

# Baptism

## A Biblical Examination

### Part 2- The Definition and History of Baptism

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#### Exodus 19:10

The LORD also said to Moses, "Go to the people and consecrate them today and tomorrow, and let them wash their garments;

#### Leviticus 16:4-5

"He shall put on the holy linen tunic, and the linen undergarments shall be next to his body, and he shall be girded with the linen sash and attired with the linen turban (these are holy garments). Then he shall bathe his body in water and put them on.

#### Leviticus 16:23&24

23 "Then Aaron shall come into the tent of meeting and take off the linen garments which he put on when he went into the holy place, and shall leave them there.

24 "He shall bathe his body with water in a holy place and put on his clothes, and come forth and offer his burnt offering and the burnt offering of the people and make atonement for himself and for the people.

### The Origin of Water Baptism

Although Christian Baptism may have been widely used by John the Baptist and the apostles, Baptism *itself* did not originate with him or, for that matter, even with the Christians. The best information that we have leads us to think that the Jews practiced Water Baptism. Certainly, they did not baptize in the way that we know Baptism today, but as a ceremonial act of purification and cleansing for Gentile converts to Judaism long before the coming of the Messiah.

It is thought by some theologians that the origins of Baptism itself are found in the Old Testament books of **Exodus** and **Leviticus** where the Levite priests were commanded to perform a symbolic cleansing in water before and after performing their priestly duties.

However, two things were unique about this particular "Baptism":

- ✓ It was not carried out as a result of conversion, but only for purification and cleansing before priestly duties.
- ✓ Only the priests participated.

Outside of that practice, a study of Jewish history reveals the presence of Water Baptism during Old Testament times when Gentiles wanted to identify with

Israel- either politically or religiously. As these former pagans were “converted” to Judaism, they had to go through a three-fold process:

1. Circumcision
2. Animal Sacrifice
3. Water Baptism

## **The Method of Jewish Baptism**

The Jews used rivers, lakes, and streams to perform their ceremonial “baptisms. This was the more common method that John Baptist followed as the Old Covenant came to its inevitable fulfillment. But in addition to those natural means, there was also a ceremonial appliance used for these cleansing services called a *mikveh*- a deep, portable container usually made out of clay. Archaeologists have found several Jewish mikvehs dating from before and after Jesus' time in Israel. Some are in Qumran, near where the Dead Sea Scrolls were found, but there have been some of them found elsewhere in Israel.

According to records found in Israel, the mikveh would be filled with water and the Gentile who was being converted to Judaism would be completely submerged under the water. The person being “baptized” in the mikveh could either have someone perform the “baptism” for them or they could dunk themselves. There is no record of any “sprinkling” of water on the ones converting, but the records concerning these early “baptisms” always describe complete emersion in the water.

Also, the records show that the water source used for these “baptisms” could not be a stagnant pool, but had to be flowing water. There were no water lines back in that day and only rivers and lakes were considered "flowing." A lake was considered "flowing" because of the springs or creeks which fed into it and the water that seeped out of it. The mikvah qualified because it would have a small man-made channel that connected it to a "flowing" water source, such as a river or lake.

While it was common that only Gentile men would use the mikvehs for conversion purposes (accompanied by circumcision) both the men and women of the Jews used the mikvehs. Most of the time- the ladies only used the mikvehs for ceremonial cleansing after their menstrual cycle while the men would use them for cleansing before and after some spiritual duty or act.<sup>1</sup>

Many modern Jewish rabbis believe that the first instance of the use of ceremonial cleansing through water occurred just prior to the giving of the Covenant at Mt. Sinai. They cite **Exodus 19:10** as their justification:

**The LORD also said to Moses, "Go to the people and consecrate them today and tomorrow, and let them wash their garments;**

These rabbis believe that the "consecration" and the "washing" of the

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<sup>1</sup> *The Jewish Book of Why* pages 123&297

garments are related actions.<sup>2</sup>

## **Summary of the Origin of Water Baptism**

So, it appears from ancient Jewish records that an incomplete and primitive type of water “baptism” was being carried out by the priests based upon an understanding of several passages in **Exodus** and **Leviticus**. Also, it appears that Jewish males were ceremonially washed through emersion before and after conducting certain spiritual activities and that occasionally women also utilized this process. It also appears that in between the two Testaments- that Gentile converts were *required* to go through this cleansing before “becoming a Jew” either politically or religiously.

