Myth of Baptism

Summary

What if "baptism" was never mainly about water at all? A close read of Acts and the Epistles makes the case that true baptism is immersion in the Spirit — and that the water ritual had already run its course.

- "Baptism" (Greek baptizo, "immerse") as immersion in the Holy Spirit received at belief.
- Water baptism as a temporary, John-instituted practice Yah'shua fulfilled and ended.
- Key cases examined: Cornelius's household, the Ephesian disciples of Acts 19, John's own in-womb filling with the Spirit.
- Two closing addenda on John's baptism from Yahweh and Yah'shua's "another baptism to accomplish" (Luke 12:49–50).

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Myth of Baptism

The Greek word used in the Bible for baptism, is “baptizo”. It literally means to “immerse, or plunge into”.

Paul was inspired to write: “Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Yah'shua the Messiah were baptized into his death?” *(Rom. 6:3-4)*.

And Peter said: “Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Yah'shua the Messiah for the remission of sins” *(Acts 2:38)*. And he clarified this in 3:19, “Repent therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out”.

And Mark wrote: “He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned” *(Mark 16:16).*

If we replace the Greek word baptism *(or baptized)* with immerse (or immersed) in the above quotes, we find that we are simply instructed to “immerse” ourselves in Yah'shua the Messiah and in the things concerning Him. This immersion then, results in us believing in and about the Gospel of Yah'shua the Messiah, and thus, being converted. This belief is the result of immersing ourselves in the Word *(Yah'shua the Messiah);* studying the Bible, to learn His truths.

This immersion *(studying)* results in faith, which in turn results in our understanding that our sins have been blotted out.

John the Baptist was inspired to baptize in water, in preparing the way for Yah'shua the Messiah. The ancient rite was symbolic of washing away the old man - the way of sin - and plunging or immersing into the new man - the way of life.

Prior to the gift of His Holy Spirit, this symbolic ritual was an integral part of the conversion process, for those that believed in the Messiah. John the Baptist, said himself, that, “I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance, but He who is coming after me is mightier than I, whose sandals I am not worthy to carry. He will baptize you with His Holy Spirit and fire” *(Matt. 3:11).*

Here, John the Baptist is clearly pointing out that Yah'shua the Messiah will baptize us with His Holy Spirit - not with water! And Yah'shua the Messiah said of this John: “Among those born of women there has not risen one greater than John the Baptist...” *(Matt. 11:11)*.

The Bible clearly teaches us that Yah'shua the Messiah did not baptize with water - ever *(see John 4:1,2)*. He allowed His disciples to maintain the symbolic ritual of baptism, during His ministry and up to the time of

His giving the gift of His Holy Spirit, on the Day of Pentecost, when the symbolic water baptism was made obsolete by virtue of His Holy Spirit. We are now baptized BY His Holy Spirit. In other words, we receive the gift of His Holy Spirit - we are immersed in His Holy Spirit - not water!

When Paul wrote to the Corinthians, he recognized that it was only his responsibility to preach the Gospel - and that when some "heard and believed", they would then immediately be baptized by His Holy Spirit. "For the Messiah did not send me to baptize, but to preach the gospel, not with wisdom of words, lest the burden of the stake of the Messiah should be made of no effect" *(1 Cor. 1:17).*

There are numerous examples in the New Covenant writings setting out that we are indeed baptized BY His Holy Spirit - after believing. BELIEVING, is the key. IMMEDIATELY UPON BELIEF, we are given the gift - we are immersed in His Holy Spirit - we are baptized by it. "And many of the Corinthians hearing, BELIEVED and were baptized" *(Acts 18:8).*

There was no mention of "water" - because His Holy Spirit does not require water to baptize - it simply baptizes - immerses us in itself!

Under the New Covenant Priesthood, Yah'shua the Messiah is our High Priest. His Holy Spirit is our Helper. It is Yah'shua the Messiah and His Gospel of the Kingdom of Yahweh that we must believe in - and upon our faith in the Messiah, His resurrection and Yahweh's plan of salvation, the power and strength of Yahweh's Holy Spirit will be GIVEN to us.

