

Baptism in the Old Testament

The Basic Meaning of Baptism

The basic meaning of the Greek tells you that the ritual act of baptism is a washing, cleansing or purification by means of water, especially in terms of a ritual or ceremonial action related to the covenants in the Bible.

βαπτισμός – Mark 7:4, Colossians 2:12, Hebrews 6:2, 9:10

βάπτω – Exodus 12:22, Leviticus 4:6,17; 9:9; 11:32; 14:6,16,51, Numbers 19:18, Deuteronomy 33:24, Joshua 3:15, Ruth 2:14, 1 Samuel 14:27, 2 Kings 8:15, Psalm 67:24, Job 9:31, Daniel 4:33; 5:21, Luke 16:24, John 13:26, Revelation 19:13

βάπτισμα – Found only in Christian writers – Matthew 3:7; 21:25, Mark 1:4; 10:38,39; 11:30, Luke 3:3; 7:29; 12:50; 20:4, Acts 1:22; 10:37; 13:24; 18:25; 19:3,4 Romans 6:4, Ephesians 4:5, 1 Peter 3:21

βαπτίζω – Matthew 28:19, Mark 16:16, Luke 12:50, John 3:22, and many more.

Baptism Events in the Old Testament

The Creation of the World - Gen 1:2 and Gen 2:5-6

Noah's Flood - Gen 7:11-12

Baby Moses' Deliverance from Drowning - Exodus 2:3-10

The Red Sea Crossing - Exodus 14:21-22

The Various Washings of the Old Covenant:

Lathering - Exodus 12:22

Pouring - Leviticus 9:9

Sprinkling - Numbers 19:18

Defining Baptism Better

Duane Spencer states, "The terms from which we derive our words 'baptize' and 'baptism' is that the terms themselves do not dictate (1) the proper mode, (2) the proper substances, or (3) the proper subjects of baptism."

He goes on to say that, “Information as to the mode, substances, or subjects of baptism must always be gleaned from the context in which the terms appear, or from related sources. Like their English transliterations, the Greek terms for baptism are barren of such information.”

So what is intrinsic to the meaning of these words that we translate as ‘baptize’ or ‘baptism’?

Spencer suggests the following, “According to general usage, whether in Classical Greek, the Greek Septuagint, or the Greek New Testament, the intrinsic meaning of *bapto*, *baptizo*, and *baptisma* is “union, fellowship, identification.”

For example: Romans 6:3, Galatians 3:27, 1 Corinthians 10:2, 1 Corinthians 12:13

The New Covenant Prophecies and Baptism

Isaiah 52:13-15, note the connection to the Ethiopian Eunuch in Acts 8:27-38

Ezekiel 36:25-27

In Conclusion

- (1) Baptism in the Old Testament well informs us that every mode of applying the water is a legitimate symbolism and the mode of immersion is not the exclusive symbol making an individual's baptism a legitimate baptism.
- (2) Christian Baptism or New Covenant Baptism is the fulfillment of all the Baptisms found in the Old Testament. This is demonstrated by the fact that New Testament writers, like Peter and Paul, connected multiple different events in the Old Testament to events that pointed forward to Christ, our baptisms, and their union with one another.
- (3) And since I would be remiss to not mention this in the Context of the Old Testament and Baptism... Because all these baptisms are tied to God's covenants and the relationship they establish between him and his people... There is a clear continuity between the Old and New Testament. Just as all the Old Testament baptisms included the children and households of God's people (Noah and his whole family, All the Israelites passed through the red sea, All the people, not just adults, were sprinkled with blood, and all the households of Israel baptized their doorposts with blood to save their children – the firstborn males)... so does the New Covenant baptism.