And while rivers and lakes were the primary means of conducting this “baptism” there was also a clay appliance called a “mikveh” in which the converts were baptized.

## **An Important Note**

Now it is very important to understand that while we do not know for certain if any of this information is true or not, these are the best ideas that are available as of this date from all available records. So, we must use this information with caution and not simply accept it as a Biblical fact because it is not. However, if these things *are* accurate, they present some very interesting parallels with John the Baptist’s ministry, the Day of Pentecost, and the giving of The New Covenant.

For example, when first John the Baptist and later Peter commanded the Jews to “be baptized,” they were in effect saying that these natural born Jews were pagan and Gentiles in their hearts and needed to be “converted” to the Truth- even though they were born Jews and had been raised on the teachings of the Old Covenant. This struck at the very heart of their entire existence and nothing made them more hostile to the New Covenant than the thought they too needed to be “cleansed,” “converted,” and “saved” like the other Gentiles.

## **The Biblical Record of Water Baptism**

However, what we *do* know is true and what we *can* rely upon is the indisputable fact that Scripture clearly and repeatedly records that both John the Baptist and the Apostles preached, taught, and carried out the baptizing of new converts in water by complete emersion and that Jesus commanded all believers to be baptized throughout the world until His Return while He Himself set the perfect Example by Personally being baptized in water by emersion in the River Jordan. Let’s examine the Biblical Record.

## **John Baptist Required and Administered Water Baptism**

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<sup>2</sup> *The Second Book of Jewish Why* pages 128&129

**Matthew 3:1-12**

**1** Now in those days John the Baptist came, preaching in the wilderness of Judea, saying,

**2** "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand."

**3** For this is the one referred to by Isaiah the prophet when he said,

*"THE VOICE OF ONE CRYING IN THE WILDERNESS,  
'MAKE READY THE WAY OF THE LORD,  
MAKE HIS PATHS STRAIGHT!'"*

**4** Now John himself had a garment of camel's hair and a leather belt around his waist; and his food was locusts and wild honey.

**5** Then Jerusalem was going out to him, and all Judea and all the district around the Jordan;

**6** and they were being baptized by him in the Jordan River, as they confessed their sins.

**7** But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees coming for baptism, he said to them, "You brood of vipers, who warned you to flee from the wrath to come?"

**8** "Therefore bear fruit in keeping with repentance;

**9** and do not suppose that you can say to yourselves, 'We have Abraham for our father'; for I say to you that from these stones God is able to raise up children to Abraham.

**10** "The axe is already laid at the root of the trees; therefore every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire.

**11** "As for me, I baptize you with water for repentance, but He who is coming after me is mightier than I, and I am not fit to remove His sandals; He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire.

**12** "His winnowing fork is in His hand, and He will thoroughly clear His threshing floor; and He will gather His wheat into the barn, but He will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire."

**Mark 1:4-8**

**1** John the Baptist appeared in the wilderness preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins.

**5** And all the country of Judea was going out to him, and all the people of Jerusalem; and they were being baptized by him in the Jordan River, confessing their sins.

**6** John was clothed with camel's hair and *wore* a leather belt around his waist, and his diet was locusts and wild honey.

**7** And he was preaching, and saying, "After me One is coming who is mightier than I, and I am not fit to stoop down and untie the thong of His sandals.

**8** "I baptized you with water; but He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit."

**Luke 3:1-17**

**1** Now in the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar, when Pontius Pilate was governor of Judea, and Herod was tetrarch of Galilee, and his brother Philip was tetrarch of the region of Ituraea and Trachonitis, and Lysanias was tetrarch of Abilene,

**2** in the high priesthood of Annas and Caiaphas, the word of God came to John, the son of Zacharias, in the wilderness.

**3** And he came into all the district around the Jordan, preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins;

**4** as it is written in the book of the words of Isaiah the prophet,

*"THE VOICE OF ONE CRYING IN THE WILDERNESS,  
'MAKE READY THE WAY OF THE LORD,  
MAKE HIS PATHS STRAIGHT.*

***5** 'EVERY RAVINE WILL BE FILLED,  
AND EVERY MOUNTAIN AND HILL WILL BE BROUGHT LOW;  
THE CROOKED WILL BECOME STRAIGHT,  
AND THE ROUGH ROADS SMOOTH;*

***6** AND ALL FLESH WILL SEE THE SALVATION OF GOD.'"*

**7** So he *began* saying to the crowds who were going out to be baptized by him, "You brood of vipers, who warned you to flee from the wrath to come?"