That is why we were commanded to "Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing *[immersing]* them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of His Holy Spirit" *(Matt. 28:19).* And in verse 20, Yah'shua makes it clear what this means: "Teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you".

In other words, if we teach them all things that Yah'shua commanded - that is, all about the Kingdom of Yahweh - we would indeed be "immersing" them into everything concerning the Father, the Son and the power of Yahweh's Holy Spirit - which when they believed, would lead them to repentance - and then to receiving the FREE GIFT of His Holy Spirit - to being immersed *(baptized)* in the power and strength of His Holy Spirit, leading to an understanding of all things pertaining to the mysteries of the Kingdom.

When teaching on the gifts of the Spirit, Paul says: "But one and the same Spirit works all these things, distributing to each one individually as He *[Yahweh]* wills...For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body - whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free - and have all been made to drink into one Spirit" *(1 Cor. 12:11-13).* We are all baptized <u>BY</u> ONE SPIRIT - not by having so-called "holy" water sprinkled on us, or by being dunked in water, especially the water of some false ministry's pool or Jacuzzi!

We are after all, seeking to become members of the True Congregation of believers that Yah'shua said He would build. Only the power of His Holy Spirit can cause us to become members of that Congregation - "the general assembly and Congregation of the firstborn who are REGISTERED IN HEAVEN" *(Heb.*

12:23). So we see, that "he who believes and is baptized will be saved" - when he is baptized into the True Congregation by His Holy Spirit! "But the Messiah came as High Priest of the...greater and more perfect tabernacle not made with hands, that is not of this creation...For the priesthood being changed, of necessity there is also a change of the law" *(Heb. 9:11; 7:12).*

The PROOF is offered by the very words of the Messiah Himself. After His resurrection from the dead, just prior to the Day of Pentecost, the Messiah appeared and instructed His disciples: "For John truly baptized with water, but you shall be baptized with His Holy Spirit not many days from now" *(Acts 1:5).*

"For you are all sons of Yahweh through faith in Yah'shua the Messiah. For as many of you as were baptized into the Messiah have put on the Messiah" *(Gal. 3:26,27).* We see again, then, that FAITH in the Messiah is what leads us to being immersed in the Messiah as a way of life - of being baptized *(plunged)* into, or "putting on" the Messiah.

In chapter 10 of Acts, we read how Peter received a vision from Yahweh concerning the Gentiles, and how the Gentile Cornelius also received a vision, and summoned Peter to Caesarea. When Peter arrived in Caesarea, Cornelius, together with many of his friends and all of his relatives, were waiting for him. After preliminary introductions, and sharing accounts of their respective visions *(that caused them to meet)*, Peter began to teach them concerning the Word of Yahweh: "that Word you know, which was proclaimed throughout all Judea, and began from Galilee AFTER the baptism which John preached" *(Acts 10:37).*

"While Peter was still speaking these words, His Holy Spirit FELL UPON ALL THOSE WHO HEARD THE WORD...And those of the circumcision who believed were ASTONISHED, as many as came with Peter, because the gift of His Holy Spirit had been poured out on the Gentiles also...Then Peter answered, 'Can anyone forbid water, that these should not be baptized who have received His Holy Spirit just as we have?'" *(vv.44-47).*

This sounds like Peter thought these Gentiles should be baptized, even AFTER they had already received His Holy Spirit - because, as Peter himself said, it seemed fitting to do this to the Gentiles, "just as we have" had it done to ourselves. In fact, Peter commanded them to be baptized in water! *(v.48).*

But after a few days, when Peter returned to Jerusalem, the apostles and many brethren questioned him concerning the Gentiles. Peter then explained to them all the things concerning the visions from Yahweh and his trip to Caesarea *(11:1-14)*. When Peter came to the point of explaining his teaching of the Word to the Gentiles, he said: "And AS I BEGAN TO SPEAK, His Holy Spirit fell upon them, as upon us at the beginning. THEN I REMEMBERED the Word of the Messiah, how He said, 'John indeed baptized with water, but you SHALL BE BAPTIZED WITH His Holy Spirit'" *(11:15,16).*

So we see by Peter's own words, that because of his *(and his companions')* "astonishment" at the time the Gentiles were BAPTIZED BY His Holy Spirit, he had simply forgotten what Yah'shua the Messiah had previously said about being baptized "BY" or "WITH His Holy Spirit"! He even pointed out how he

“remembered” this, to the apostles and his fellow brethren, clarifying the matter once and for all, by reaffirming the Messiah’s own words.

