

Baptism and the Old Testament

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Notes for sermon "Baptism and the Old Testament".

Slide 1

Recently I read an article titled "Baptism and the Old Testament". It caught my attention because Baptism is generally associated with the New Testament but after reading the article I came away with a better understanding of what Baptism is all about.

You may have had someone, or maybe you have even wondered, "Why Baptism?" Why did God chose Baptism as the place and means where we come in contact with the blood of Jesus and have our sins washed away?

(Acts 22:16)

Romans 6 gives us a clear description and explanation of what baptism is but Romans was written about 57 AD. Did the people in the 1st Century have to wait 24 years from the time in Acts 2:38 (33 AD) until Paul wrote Romans to find out about baptism?

Was baptism something new and shocking to those in the 1st century?

Or was baptism something that they already understood?

Let's see!

Slide 2

Most of us are familiar with the ritual sacrifices in the O.T. but do you know about the ritual washings?

Just as animal sacrifices were an important part of O. T. Law so were ritual washings. Notice these passages...

Lev. 14:8-9 "He who is to be cleansed shall wash his clothes, shave off all his hair, and wash himself in water, that he may be clean. After that he shall come into the camp, and shall stay outside his tent seven days. 9 "But on the seventh day he shall shave all the hair off his head and his beard and his eyebrows-all his hair he shall shave off. He shall wash his clothes and wash his body in water, and he shall be clean.

Lev. 16:23-28 "Then Aaron shall come into the tabernacle of meeting, shall take off the linen garments which he put on when he went into the Holy Place, and shall leave them there. 24 "And he shall wash his body with water in a holy place, put on his garments, come out and offer his burnt offering and the burnt offering of the people, and make atonement for himself and for the people. 25 "The fat of the sin offering he shall burn on the altar. 26 "And he who released the goat as the scapegoat shall wash his clothes and bathe his body in water, and afterward he may come into the camp. 27 "The bull for the sin offering and the goat for the sin offering, whose blood was brought in to make atonement in the Holy Place, shall be carried outside the camp. And they shall burn in the fire their skins, their flesh, and their offal. 28 "Then he who burns them shall wash his clothes and bathe his body in water, and afterward he may come into the camp.

Lev. 17:15-16 And every person who eats what died naturally or what was torn by beasts, whether he is a native of your own country or a stranger, he shall both wash his clothes and bathe in water, and be unclean until evening. Then he shall be clean. 16 "But if he does not wash them or bathe his body, then he shall bear his guilt."

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Let's take a closer look at the word "washing" in verse 10.

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I want us to see a couple of other translations of verse 10.

The Jews did not understand these "washings" to mean the taking out of a scrub brush and taking filth off the body. Nor did they understand these washing to be a simple sprinkling of water. The Jews believed that immersion in water was necessary and that the water must touch every part of the body to become ritually clean. **(Science and the Bible: National Geographic Channel)**

So we see that the washings were not only for the health of the Jews but as a ritual cleansing to be made right before God, such as the washing that the High Priest did when he offered sacrifice for the people on the day of atonement.

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In the O.T. there is a Hebrew word, "tabal" (taw-bal') and is used 19 times in the O.T and always means to dip, to dip into, to plunge, to dip one self, to be dipped.

In II Kings 5 we read about Naaman who was a commander in the army of the King of Syria. He was a mighty man of valor, but he was a leper. Naaman heard about the prophet Elisha and that he could cure Naaman of his leprosy. In verse 10 it says, **“Go and wash in the Jordan seven times, and your flesh shall be restored to you, and you shall be clean.”** This made Naaman angry because he expected Elisha to perform some grand and glorious ceremony in ridding him of his leprosy. In verses 13-14 it says, **“And his servants came near and spoke to him, and said, 'My father, if the prophet had told you to do something great, would you not have done it? How much more then, when he says to you, 'Wash, and be clean'?”** 14 **So he went down and dipped seven times in the Jordan, according to the saying of the man of God; and his flesh was restored like the flesh of a little child, and he was clean.”**

Our English word “dipped” in verse 14 is the Hebrew word “tabal” which, as we said, means to dip, to dip into, etc.