**8** "Therefore bear fruits in keeping with repentance, and do not begin to say to yourselves, 'We have Abraham for our father,' for I say to you that from these stones God is able to raise up children to Abraham.

**9** "Indeed the axe is already laid at the root of the trees; so every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire."

**10** And the crowds were questioning him, saying, "Then what shall we do?"

**11** And he would answer and say to them, "The man who has two tunics is to share with him who has none; and he who has food is to do likewise."

**12** And *some* tax collectors also came to be baptized, and they said to him, "Teacher, what shall we do?"

**13** And he said to them, "Collect no more than what you have been ordered to."

**14** *Some* soldiers were questioning him, saying, "And *what about* us, what shall we do?" And he said to them, "Do not take money from anyone by force, or accuse *anyone* falsely, and be content with your wages."

**15** Now while the people were in a state of expectation and all were wondering in their hearts about John, as to whether he was the Christ,

**16** John answered and said to them all, "As for me, I baptize you with water; but One is coming who is mightier than I, and I am not fit to untie the thong of His sandals; He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire.

**17** "His winnowing fork is in His hand to thoroughly clear His threshing floor, and to gather the wheat into His barn; but He will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire."

**John 1:6-28**

**6** There came a man sent from God, whose name was John.

**7** He came as a witness, to testify about the Light, so that all might believe through him.

**8** He was not the Light, but *he came* to testify about the Light.

- 9 There was the true Light which, coming into the world, enlightens every man.
- 10 He was in the world, and the world was made through Him, and the world did not know Him.
- 11 He came to His own, and those who were His own did not receive Him.
- 12 But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, *even* to those who believe in His name,
- 13 who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God.
- 14 And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us, and we saw His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth.
- 15 John testified about Him and cried out, saying, "This was He of whom I said, 'He who comes after me has a higher rank than I, for He existed before me.'"
- 16 For of His fullness we have all received, and grace upon grace.
- 17 For the Law was given through Moses; grace and truth were realized through Jesus Christ.
- 18 No one has seen God at any time; the only begotten God who is in the bosom of the Father, He has explained *Him*.
- 19 This is the testimony of John, when the Jews sent to him priests and Levites from Jerusalem to ask him, "Who are you?"
- 20 And he confessed and did not deny, but confessed, "I am not the Christ."
- 21 They asked him, "What then? Are you Elijah?" And he said, "I am not." "Are you the Prophet?" And he answered, "No."
- 22 Then they said to him, "Who are you, so that we may give an answer to those who sent us? What do you say about yourself?"
- 23 He said, "I am A VOICE OF ONE CRYING IN THE WILDERNESS, 'MAKE STRAIGHT THE WAY OF THE LORD,' as Isaiah the prophet said."
- 24 Now they had been sent from the Pharisees.
- 25 They asked him, and said to him, "Why then are you baptizing, if you are not the Christ, nor Elijah, nor the Prophet?"
- 26 John answered them saying, "I baptize in water, *but* among you stands One whom you do not know.
- 27 "*It is* He who comes after me, the thong of whose sandal I am not worthy to untie."
- 28 These things took place in Bethany beyond the Jordan, where John was baptizing.

## Jesus Commanded Water Baptism

### Matthew 28:16-20

- 16 But the eleven disciples proceeded to Galilee, to the mountain which Jesus had designated.
- 17 When they saw Him, they worshiped *Him*; but some were doubtful.

18 And Jesus came up and spoke to them, saying, "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth.

19 "Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit,

20 teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age."

Mark 16:14-20

14 Afterward He appeared to the eleven themselves as they were reclining *at the table*; and He reproached them for their unbelief and hardness of heart, because they had not believed those who had seen Him after He had risen.

15 And He said to them, "Go into all the world and preach the gospel to all creation.

16 "He who has believed and has been baptized shall be saved; but he who has disbelieved shall be condemned.

17 "These signs will accompany those who have believed: in My name they will cast out demons, they will speak with new tongues;

18 they will pick up serpents, and if they drink any deadly *poison*, it will not hurt them; they will lay hands on the sick, and they will recover."

19 So then, when the Lord Jesus had spoken to them, He was received up into heaven and sat down at the right hand of God.

20 And they went out and preached everywhere, while the Lord worked with them, and confirmed the word by the signs that followed.]

