptism is the answer of a good conscience toward Yahweh (1 Peter 3:21). The disciples did as they were commanded and Yahshua confirmed the word by the supernatural signs that followed (casting out demons, speaking in new tongues, healing, etc).

Yahshua doesn’t change – He is the same yesterday, today, and forever (Hebrews 13:8). He promised that “these signs will accompany those who believe...” Notice that He did not limit it to those who stood there with Him on that day, or solely to the generation living at that time. When we do what He has commanded, He still confirms the word by the signs that follow – TODAY.

Yahshua’s disciples also considered baptism to be of paramount importance:

Peter said to them, “Repent, and be baptized, every one of you,



in the Name of Yahshua Messiah for the forgiveness of sins, and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.” (Acts 2:38)

NOTE: John the Baptist preached the baptism of repentance, but the gift of the Holy Spirit did not become available until after Yahshua’s death, burial, and resurrection (John 16:7). This gift, given through the laying on of hands after baptism, will be covered in more detail shortly.

Philip proclaimed the Messiah in the city of Samaria:

The multitudes listened with one accord to the things that were spoken by Philip, when they heard and saw the signs which he did; for unclean spirits came out of many of those who had them. They came out, crying with a loud voice. Many who had been paralyzed and lame were healed. There was great joy in that city... But when they believed Philip preaching good news concerning the kingdom of Yahweh and the name of Yahshua the Messiah, they were baptized, both men and women. (Acts 8:5-8, 12)

During their ministry at Philippi, a city in Macedonia, Paul and Silas were arrested, beaten, and thrown in prison. When they were supernaturally delivered, they seized the opportunity to minister the gospel to their jailer and his entire household:

But about midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to Yahweh, and the prisoners were listening to them. Suddenly there was a great earthquake, so that the foundations of the prison were shaken; and immediately all the doors were opened, and everyone’s bonds were loosened. The jailer, being roused out of sleep and seeing the prison doors open, drew his sword and was about to kill himself, supposing that the prisoners had escaped. But Paul cried with a loud voice, saying, “Don’t harm yourself, for we are all here!” He called for lights and sprang in, and fell down trembling before Paul and Silas, and brought them out and said, “Sirs, what must I do to be saved?” They said, “Believe in the Master Yahshua Messiah, and you will be saved, you and your house.” They spoke the word of the Master to him, and to all who were in his house. He took them the same hour of the night, and washed their stripes, and was immediately baptized, he and all his household. He brought them up into his house, and set food before them, and rejoiced greatly, with all his house, having believed in Yahweh. (Acts

16:19, 23-34)

Once again we see belief in Yahshua the Messiah is directly connected to water baptism.

## THE DOORWAY TO A NEW LIFE

We've seen from the Scriptures that baptism is important. But why – what does it picture? As we will see it is more than just a religious ritual or even obedience to a commandment.

Sin is the transgression of the law (1 John 3:4), and the wages or penalty of sin is death (Rom. 6:23). Since all have sinned and come short of the glory of Yahweh (Rom. 3:23), that means that each person has transgressed Yahweh's law and is under a death sentence due to his or her sins. The good news is that Yahshua paid the ultimate penalty for sin through His own death, but to benefit from His sacrifice one must become conformed to His death through baptism.

The word 'baptize' comes from the Greek word *baptizo* [bap-TID-zo], and it and related words are used about 100 times in the Greek manuscripts of the New Testament. *Baptizo* literally means to immerse or make fully wet, so baptism involves putting the person completely under water. This symbolizes death and burial; rising up out of the water symbolizes resurrection:

[You were] buried with Him in baptism, in which you were also raised with Him through faith in the working of Yahweh, who raised Him from the dead. You, being dead through your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, you He made alive together with Him, having forgiven us all our trespasses. (Col. 2:12-13)

We are buried with Yahshua through baptism. But it isn't enough just to put the "old man" of sin to death and bury him; we must also be raised up (symbolically and spiritually resurrected) with Yahshua through faith, to walk in newness of life.