The O.T. was translated from Hebrew into Greek in about 200 B.C. This is the translation from which Jesus often quoted. The Greek word that is used for the word “dipped” is the word “ebaptisato” which means “to dip yourself”. Notice how this goes along with what we read in the N.T.

Acts 2:38 “Repent, and let every one of you be *baptized* in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins.”

Heb. 9:10 “concerned only with foods and drinks, various *washings*, and fleshly ordinances imposed until the time of reformation.

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So we see that in Heb. 9:10 the washings were an immersion or baptism. The Strong’s Concordance has this to say concerning this passage.

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In taking this concept of washings, immersions and baptisms a litter further let’s look at the **Jewish tradition of converting people to Judaism.**

In order to be converted to Judaism the person had to do three things.

1. circumcision
2. baptism
3. sacrifice.

So we see that the Jews even used baptism (immersion) as a requirement to be converted to Judaism.

To be brought into Judaism they had to be baptized.

We see that the Jews were very familiar with immersion (baptism) as a ceremonial cleansing.

Let's look at some O.T. prophecies.

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The Prophets used the people's knowledge of ceremonial cleansing as a way to symbolize the people's need to cleanse their hearts from sin.

Isaiah starts the book by condemning Israel for their wickedness. He says they are full of iniquity, bloodshed, injustice and corruption. Then in verse 16 Isaiah commands them to wash (immerse) themselves and make themselves clean.

Then in verse 18 God talks about a time when their sins will be white as snow.

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God is telling them to look forward to a time when the Lord will open a spring so that their sin and uncleanness will be washed away. This is a clear reference to immersion.

Looking again at Heb. 9:9-10, it says,

“This is symbolic for today.” what is symbolic for today? What do we have in the N.T. that is symbolic of the ritual sacrifices and washings of the O.T.?

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Baptism!!!! Where we find the ritual sacrifices and the ritual washing of the O.T.

Sacrifice

- In the O.T. the blood of animals had to be sacrificed over and over again because as Heb. 10:4 says, “the blood of bulls and goats can not take away sin.”
- In the N.T. we have the perfect sacrifice, Jesus Christ. He shed His blood once for all time. No more sacrifice is needed. As Isaiah prophesied, the blood of Jesus makes us white as snow!

Washings

- In the O.T. the ritual washings had to take place over and over again because it could not cleanse them once and for all time.
- In the N.T. we have the immersion of baptism that cleanses us once for all time because that is where we come in contact with the blood of Jesus that washes away all sin.

We see here that the people equated washing (immersion) with being made clean, even the removal of sin.

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I want us to read some passages dealing with Baptism. Note the relationship with **washing** and **baptism**.

So we see that when Peter stood up and said in **Acts 2:38** “Repent, and let every one of you be **baptized** in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins;”

The people fully knew what he was talking about.

Acts 22:16 “And now why are you waiting? Arise and be **baptized**, and **wash** away your sins, calling on the name of the Lord.”

The Hebrew writer shows the comparison between the Old Testament washings and our being baptized today. **Hebrews 10:19-22** “Therefore, brethren, having boldness to enter the Holiest by the blood of Jesus, 20 by a new and living way which He consecrated for us, through the veil, that is, His flesh, 21 and having a High Priest over the house of God, 22 let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience and our bodies **washed** with pure water.”

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I want us to read some passages dealing with Baptism. Note the relationship with **washing** and **baptism**.

I Cor. 6:9-11

Titus 3:4-7

In the O.T. God declared his people clean when they **washed** their clothes and **washed** their bodies. At that point they were declared clean, not any time before.

If they did not wash then they were not clean and as **Lev. 17:16** says, “But if he does not wash his clothes and bathe himself, he will bear his guilt. (or punishment)

Now we can see why baptism is referred to as “washing” so many times in the New Testament.

So we see that the people of the 1st century had a good understanding of the purpose of baptism. I would say that they probably had a better understanding of what baptism is all about than most people in the religious world today!

Now back to our original question, “WHY BAPTISM!”

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Back to our original question, Why Baptism?

List each point.

Then Next slide starts, “WHAT ABOUT YOU?”

Slide 14

What about You?

Have you been washed, immersed, baptized for the remission of sins?