### Jesus Himself Was Baptized in Water

Matthew 3:13-17

13 Then Jesus arrived from Galilee at the Jordan *coming* to John, to be baptized by him.

14 But John tried to prevent Him, saying, "I have need to be baptized by You, and do You come to me?"

15 But Jesus answering said to him, "**Permit it at this time; for in this way it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness.**"

Then he permitted Him.

16 After being baptized, Jesus came up immediately from the water; and behold, the heavens were opened, and he saw the Spirit of God descending as a dove *and* lighting on Him,

17 and behold, a voice out of the heavens said, "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well-pleased."

Mark 1:9-11

9 In those days Jesus came from Nazareth in Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan.

10 Immediately coming up out of the water, He saw the heavens opening, and the Spirit like a dove descending upon Him;

**11** and a voice came out of the heavens: "You are My beloved Son, in You I am well-pleased."

**Luke 3:21&22**

**21** Now when all the people were baptized, Jesus was also baptized, and while He was praying, heaven was opened,

**22** and the Holy Spirit descended upon Him in bodily form like a dove, and a voice came out of heaven, "You are My beloved Son, in You I am well-pleased."

### **The Apostles Taught and Administered Baptism**

**Romans 6:1-7**

**1** What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin so that grace may increase?

**2** May it never be! How shall we who died to sin still live in it?

**3** Or do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus have been baptized into His death?

**4** Therefore we have been buried with Him through baptism into death, so that as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life.

**5** For if we have become united with *Him* in the likeness of His death, certainly we shall also be *in the likeness* of His resurrection,

**6** knowing this, that our old self was crucified with *Him*, in order that our body of sin might be done away with, so that we would no longer be slaves to sin;

**7** for he who has died is freed from sin.

**Ephesians 4:1-6**

**1** Therefore I, the prisoner of the Lord, implore you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling with which you have been called,

**2** with all humility and gentleness, with patience, showing tolerance for one another in love,

**3** being diligent to preserve the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.

**4** *There is* one body and one Spirit, just as also you were called in one hope of your calling;

**5** one Lord, one faith, one baptism,

**6** one God and Father of all who is over all and through all and in all.

**Colossians 2:6-15**

**6** Therefore as you have received Christ Jesus the Lord, *so* walk in Him,

**7** having been firmly rooted *and now* being built up in Him and established in your faith, just as you were instructed, *and* overflowing with gratitude.

**8** See to it that no one takes you captive through philosophy and empty deception, according to the tradition of men, according to the elementary principles of the world, rather than according to Christ.

**9** For in Him all the fullness of Deity dwells in bodily form,

**10** and in Him you have been made complete, and He is the head over all rule and authority;

**11** and in Him you were also circumcised with a circumcision made without hands, in the removal of the body of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ;



12 having been buried with Him in baptism, in which you were also raised up with Him through faith in the working of God, who raised Him from the dead.

13 When you were dead in your transgressions and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He made you alive together with Him, having forgiven us all our transgressions,

14 having canceled out the certificate of debt consisting of decrees against us, which was hostile to us; and He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross.

15 When He had disarmed the rulers and authorities, He made a public display of them, having triumphed over them through Him.

#### The Acts 2:37-42

37 Now when they heard *this*, they were pierced to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, "Brethren, what shall we do?"

38 Peter *said* to them, "Repent, and each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.

39 "For the promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off, as many as the Lord our God will call to Himself."

40 And with many other words he solemnly testified and kept on exhorting them, saying, "Be saved from this perverse generation!"

41 So then, those who had received his word were baptized; and that day there were added about three thousand souls.

42 They were continually devoting themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer.

#### The Acts 8:35-38

35 Then Philip opened his mouth, and beginning from this Scripture he preached Jesus to him.

36 As they went along the road they came to some water; and the eunuch said, "Look! Water! What prevents me from being baptized?"

37 [And Philip said, "If you believe with all your heart, you may." And he answered and said, "I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God."]

38 And he ordered the chariot to stop; and they both went down into the water, Philip as well as the eunuch, and he baptized him.

#### The Acts 8:12&13

12 But when they believed Philip preaching the good news about the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, they were being baptized, men and women alike.

13 Even Simon himself believed; and after being baptized, he continued on with Philip, and as he observed signs and great miracles taking place, he was constantly amazed.

#### The Acts 9:1-19

1 Now Saul, still breathing threats and murder against the disciples of the Lord, went to the high priest,

2 and asked for letters from him to the synagogues at Damascus, so that if he found any belonging to the Way, both men and women, he might bring them bound to Jerusalem.