Or don't you know that all we who were baptized into Messiah Yahshua were baptized into His death? We were buried therefore with Him through baptism to death, that just like Messiah was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we also might walk in newness of life. For if we have

become united with Him in the likeness of His death, we will also be part of His resurrection; knowing this, that our old man was crucified with Him, that the body of sin might be done away with, so that we would no longer be in bondage to sin. For he who has died has been freed from sin. But if we died with Messiah, we believe that we will also live with Him; knowing that Messiah, being raised from the dead, dies no more. Death no more has dominion over him! ... Likewise you also, reckon yourselves to be dead indeed to sin, but alive to Yahweh in Messiah Yahshua our Master. (Rom. 6:3-9, 11)

Through water baptism we rehearse the death, burial and resurrection of our Savior Yahshua the Messiah. In so doing we are allowing the death of our old, sinful nature, embracing Yahshua's atonement for our sins, and receiving forgiveness. Then, just as He was raised to life, we rise up out of the water committed to "walk in newness of life" through Messiah living in us and empowering us through the Holy Spirit. Baptism is literally the doorway to a brand new life in Messiah!

Part of the awesome good news of Messiah is that we can walk in newness of life. The "old man" of sin was crucified with Him, breaking its hold and power over us. We don't have to continue to live as we once lived.

I have been crucified with Messiah, and it is no longer I that live, but Messiah living in me. That life which I now live in the flesh, I live by faith in the Son of Yahweh, Who loved me, and gave Himself up for me. (Gal. 2:20)

For as many of you as were baptized into Messiah have put on Messiah (Gal. 3:27)

If one hasn't been baptized into Messiah (buried with Yahshua in baptism), then he has not put on Messiah! How can he expect to walk in newness of life? This is not simply water baptism, but the receiving of the Holy Spirit.

Therefore if anyone is in Messiah, he is a new creation. The old things have passed away. Behold, all things have become new. (2 Cor. 5:17)

When truly understood this verse is extremely powerful. When we come up out of the waters of baptism and receive the Holy Spirit, we

might look the same in the natural. But spiritually we are a brand new creation; old things have passed away and all things have become new.

Yahshua spoke of this “new birth” in the Spirit.

## The New Birth

Now there was a man of the Pharisees named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews. The same came to Him by night, and said to Him, “Rabbi, we know that you are a teacher come from Elohim<sup>3</sup>, for no one can do these signs that you do, unless Elohim is with him.” Yahshua answered him, “Most assuredly, I tell you, unless one is born again [anew], he can’t see the Kingdom of Yahweh.” Nicodemus said to Him, “How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter a second time into his mother’s womb, and be born?” Yahshua answered, “Most assuredly I tell you, unless one is born of water and spirit, he can’t enter into the Kingdom of Yahweh! That which is born of the flesh is flesh. That which is born of the Spirit is spirit. Don’t marvel that I said to you, ‘You must be born again.’ The wind blows where it wants to, and you hear its sound, but don’t know where it comes from and where it is going. So is everyone who is born of the Spirit.” (John 3:1-8)

Here Yahshua equates being “born again” with being born of water and of the Spirit. And He declared that, in order to see, experience, and enter into the Kingdom of Yahweh, “you must be born again” – it is not optional.

Interestingly, the Jewish Encyclopedia notes a similar connection between water baptism and receiving the Spirit:

“To receive the Spirit of God, or to be permitted to stand in the presence of God (*His Shekinah*), man must undergo Baptism... The Baptism of the proselyte has for its purpose his cleansing from the impurity of idolatry, and the restoration to the purity of a new-born man... (It) is to constitute a rebirth... and he must bathe ‘in the name of God’ – *‘leshem shamayim*’ – that is, assume the yoke of God’s kingdom imposed upon him by the one who leads him to Baptism”<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Elohim [eh-low-HEEM] – Hebrew word usually translated as ‘God’.

<sup>4</sup> “Baptism.” The Jewish Encyclopedia. Accessed 12 Dec 2011. <<http://www.jewishencyclopedia.com/articles/2456-baptism>>

## RELEVANCE FOR TODAY

We have clearly seen from the Bible that baptism was a central part of the teachings of the early *ekklesia*<sup>5</sup>. More than a mere religious ritual, this simple but profound ceremony actually marks the beginning of a brand new life in Messiah. There is no Biblical commandment to stop the practice of baptism, nor any indication that the New Testament Body ought to abandon Yahshua's mandate regarding it.