Addendum 1: The Baptism of John

There is an often overlooked significance to the meaning or purpose behind this Bible verse: Matthew 21:25: "The baptism of John, whence was it? From heaven, or of men? And they reasoned with themselves, saying, If we shall say, From heaven; he will say unto us, Why did ye not then believe him?"

In this dialogue recorded as having taken place between the Messiah and the "chief priests and the elders of the people" of Israel, the Messiah is being asked if John's baptism was inspired by Yahweh or by men, with the unwritten implication that "men" meant either from himself *(John the Baptist)* or from others without inspiration from Yahweh.

It is clear from many verses that John was indeed inspired by Yahweh to conduct his baptism ministry to fulfill that which was spoken by the prophets, particularly Isaiah 40:3: "The voice of one crying in the wilderness: 'Prepare the way of Yahweh, Make His paths straight".

The Messiah further directly clarifies that John's baptism was inspired by Yahweh in Matthew 11:11 through 14: "Assuredly, I say to you, among those born of women there has not risen one greater than John the Baptist...For all the prophets and the law prophesied until John..."

The purpose in the Messiah having asked these chief priests and elders this question regarding whether or not they believed John's baptism was inspired, was further explained in the verses that immediately precede it, and in those that immediately follow the question, and that purpose was basically that the Messiah wished to entrap them into the place of having to admit to believing in John and consequently in Himself *(the Messiah),* or denying it, knowing however, that they had already spoken against John to the multitudes and that they were not likely to admit any belief in Him due to their envy of His *(the Messiah’s)* notoriety.

The dialogue begins with the priests and elders asking the Messiah by what authority He acts. The following question; the question quoted above, was Messiah's reply to the forgoing question posed to Him by the priests and elders. It is obvious to us reading these words now, and the Messiah knew that it should have been obvious to the priests and elders that both the authority of John and the authority of the Messiah came from Yahweh, but they were unwilling to concede this, hence the Messiah would not directly answer them.

Now as to continuing the baptism rites, there is much misunderstanding within traditional Christianity. Almost universally, there is the mistaken belief that some form of water baptism is still a requirement of the Congregation. We must look at the very words of the Messiah, and those of John the Baptist, of whom the Messiah proclaimed to be the greatest among the prophets, to find the truth.

Matthew 3:11: "I *[John]* indeed baptize you with water unto repentance, BUT HE WHO IS COMING AFTER ME IS MIGHTIER THAN I, WHOSE SANDALS I AM NOT WORTHY TO CARRY. HE WILL BAPTIZE YOU WITH His Holy Spirit AND FIRE". And also Mark 1:8: "I indeed baptize with water, BUT HE WILL BAPTIZE YOU WITH His Holy Spirit".

So we can see that John's baptism ministry led people to repentance and prepared them for the Messiah, who would preach a different message; that message was the Gospel of the Kingdom of Yahweh. Now the gift of Yahweh's Holy Spirit is given according to Yahweh's will and may be associated with repentance and faith or belief in that Gospel of the Messiah concerning the Kingdom of Yahweh. But in many cases, such as Paul for example, Yahweh determined to give him His gift of His Holy Spirit before Paul repented.

Baptism in its own right will not aid in obtaining Yahweh's gift in any way, and if it is purely baptism for baptism's sake, it may not interfere with receiving Yahweh's gift either. It is simply not a "requirement", and like many ancient rites or rituals that are no longer requirements, it is not necessarily harmful if done in the proper context either.