3 As he was traveling, it happened that he was approaching Damascus, and suddenly a light from heaven flashed around him;

4 and he fell to the ground and heard a voice saying to him, "**Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?**"

5 And he said, "Who are You, Lord?" And He *said*, "**I am Jesus whom you are persecuting,**  
6 **but get up and enter the city, and it will be told you what you must do.**"  
7 The men who traveled with him stood speechless, hearing the voice but seeing no one.  
8 Saul got up from the ground, and though his eyes were open, he could see nothing; and leading him by the hand, they brought him into Damascus.  
9 And he was three days without sight, and neither ate nor drank.  
10 Now there was a disciple at Damascus named Ananias; and the Lord said to him in a vision, "**Ananias.**" And he said, "Here I am, Lord."  
11 And the Lord *said* to him, "**Get up and go to the street called Straight, and inquire at the house of Judas for a man from Tarsus named Saul, for he is praying,**  
12 **and he has seen in a vision a man named Ananias come in and lay his hands on him, so that he might regain his sight.**"  
13 But Ananias answered, "Lord, I have heard from many about this man, how much harm he did to Your saints at Jerusalem;  
14 and here he has authority from the chief priests to bind all who call on Your name."  
15 But the Lord said to him, "**Go, for he is a chosen instrument of Mine, to bear My name before the Gentiles and kings and the sons of Israel;**  
16 **for I will show him how much he must suffer for My name's sake.**"  
17 So Ananias departed and entered the house, and after laying his hands on him said, "Brother Saul, the Lord Jesus, who appeared to you on the road by which you were coming, has sent me so that you may regain your sight and be filled with the Holy Spirit."  
18 And immediately there fell from his eyes something like scales, and he regained his sight, and he got up and was baptized;  
19 and he took food and was strengthened.

#### The Acts 10:46-48

46 Then Peter answered,  
47 "Surely no one can refuse the water for these to be baptized who have received the Holy Spirit just as we *did*, can he?"  
48 And he ordered them to be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ. Then they asked him to stay on for a few days.

#### The Acts 16:14&15

14 A woman named Lydia, from the city of Thyatira, a seller of purple fabrics, a worshiper of God, was listening; and the Lord opened her heart to respond to the things spoken by Paul.  
15 And when she and her household had been baptized, she urged us, saying, "If you have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come into my house and stay." And she prevailed upon us.

#### The Acts 16:22-34

22 The crowd rose up together against them, and the chief magistrates tore their robes off them and proceeded to order *them* to be beaten with rods.  
23 When they had struck them with many blows, they threw them into prison, commanding the jailer to guard them securely;  
24 and he, having received such a command, threw them into the inner prison and fastened their feet in the stocks.

25 But about midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns of praise to God, and the prisoners were listening to them;  
26 and suddenly there came a great earthquake, so that the foundations of the prison house were shaken; and immediately all the doors were opened and everyone's chains were unfastened.  
27 When the jailer awoke and saw the prison doors opened, he drew his sword and was about to kill himself, supposing that the prisoners had escaped.  
28 But Paul cried out with a loud voice, saying, "Do not harm yourself, for we are all here!"  
29 And he called for lights and rushed in, and trembling with fear he fell down before Paul and Silas,  
30 and after he brought them out, he said, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?"  
31 They said, "Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved, you and your household."  
32 And they spoke the word of the Lord to him together with all who were in his house.  
33 And he took them that *very* hour of the night and washed their wounds, and immediately he was baptized, he and all his *household*.  
34 And he brought them into his house and set food before them, and rejoiced greatly, having believed in God with his whole household.

#### The Acts 18:5-9

5 But when Silas and Timothy came down from Macedonia, Paul *began* devoting himself completely to the word, solemnly testifying to the Jews that Jesus was the Christ.  
6 But when they resisted and blasphemed, he shook out his garments and said to them, "Your blood *be* on your own heads! I am clean. From now on I will go to the Gentiles."  
7 Then he left there and went to the house of a man named Titius Justus, a worshiper of God, whose house was next to the synagogue.  
8 Crispus, the leader of the synagogue, believed in the Lord with all his household, and many of the Corinthians when they heard were believing and being baptized.