This is a symbol of baptism, which now saves you – not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward Yahweh, through the resurrection of Yahshua the Messiah (1 Peter 3:21)

The Bible instructs that “he who says he remains in Him [Yahshua] ought himself also to walk just like He walked” (1 John 2:6). We are to live the way Yahshua lived and walk the way He walked. He insisted upon being baptized by John in order to “fulfill all righteousness” (Matt. 3:15). We should follow His example in baptism as well.

### Baptism, the Biblical Way

The Biblical method of water baptism is by complete immersion. In fact, as already discussed, the English word ‘baptize’ comes from the Greek word *baptizo*, which means ‘to make whelmed’ (i.e., fully wet). The root word *bapto* means to whelm (i.e., cover wholly with a fluid).

Based on what we now understand about being buried with Messiah through baptism, this makes complete sense. When Philip baptized the Ethiopian eunuch, they both went down into water and then came up out of water (Acts 8:37-39).

In addition, baptism should be done in the name of Yahshua:

Then Peter said to them, “Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Yahshua Messiah for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.” (Acts 2:38)

What about Yahshua's instruction to His disciples to baptize “in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit”? (Matt. 28:19).

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<sup>5</sup> *ekklesia* (pronounced ek-klay-SEE-ah) is the Greek word for assembly or congregation. It is typically translated as ‘church’ in most English Bibles.

Some groups use that as a formula: “in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit”, rather than using an actual name. But Peter specifically said “in the name of Yahshua Messiah.” The name Yahshua contains the shortened or poetic form of the Father’s name – Yah. In fact, Yahshua literally means “Yah is salvation” or “salvation of Yah”.<sup>6</sup> So when one is baptized in the name of Yahshua, the Father’s name is included. Yahweh gave Yahshua “the Name above every name” (see Phil. 2:9-11).

In some religious circles there is a recent teaching on baptism that says that a person shouldn’t actually be baptized by anyone else, that the other person is only there as a witness to the event – in other words, that a person baptizes him or herself. However, there is no support for such a practice in the New Testament. In fact, people were clearly being baptized by John the Baptist during his ministry. Yahshua went and submitted Himself to John for baptism at the Jordan River, even though John professed that he wasn’t worthy to baptize Him (Matt 3:13-16). It would have been no great thing for John to simply witness Yahshua immersing Himself, but it was an entirely different thing for Yahshua to submit under John’s hands to baptism.

The apostle Paul said that he had baptized Crispus, Gaius, and the household of Stephanas (1 Cor. 1:15-16). And as mentioned, Philip baptized the Ethiopian eunuch.

## **WHAT SHOULD YOU DO?**

The single most important decision a person can ever make is to accept the sacrifice of Yahshua, repent of his sins, and be baptized. What should one do before making this most-important lifelong commitment?

### **Counting the Cost**

Now great multitudes were going with Him. He turned and said to them, “If anyone comes to Me, and doesn’t hate his own father, mother, wife, children, brothers, and sisters, yes, and his own life also, he can’t be My disciple. Whoever doesn’t bear his

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<sup>6</sup> For a detailed discussion on these Names, request our free booklet entitled “In the Name of the Father”.

own cross, and come after Me, can't be My disciple. For which of you, desiring to build a tower, doesn't first sit down and count the cost, to see if he has enough to complete it? Or perhaps, when he has laid a foundation, and is not able to finish, everyone who sees begins to mock him, saying, 'This man began to build, and wasn't able to finish.'... So therefore whoever of you who doesn't renounce all that he has, he can't be My disciple." (Luke 14:25-30, 33)

We are called not only to believe but to become disciples. Clearly, becoming a disciple of Yahshua is not something to be taken lightly or done on a whim. It is a lifelong, covenant commitment and means forsaking all that we have and all that we are.

When Yahshua spoke of hating father, mother, etc., He was obviously speaking in hyperbole, as we are commanded to honor our father and mother and love even our enemies (Matthew 19:19, 5:44). What He meant was that our love for Yahweh, Yahshua, and the things of the Kingdom must be greater than our love for anything or anyone else; that, in comparison to the immense love we have for Him, everything else seems inconsequential.