Unfortunately, the proper context is lost to most of traditional Christianity. Typically the rite of baptism is wrongly proclaimed as a necessary requirement, and typically it entails being "registered" as a member of a man-made church organization, as opposed to acknowledging that our membership in the true Congregation is registered only "in heaven" and the true Congregation is a "spiritual organism", not a "statutory organization", which by definition, requires subservience to the state within a hierarchy of men, rather than subservience to Yahweh through the Messiah alone

Another interesting and important issue, is the question of whether or not John the Baptist was baptised, and if so, by who? This question poses a question within itself, and that is to do with what the word "baptised" means, and in what context it is being used.

As we know, the word "baptise" is the Greek equivalent to the English "immerse". Hence if we are asking who "immersed" John the Baptist in water, there are no passages in our Bibles to be cited confirming that John the Baptist was ever "baptised" by immersion in water.

However if we are asking who "immersed" John the Baptist in His Holy Spirit, thus "baptising" him in His Holy Spirit, then the answer may well be that Yahweh baptised John with His Holy Spirit while John was still in his mother's *(Elizabeth's)* womb, upon the greeting of her blood relative, Mary, the mother of the Messiah: "And it happened, when Elizabeth heard the greeting of Mary, that the babe *(John)* leaped in her womb; and [as] Elizabeth was filled with His Holy Spirit" *(Luke 1:41).*

In fact, it is clear that John the Baptist had a Spiritual, or inner revelation of truth regarding his own need to be "baptised" or more thoroughly immersed in the knowledge and understanding of the things of Yahweh, for when he met the Messiah, he spoke thusly: "I have need to be baptised *[immersed]* in You, and you *[the Messiah]* are coming to me?" As this question was posed by John at a time when it was obvious

that he had already been led by Yahweh's Holy Spirit to conduct his ministry of baptism to repentance, it is clear that at least John understood that he still required immersion in the things to do with the Messiah and the Messiah's ministry, which was to do with belief in and obedience to "the Kingdom of Yahweh".

That is also why when the Gospel writers refer to John the Baptist's ministry, it is always as a "baptism *[immersion]* of repentance for the remission of sins", and John himself describes the difference between his ministry and that ministry of the Messiah's as: "He *[Yahweh]* who sent me to baptise *[immerse]* with water said to me, 'Upon whom you see the Spirit descending, and remaining on Him, this is He *[the Messiah]* who baptizes *[immerses]* with His Holy Spirit" *(John 1:33)*. Whereas also the Gospel writers always refer to the Messiah's ministry as that of the Messiah "preaching the gospel of the kingdom of Yahweh" *(Mark 1:14)*.

And perhaps the most significant statement offered by the Messiah about three years after He was baptized in water by John: “I came to send fire on the earth....But I *[the Messiah]* have a baptism to be baptized with, and how distressed I am till it is accomplished!” *(Luke 12:49-50)*. The Messiah had indeed been symbolically baptized in water by John, yet he still had another baptism to accomplish!

In other words, the Messiah came and did precisely what He said He would do - complete, or fulfill the law. Just like the Messiah became the "final" wave sheaf offering, completing the need for the ritual, and just like He became the final Passover, changing or completing the Passover symbols, He symbolized the final water baptism, permanently completing the need for this ritual, which was symbolic of the baptism of fire and the baptism by His Holy Spirit which would replace it.

Addendum 2: Baptism, Generally

The Messiah became the "Passover", and eliminated any further need of the ritualistic sacrifice, but by doing so, He did not eliminate the Passover Celebration.

The Messiah became the final "wave sheaf" offering and eliminated any further need of the ritualistic offering, but by doing so, He did not eliminate the celebration.

Likewise, the Messiah's water baptism, served to complete or fulfill all righteousness with respect to the ritual of water baptism, but it by no means eliminated our need to be baptized by or immersed in His Holy Spirit.

There are numerous accounts in the Bible of His Holy Spirit being given immediately upon and because of belief. There are no accounts of His Holy Spirit being given immediately upon and because of water baptism. In the specific instance below where we refer to Acts 19:6, the issue of "upon AND because" is more fully explained than in other instances, because of its association with speaking in other tongues.

There are three uniquely special occurrences of speaking in tongues mentioned in Acts, each giving miraculous evidence and divine approval for three major developments in the Israelite Congregation.

