

Understanding Baptism Part 2: September 16, 2020

Resources on Baptism

1. *Down in the River to Pray* by John Mark Hicks and Greg Taylor
2. *Baptism: What the Bible Teaches* (free eBook on renew.org)
3. A Student's Guide to Baptism (free study guide on TeachOneReachOne.org).
4. Free Bible Study put together by Bryan

Recap:

A broad definition of baptism: "A Christian rite of passage involving water that symbolizes a person's entrance to the Christian faith."

Spiritual Anchors: Big ideas, passages, or assumptions that serve as a non-negotiable starting point for understanding our faith.

A major source of disagreement among Christians can be traced back to where we drop our spiritual anchors.

Old Testament Stories Featuring Water:

1. Creation
2. Flood / Noah's Ark
3. Moses (River, Red Sea)
4. Exodus (Water from the Rock, Bitter Water to Drinking Water)
5. Crossing the Jordan River
6. Namaan is Healed
7. Others?

Creation (Genesis 1)

*"In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. Now the earth was formless and empty, darkness was over the surface of the deep, and the Spirit of God was hovering over the waters." **Genesis 1:1-2 (NIV)***

The Spirit of God moves creation from chaos to order, from darkness to light.

The Flood (Genesis 6-8)

*"5 The Lord saw how great the wickedness of the human race had become on the earth, and that every inclination of the thoughts of the human heart was only evil all the time. 6 The Lord regretted that he had made human beings on the earth, and his heart was deeply troubled." **Genesis 6:5-6 (NIV)***

*"20 Then Noah built an altar to the Lord and, taking some of all the clean animals and clean birds, he sacrificed burnt offerings on it. 21 The Lord smelled the pleasing aroma and said in his heart: "Never again will I curse the ground because of humans, even though every inclination of the human heart is evil from childhood. And never again will I destroy all living creatures, as I have done." **Genesis 8:20-21 (NIV)***

Hicks and Taylor on the Significance of the Flood:

“Just as the Flood was a cataclysmic event that destroyed the old world through cleansing, so the baptismal experience is a destruction of the old person through cleansing.” -*Down in the River to Pray*, 35.

The Exodus (Exodus-Deuteronomy)

“29 But the Israelites went through the sea on dry ground, with a wall of water on their right and on their left. 30 That day the Lord saved Israel from the hands of the Egyptians, and Israel saw the Egyptians lying dead on the shore. 31 And when the Israelites saw the mighty hand of the Lord displayed against the Egyptians, the people feared the Lord and put their trust in him and in Moses his servant.” Exodus 14:29-31 (NIV)

Also: Water from the Rock and Bitter water turned into good water.

Crossing the Jordan (Joshua 3)

“The priests who carried the ark of the covenant of the Lord stopped in the middle of the Jordan and stood on dry ground, while all Israel passed by until the whole nation had completed the crossing on dry ground.” Joshua 3:17 (NIV)

Namaan is Healed (2 Kings 5)

“So he went down and dipped himself in the Jordan seven times, as the man of God had told him, and his flesh was restored and became clean like that of a young boy.” 2 Kings 5:14 (NIV)

Water Rituals in the Old Testament

Priestly Life: Priests were required to perform frequent washings (hands, body) before their official duties and sacrifices in the Temple.

Daily Life: The people of Israel were required to wash whenever they came into contact with something that made them physically unclean (germs, diseases, bodily fluids, etc.).

The Four Baptisms During the time of Jesus

1. **Purification**—Men and women would immerse themselves to become pure before worshipping God. Hundreds of immersion pools (mikva'ot) have been discovered around Jerusalem.
2. **Jewish Convert**—Some evidence that Gentiles who wanted to become Jewish would undergo a conversion baptism.
3. **Qumran Community**—Daily life for this isolated religious group included frequent washings.
4. **John the Baptist** (more on this next week)—A baptism of repentance in preparation for the Kingdom of God.

What Does Water Represent?

“Water rituals represent a transition—from the old world to the new world (Noah), from bondage to freedom (Israel), and from impurity to purity (Levitical rituals). Water rituals cleanse the participants and prepare them for entrance into something new, free and pure. They sanctify a people for God’s Holy presence.” Hicks and Taylor, 45.

The Symbolism of Water in the Old Testament:

- Bringing Order to the Chaos
- Conquering Evil
- Fresh Start / Renewal
- Deliverance from Evil
- Freedom and a Fresh Start
- New Identity
- Fulfillment of God’s Promises
- Cleansing from Impurity

The New Testament Agrees:

*“In it [Noah’s Ark] only a few people, eight in all, were saved through water, 21 and this water symbolizes baptism that now saves you also—not the removal of dirt from the body but the pledge of a clear conscience toward God. It saves you by the resurrection of Jesus Christ, 22 who has gone into heaven and is at God’s right hand—with angels, authorities and powers in submission to him.” **1 Peter 3:20-22 (NIV)***