Some churches and denominations seem to be in such a hurry to get people saved and baptized that they don't take the time to ensure that those new converts really understand the commitment that they are making. This is a grave disservice to them and to the Father.

We must count the cost of discipleship. Although believers are equipped and empowered by the resurrection power of the Spirit, it isn't always an easy or tranquil life. We will face adversity and even persecution for the sake of Yahshua and the Kingdom.

"Everyone therefore who confesses Me before men, him will I also confess before My Father who is in heaven. But whoever denies Me before men, him will I also deny before My Father who is in heaven. Don't think that I came to send peace on the earth. I didn't come to send peace, but a sword. For I came to set a man at odds against his father, and the daughter against her mother, and the daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law. A man's foes will be those of his own household. He who loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me; and he who loves son or daughter more than Me isn't worthy of Me. He who doesn't take his cross and follow after Me, isn't worthy of Me. He who finds his life will lose it; and he who loses his life for My sake will find it." (Matt. 10:32-39)

Obviously, counting the cost of this lifelong commitment requires maturity. Infants and little children don't have the maturity necessary to make such a weighty decision; there are no examples of them being baptized in the Bible. At the same time we must remember Yahshua's words: "suffer the little children to come to Me" (Matt. 19:14). We must be very careful to nurture children as they are drawn to Yahshua; when they are mature enough to make the decision to be a disciple of Yahshua and be baptized, we certainly shouldn't hinder them.

## The Next Step

After being convicted of the need for baptism and counting the cost, what should you do? The answer is surprisingly simple:

Then Peter said to them, "Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Yahshua Messiah for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit." (Acts 2:38)

As they went on the way, they came to some water, and the eunuch said, "Behold, here is water. What is keeping me from being baptized?" Then Philip said, "If you believe with all your heart, you may." He commanded the chariot to stand still, and they both went down into the water, both Philip and the eunuch, and he baptized him. (Acts 8:36-38)

Some people believe that they must wait until they become "good enough" to be baptized. But there are only two basic Biblical requirements for baptism – belief in Yahshua and sincere, heartfelt repentance. One need not be perfect. In fact, there is no way to be spiritually perfect without receiving Yahweh's Holy Spirit; it is the Spirit that enables us to grow toward spiritual perfection.

... if you will confess with your mouth the Master Yahshua, and believe in your heart that Yahweh raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. For with the heart, one believes unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation. For the Scripture says, "Whoever believes in Him will not be put to shame." For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek; for the same Master is Sovereign of all, and is rich to all who call on Him. For, "Whoever will call on the Name of Yahweh will be saved." (Rom. 10:9-13)



Belief is important, but true belief leads to obedience, to action. After believing in our heart that Yahweh raised Yahshua from the dead, we must also repent of our sins and confess with our mouth that Yahshua is Sovereign. Then we will be saved. Something happens when we make a faith confession – a declaration – that Yahshua is our Master. We are making a covenant commitment, a vow or oath of loyalty. The Bible says “death and life are in the power of the tongue” (Proverbs 18:21).

If you would like personal counseling about being baptized, feel free to contact us. You may request this counsel and guidance free of charge and without any obligation on your part.

## BAPTISM OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

As we have seen, water baptism is a crucial step in an individual’s life and represents the doorway to a new life in Messiah. But there is more available to every believer – the baptism of the Holy Spirit. Recall the words of John the Baptist:

“I indeed baptize you in water for repentance, but He who comes after me is mightier than I, whose shoes I am not worthy to carry. He shall baptize you in the Holy Spirit.” (Matt. 3:11)

“I indeed baptize you with water, but He comes who is mightier than I, the latchet of whose sandals I am not worthy to loosen. He will baptize you in the Holy Spirit and fire” (Luke 3:16. See also Mark 1:8).