#### The Acts 19:1-7

1 It happened that while Apollos was at Corinth, Paul passed through the upper country and came to Ephesus, and found some disciples.  
2 He said to them, "Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?" And they *said* to him, "No, we have not even heard whether there is a Holy Spirit."  
3 And he said, "Into what then were you baptized?" And they said, "Into John's baptism."  
4 Paul said, "John baptized with the baptism of repentance, telling the people to believe in Him who was coming after him, that is, in Jesus."  
5 When they heard this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus.  
6 And when Paul had laid his hands upon them, the Holy Spirit came on them, and they *began* speaking with tongues and prophesying.  
7 There were in all about twelve men.

#### 1Corinthians 1:10-17

10 Now I exhort you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you all agree and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be made complete in the same mind and in the same judgment.

**11** For I have been informed concerning you, my brethren, by Chloe's *people*, that there are quarrels among you.

**12** Now I mean this, that each one of you is saying, "I am of Paul," and "I of Apollos," and "I of Cephas," and "I of Christ."

**13** Has Christ been divided? Paul was not crucified for you, was he? Or were you baptized in the name of Paul?

**14** I thank God that I baptized none of you except Crispus and Gaius,

**15** so that no one would say you were baptized in my name.

**16** Now I did baptize also the household of Stephanas; beyond that, I do not know whether I baptized any other.

**17** For Christ did not send me to baptize, but to preach the gospel, not in cleverness of speech, so that the cross of Christ would not be made void.

**Galatians 3:24-29**

**24** Therefore the Law has become our tutor *to lead us* to Christ, so that we may be justified by faith.

**25** But now that faith has come, we are no longer under a tutor.

**26** For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus.

**27** For all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ.

**28** There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free man, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus.

**29** And if you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's descendants, heirs according to promise.

## **The Linguistic Definition of Baptism**

As we have previously discovered, if the Biblical writers were alive today we could simply walk over to them and ask them what they meant in the verses and passages that they wrote and that would end all the debate. But we can't do that because they are all dead. So, all we have to go by are the actual words that God the Holy Spirit moved upon them to pen down and the precise meaning of those words. We also have the "context" in which those words are found and the combination of the precise meaning of the words along with the context in which they were written helps us to discover the one, single, true meaning of every verse and every passage.

Words have very precise and clear meanings. And we cannot arbitrarily assign a meaning to a word without clear evidence- both from history and from the linguistic sources- that allow for that to be done. So, as believers we are absolutely supposed to be illuminated by the supernatural power of the Holy Spirit as we study and struggle to understand God's Word. But that supernatural illumination will always be in concert with the actual meaning of the words of Scripture and their correct context or else we have no basis to trust what we think the Holy Spirit has revealed to us.

So, while being supernaturally enabled to understand and comprehend the Truth, we are *not* free and we have no license to simply place our own thoughts, our

own reasoning, or our own personal interpretation onto the words of Scripture while minimizing or outright ignoring the linguistic, grammatical, and historical context and reality in which those words were written.

By God's own design, Divine Truth is received and learned and taught and understood by humans through the cognizant abilities of the human mind aided by the Power of the Holy Spirit. And that Truth will never be in opposition or contradiction to the literal, grammatical, and historical context of the words of Holy Scripture.

So, in the case of Baptism, to find the true meaning of the practice we must look at the actual meaning of the words that God the Holy Spirit moved upon the Biblical writers to use in the Scriptures. And there are two Greek verbs that the New Testament writers used which express the reality of Baptism:

- ✓ Bapto
- ✓ Baptizo

Every single reference to Water Baptism in the New Testament uses these two verbs and both of them mean *to immerse, or to dip into*. Not coincidentally, they are the same verbs which we translate when we speak of drowning.

The Greek noun *Baptismos* is used in **The Book of the Acts of the Apostles** to *always* refer to a genuine believer being fully and completely immersed into water. The Latin equivalents of this Greek noun are:

- Immersio
- Submersio.

The Greek language has a completely different word for “sprinkling”, the word, *rhantizo*, which never is used anywhere in the entire New Testament to describe Water Baptism. Without exception, every New Testament use of the “bapto” family of words either requires or permits complete immersion into water. Even the great reformer John Calvin said:

“The word baptize means to immerse. It is certain that immersion was the practice of the early church.”<sup>3</sup>

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The Covenant of Peace Church 13600 John Clark Road Gulfport, Mississippi 39503 228.832.7729 [www.covenantofpeace.net](http://www.covenantofpeace.net)

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<sup>3</sup> The Institutes of the Christian Religion

The Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit. Amen. Be watchful and quicken your pace. Soli Deo Gloria. For the Glory of God alone.