Speaking in tongues was a miracle that gave spectacular support and timely evidence to the apostles efforts to establish the Congregation of believers; fulfilling the words of Mark 16:15-16, which says that speaking in "new tongues" would be one of the signs that followed the apostles. *(This list of signs includes protection from poisonous snakes and poisonous drinks, and is a short sampling of the types of miracles Yahweh's disciples would experience. It does not mean every Israelite would experience every sign.)*

The first occurrence was the formation of the Congregation on the Day of Pentecost. Yahweh ensured that the miracle focused the attention of the crowd and permitted Peter, who was not a rabbi, to speak to them with authority. Shortly after the Messiah had risen, His disciples were gathered during the annual festival of Pentecost *(Acts 2:10).* A miraculous sound filled the building, and tongues as of fire appeared to sit on them *(vv. 2-3)*. The disciples were "filled with His Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues" *(V. 4).* These other "tongues" were foreign languages readily understood by the people who were native to many other nations *(vv. 8-11)*. There was no water baptism associated with this event.

About 10 years later, after Peter had preached to a group of Gentiles in the house of Cornelius, the "Holy Spirit fell upon all those who heard the word". The Bible records that the (Hebrew) Israelites then heard the gentiles "speak with tongues and magnify Yahweh" *(10:44-46)*. This second occurrence announced the call of the Gentiles into the Congregation. Since the (Hebrews) Israelites had historically separated themselves from the Gentiles, these special signs were given to PROVE to the Hebrews that Yahweh had not only authorized Peter to speak, but that He had accepted the Gentiles into the Congregation as His children *(Acts 15:7,8).*

Another decade after this account, Paul taught some disciples in Ephesus about His Holy Spirit, and "when Paul had laid hands on them, His Holy Spirit came upon them, and they spoke with tongues and prophesied" *(19:1-6)*. This final example is used to validate those who had previously been led by John the Baptist and were now true followers of New Covenant Israelite faith *(Acts 19:1-6).* This was the final demonstration orchestrated by Yahweh, that proved that the water baptism of John was now obsolete and that those followers of John were now accepted into the Congregation as His children, along with the gentiles and everyone else.

In all three of these accounts, speaking in tongues was a miracle associated with His Holy Spirit, as related to three, very special developments in the early Congregation of believers. So the answer as to why Yahweh chose to have these converts wait to receive His Holy Spirit until after Paul laid on his hands in this instance, is simply because Yahweh wanted to provide His Divine demonstration that the former followers of John were now officially invited into His true Congregation of believers, as evidenced by His gift of His Holy Spirit - without water baptism.

Acts, 19:1-7, states very simply that although all of the disciples that were present at the time had been "baptized" or immersed into water, yet none of them had received His Holy Spirit. Indeed, when Paul arrived, he did not question whether or not they had received His Holy Spirit when they were, or as a

result, of their being immersed in water, he questioned as follows: "Did you not receive His Holy Spirit when you BELIEVED?"

They answered effectively saying that it was not possible for them to have believed in what they had not yet heard of, hence His Holy Spirit which enters upon belief, had not yet come upon them. They continued by explaining that they had been immersed, or instructed into a baptism of repentance, which simply means they were taught all about the need to repent of their sins and seek forgiveness of Yahweh, which is clearly what John's baptism was about.

Now the key phrase, follows, which is "When they HEARD this, they were baptized [or immersed in the things of His Holy Spirit] in the name of the Lord Yah'shua the Messiah." This means what it says - they were baptized WHEN THEY HEARD THIS, not later or earlier when they were immersed in water. Earlier, they were simply immersed in water, which was an incidental carry-over of the former ritual.

As to why Philip performed a water baptism on the eunuch, the answer is perhaps not much different than why Peter immersed the members of Cornelius's family in water AFTER they had already received His Holy Spirit.

Peter clears this up when he later explains that he had simply forgotten, or not yet quite fully understood the word of the Messiah: "Then I remembered the word of the Messiah, how he said, 'John indeed baptized with water, but you shall be baptized with His Holy Spirit. If therefore Yahweh gave them the same gift *[of His Holy Spirit]* as He gave us WHEN WE BELIEVED...'"

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