Obviously, according to John, the baptism of the Holy Spirit is different from water baptism and comes from Yahshua. In fact, during His earthly ministry Yahshua told His disciples that the Holy Spirit – the Spirit of truth – was with them and would be in them (John 14:17). He also promised:

“If anyone is thirsty, let him come to Me and drink! He who believes in Me, as the Scripture has said, from within him will flow rivers of living water.” But He said this about the Spirit, which those believing in Him were to receive. For the Holy Spirit

was not yet given, because Yahshua was not yet glorified (John 7:37b-39)

On the evening after His resurrection, we see the first example of this:

When therefore it was evening, on that day, the first day of the week, and when the doors were locked where the disciples were assembled, for fear of the Jews, Yahshua came and stood in the midst, and said to them, "Peace be to you." When He had said this, He showed them His hands and His side. The disciples therefore were glad when they saw the Master. Yahshua therefore said to them again, "Peace be to you. As the Father has sent Me, even so I send you." When He had said this, He breathed on them, and said to them, "Receive the Holy Spirit!" (John 20:19-22)

Notice that Yahshua breathed on them and told them to receive the Holy Spirit. Yet mere weeks later, just prior to His ascension to heaven, we read this account:

Being assembled together with them, [Yahshua] charged them, "Don't depart from Jerusalem, but wait for the promise of the Father, which you heard from Me. For John indeed baptized in water, but you will be baptized in the Holy Spirit not many days from now." Therefore, when they had come together, they asked Him, "Rabbi, are you now restoring the kingdom to Israel?" He said to them, "It isn't for you to know times or seasons which the Father has set within His own authority. But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come on you. You will be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the uttermost parts of the earth." (Acts 1:4-8)

Here Yahshua also made an obvious distinction between John's baptism in water and the baptism of the Holy Spirit. Also notice that this "baptism" of the Holy Spirit had to be different from the "receiving" of the Holy Spirit in John 20:21-22. Otherwise, why would He breathe on them and say "receive the Holy Spirit", then turn around a few weeks later and tell them to wait in Jerusalem because they would be "baptized in the Holy Spirit not many days hence"?

But what exactly is the baptism of the Spirit? Where does it come from? What is its purpose? Is it for today? Do we need it?

## What is the Difference?

We receive the Holy Spirit at conversion; however, the baptism of the Holy Spirit is a special gift given by Yahweh that often occurs some time after conversion. Though not required for salvation, this gift is available to all believers. It represents a deeper revelation of and communion with the Father, as well as spiritual empowerment – Yahshua promised His disciples that they would receive power when the Holy Spirit had come upon them, and that they would be His witnesses in all the earth.

This promise was fulfilled only days later on Pentecost:

Now when the day of Pentecost had fully come, they were all with one accord in one place. Suddenly there came from heaven a sound like the rushing of a mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting. There appeared to them tongues like fire and were distributed to them, and it sat on each one of them. They were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance [the ability to speak]. (Acts 2:1-4)

This powerful event caught the attention of a great multitude of Jews from various nations who were in Jerusalem for this festival (v5-10). They were amazed and perplexed by this display, for they heard them speaking in their own languages the mighty works of Yahweh (v11).

Immediately after this outpouring, Peter stood up and preached an awesome message, explaining to the mixed multitude exactly what was happening and why:

... this is what has been spoken through the prophet Joel: "It will be in the last days," says Yahweh, "I will pour forth of My Spirit on all flesh. Your sons and your daughters will prophesy. Your young men will see visions. Your old men will dream dreams. Yes, and on My servants and on My handmaidens in those days, I will pour out My Spirit, and they will prophesy." (Acts 2:16-18)

He went on to preach the message of salvation through Yahshua the Messiah:

"You men of Israel, hear these words. Yahshua of Nazareth, a man approved by God to you by mighty works and wonders and signs which God did by Him in the midst of you, even as you

yourselves know, Him, being delivered up by the determined counsel and foreknowledge of God, you have taken by the hand of lawless men, crucified and killed; whom Yahweh raised up, having freed Him from the agony of death, because it was not possible that He should be held by it... Let all the house of Israel therefore know assuredly that Yahweh has made him both Master and Messiah, this Yahshua whom you crucified.” Now when they heard this, they were cut to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, “Brothers, what will we do?” Peter said to them, “Repent, and be baptized, everyone of you, in the name of Yahshua Messiah for the forgiveness of sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. For to you is the promise, and to your children, and to all who are far off, even as many as Yahweh our God will call to Himself.” With many other words he testified, and exhorted them, saying, “Save yourselves from this crooked generation!” Then those who gladly received his word were baptized. There were added that day about three thousand souls. They continued steadfastly in the apostles’ teaching and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and prayer. (Acts 2:22-24, 36-42)

