

Further, it is important to note that these baptisms were purifying or cleansing ceremonies (Numbers 8:7; 19:13; *et al*). This fact will be significant below.

II. BAPTISM IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

There is no hint in the questions posed to John the Baptist (John 1:19,25) that the ceremony being performed by him was in any way different from what was already prescribed in the Old Testament. The Pharisees did not ask what he was doing, they asked why he was doing it. And the answer is clear. John fulfilled prophecy as the forerunner of the Messiah (Isaiah 40:3; John 1:23). To receive the Messiah, Israel was in need of repentance and cleansing from sin (Matthew 3:2; 4:17,23), and John preached “the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins” (Mark 1:4; Luke 3:3). Therefore, came Jerusalem and all Judea to John “and were baptized by him in Jordan, confessing their sins” (Matthew 3:5,6). So to prepare Israel for their Messiah and entrance into the promised Kingdom, this purifying and cleansing ceremony of the Mosaic Law became especially important.

John himself summarizes these points in John 1:31 where he stated the general purpose of his baptism: “That He [Messiah or Christ] should be made manifest to Israel, therefore am I come baptizing with water.”

Is the baptism practiced in the Book of Acts in obedience to Matthew 28:19,20 and Mark 16:15-18 any different? That a negative answer is required can be seen for several reasons. (1) Jesus was still being presented to Israel as their Messiah (Acts 2:16-40, esp. 22,36; 3:12-26, esp. 12,25,26; 5:29-32, esp. 31). (2) As did John the Baptist, Peter commanded Israel to “repent and be baptized...for the remission of sins” (Acts 2:37,38; 3:19). (3) It was in Acts that the prophesied Kingdom was actually offered to Israel (Acts 3:19-21).

III. IS WATER BAPTISM FOR TODAY?

The answer is no for the following reasons.

1. Baptism was part of the Mosaic Law. The Christian today is strictly admonished not to place himself under the Law or any part of it. See Romans 6:14,15; Galatians 3:2,3; 4:9; 5:1-4,18; *et al*. The ordinances of the Law have been taken out of the way and nailed to the Cross of Christ (Colossians 2:14; Hebrews 8:13; 10:1-18).

2. There occurred after the early chapters of the Book of Acts a change in God’s dealings with Israel. Israel rejected Peter’s offer of the Kingdom in Acts 3:19-21 and as a result was, as a nation, temporarily cast aside (Acts 10:1-48; 13:44-49; 18:4-6; 28:25-28; Romans 11:1-25, esp. 11,12,15,25). Therefore, the whole basis for water baptism in the New Testament as traced in this tract is removed.

3. As another result of Israel's rejection, God began the Church of today, the Body of Christ mentioned in Ephesians 1:22,23. The student of Scripture must carefully distinguish between Israel and the Church. It was the Apostle Paul that God raised up to dispense the new, previously unrevealed message concerning the origin, doctrine, position, walk, and destiny of this Church (Romans 16:25-27; Ephesians 2:11-3:12; Colossians 1:24-29). This Apostle clearly states that "Christ sent me not to baptize, but to preach the gospel" (I Corinthians 1:17). Thus he was not laboring under the commission of Matthew 28 and Mark 16 as were Peter and the Eleven in the early chapters of Acts. That commission does not direct the dissemination of the gospel today. For the Church today there is only "one baptism" (Ephesians 4:5), the baptism of the Holy Spirit which unites the believer with Christ and fuses him into the Body of Christ (Romans 6:1-10; I Corinthians 12:13; Galatians 3:27; Colossians 2:10-12).

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SHOULD *Water Baptism* BE PRACTICED TODAY?



A question which has occupied the Church for centuries is whether the mode of baptism should be sprinkling, pouring, or immersing. But a more basic issue exists: Should water baptism be practiced at all today? This tract will present the case that it should not.

I. BAPTISM IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

Water baptism was not a New Testament innovation. Many baptismal ceremonies were prescribed in the Mosaic Law. See, e.g., Exodus 29:4; 30:17-21; Numbers 8:5-7, 19:1-22, esp. 7-9,13,20,21; 31:23. The KJV does not use the word "baptism" in any of the above passages because that word is a transliteration of a Greek word and not an English translation. However, in the most extensive discussion of the ceremonial aspect of the Mosaic Law found in the New Testament, it is stated that the Levitical system had its basis in "meats and drinks, and divers washings" (Hebrews 9:9,10). The word translated "washings" is *baptismos*, or "baptisms."