When the multitudes heard the message of Yahshua, they were convicted in their hearts and wanted to know what they should do. Peter said to them, “Repent and be baptized every one of you in the Name of Yahshua the Messiah to the remission of your sins; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.” (Acts 2:38). This represents the normal progression: repent, be baptized for the remission of sins, and then receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.

The book of Acts may be considered the “Holy Spirit handbook”. In fact, although people often refer to it as the “Acts of the Apostles”, it is really the “Acts of the Holy Spirit through the Apostles”. It records numerous instances after Pentecost where people received the baptism of the Holy Spirit.

We will look at them individually, but the key point to notice is that in all of these occurrences there was some physical evidence or proof that Yahweh had poured out His Spirit on a person or a people. While there may be many proofs of the baptism of the Holy Spirit, the two initial signs identified most prominently in Scripture are speaking in tongues and prophesying.

As we saw in the account from Acts 2, the disciples were filled with the Spirit and began to speak in other tongues (Acts 2:11). We find a

similar occurrence in Acts 10, where the apostle Peter was ministering the gospel at Caesarea to Cornelius and many of his friends:

“While Peter was still speaking these words, the Holy Spirit fell on all those who heard the word. They of the circumcision who believed were amazed, as many as came with Peter, because the gift of the Holy Spirit was also poured out on the Gentiles. For they heard them speaking in other tongues and magnifying God...” (Acts 10:44-46).

Notice that the proof to Peter’s Jewish companions that the Holy Spirit had been poured out on these Gentiles was that “they heard them speaking in other tongues and magnifying Yahweh.”

This passage presents an interesting counterpoint to the usual progression of repentance, followed by water baptism, then the receiving of the Holy Spirit. In this particular instance, the outpouring of the Holy Spirit occurred prior to water baptism. It probably had to happen this way in this particular situation in order for Peter and the other Jewish believers to recognize the awesome reality that Gentiles (non-Jews) could be full-fledged members of the household of faith. In fact, this proved to be a powerful testimony and turning point in the life of the early *ekklesia*, as Peter used this very event in arguing this point at the Jerusalem Council (Acts 15:7-9).

We find another interesting encounter in Acts 8, where Peter and John are sent to minister to new believers in Samaria:

Now when the apostles who were at Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the word of Yahweh, they sent Peter and John to them, who, when they had come down, prayed for them, that they might receive the Holy Spirit; for as yet it had fallen on none of them. They had only been baptized into the name of the Master Yahshua. Then they laid their hands on them, and they received the Holy Spirit. Now when Simon [Magus] saw that the Holy Spirit was given through the laying on of the apostles’ hands, he offered them money, saying, “Give me also this power, that whoever I lay my hands on may receive the Holy Spirit.” But Peter said to him, “May your silver perish with you, because you thought you could obtain the gift of Yahweh with money!” (Acts 8:14-20)

This encounter doesn’t specifically say what sign accompanied the

giving of the Holy Spirit; however, Simon Magus obviously witnessed something after the laying on of hands of the apostles. He was foolish enough to try to buy the ability to give the Holy Spirit to people through his own hands!

Saul, who was a great persecutor of the early *ekklesia*, had a dramatic encounter with the Messiah on the road to Damascus, during which he was struck blind (Acts 9:1-9). Ananias, a disciple living in Damascus, was sent by Yahshua to minister to him:

Ananias departed, and entered into the house. Laying his hands on him, he said, "Brother Saul, the Master, who appeared to you in the way which you came, has sent me, that you may receive your sight, and be filled with the Holy Spirit." Immediately there fell from his eyes as it were scales, and he received his sight. He arose and was baptized. (Acts 9:17-18)

On this occasion, Saul was converted and filled with the Holy Spirit, and his sight was restored. Again, this was a tangible, physical sign. Later known as Paul, he went on to become the mighty apostle to the Gentiles who authored a great portion of the New Testament.

Much later he went to minister at the city of Ephesus:

It happened that, while Apollos was at Corinth, Paul, having passed through the upper country, came to Ephesus, and found certain disciples. He said to them, "Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?" They said to him, "No, we haven't even heard that there is a Holy Spirit." He said, "Into what then were you baptized?" They said, "Into John's baptism." Paul said, "John indeed baptized with the baptism of repentance, saying to the people that they should believe in the one who would come after him, that is, on Yahshua." When they heard this, they were baptized into the name of the Master Yahshua. When Paul had laid his hands on them, the Holy Spirit came on them, and they spoke with other tongues, and prophesied. (Acts 19:1-6)

These disciples had been baptized with John's baptism, the baptism of repentance. However, they hadn't yet heard the full message of salvation through faith in Yahshua. As soon as they did, they were immediately baptized into His Name. Then Paul laid hands upon them

and they received the baptism of the Holy Spirit, and there was an obvious, physical manifestation of this – “they spoke with other tongues and prophesied.”

As we have seen in each of these examples from the book of Acts, baptism in the Holy Spirit was accompanied by a physical sign – usually speaking in other tongues and prophesying.

### **Is It for Today?**

Many churches today teach that the baptism of the Holy Spirit was only a temporary manifestation, needed by the fledgling *ekklesia* in the first century but not valid or necessary today. Is that true?

There is no Scriptural proof that the baptism of the Holy Spirit was only for the first century *ekklesia*. In fact, Peter, in that powerful sermon on Pentecost, stated just the opposite: “I will pour forth of My Spirit on all flesh. Your sons and your daughters will prophesy. Your young men will see visions. Your old men will dream dreams. Yes, and on My servants and on My handmaidens in those days, I will pour out My Spirit, and they will prophesy.” (Acts 2:16-18)

Yahshua Himself said that whoever believes on Him, from out of him would flow rivers of living water (John 7:37b-39).

### **Receiving the Baptism of the Holy Spirit**

Yahweh is Sovereign and can do anything He pleases, however He pleases, whenever He pleases. But He chooses to limit Himself – to a great extent – to what He can accomplish through His people.

This is true for the baptism of the Holy Spirit as well. While He can certainly choose, by sovereign decree, to impart it supernaturally to an individual or group, that is not the general pattern. Typically it is accomplished through the laying on of hands of His ordained elders (the presbytery): Ananias laid hands on Saul; Peter and John laid hands on the proselytes in Samaria; Paul laid hands on the disciples at Ephesus.

I tell you, keep asking, and it will be given you. Keep seeking, and you will find. Keep knocking, and it will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives. He who seeks finds. To him who knocks it will be opened. Which of you fathers, if your son asks for bread, will give him a stone? Or if he asks for a fish, he won't give him a snake instead of a fish, will he? Or if he asks

for an egg, he won't give him a scorpion, will he? If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him?" (Luke 11:9-13)

There are some things we just have to ask for. Yahweh "is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him" (Hebr. 11:6). He knows how to give good gifts to those who ask Him. There is no better gift than His indwelling Spirit.

Yahshua said, "It is expedient that I go away, for if I do not go away, the Comforter will not come to you; but if I depart I will send it to you" (John 16:7). He went on to say that the purpose of the Comforter coming was to "lead you into all truth" (John 16:13). What a blessing for us as believers!

## **FINAL THOUGHTS**

If you have never put your faith in Messiah for salvation, we exhort you to do so. If you have questions, need counseling, or would like to receive water baptism and/or the laying on of hands for the gift of the Holy Spirit, please contact us.



Notes







# BAPTISM

## THE DOORWAY TO A NEW LIFE

What is the purpose of water baptism? Is it just a religious ritual, or is there more to it? Is it even relevant in today's modern world?

This booklet examines the profound significance of baptism from the pages of the Bible. When it is properly understood and is performed according to Biblical precepts, baptism is nothing less than the doorway to a brand new life in Messiah!

The booklet also looks at the difference between the receiving of the Holy Spirit and the baptism of the Holy Spirit.

***“As many of you as were baptized into Messiah have put on Messiah” (Galatians 3:27)***

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