

BE BAPTISED IN JESUS NAME!

The Role of Water in Salvation

PAUL THOMAS

Copyright © 2011 Paul Thomas

All rights reserved. Unless otherwise specified, all Scripture quotations are from the King James Version, 1611 (Authorised Version). No part of this book may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means, graphic, electronic, or mechanical, including photocopying, recording, taping or by any information storage or retrieval system, without the permission in writing from the copyright holder. The right of Paul Thomas to be identified as the author of this work has been asserted in accordance with the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988 sections 77 and 78. The views expressed in this book are the author's alone.

The images featured in this book are in the public domain because their copyright has expired as per the Berne Convention and similar laws governing copyrights. This applies to Australia, the European Union and those countries with a copyright term of life of the author plus 70 years.

Lulu Publishing

ISBN: 978-1-4710-0121-5

DEDICATION

At sundry times God raises up giants in the faith – men like Bishop Teklemariam Gezahagne. He is a man, who having been profoundly touched by the precious nuggets of truths embedded in the Word of God, impacted millions of lives, including mine. It is my prayer that this book in a small way continues to shine the light that he shone on our lives.

CONTENTS

Dedication *iii*

Contents *iv*

Acknowledgements *vi*

1. IN THE BEGINNING -WATER	1
<i>The Earth's watery birth</i>	1
<i>Water and the natural birth</i>	7
2. THE DUAL ROLE OF WATER	16
<i>Destroying the old world</i>	16
<i>Old things are passed away</i>	21
<i>Jesus the true Ark of salvation</i>	24
3. THE WALLS OF THE RED SEA	26
<i>Moses: drawn from the water</i>	26
<i>The cloud of separation</i>	28
<i>Water not plagues destroyed Pharaoh</i>	35
<i>The dragon's head crushed in water</i>	40
4. BAPTISM AS CIRCUMCISION	44
<i>Abraham and the covenant of circumcision</i>	45
<i>God's zeal for circumcision: Zipporah and Gilgal</i>	52

5. WATER IN THE TABERNACLE 61

The brass laver 62

Washing and new clothes 67

Baptism as a mirror 71

6. THE WATER AND THE NAME 75

Jesus – the tabernacle of blood and water 76

Jesus name in baptism 82

Plotinus, Gregory and Matthew 28:19 86

7. CONCLUSION 94

Bibliography 97

Index 99

About the author 101

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I wish to express my appreciation for all the men of God who taught me that water baptism in Jesus name is not a peripheral matter, but central to the doctrine of salvation. Men who challenged me to explore and grasp the mystery of baptism with particular emphasis on its role in putting off the body of Adam and putting on the heavenly body of Christ, as evidenced in the words of the apostle Paul, “For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ” (Galatians 3:27). I also express my gratitude to all the saints of God who through the years, and in places as diverse as India, Kenya, Norway and the USA helped distill the marvelous truths contained in the doctrine of water baptism in Jesus name.

List of Illustrations

Illustration 1. Saturn's rings are made up of ice particles.....	4
Illustration 2. 10-week old fetus in the amniotic sac	8
Illustration 3. Miyako, Iwate, Japan after the tsunami of 2011.....	19
Illustration 4. The real Mt. Sinai is in Saudi Arabia.	39
Illustration 5. Male child circumcision.....	49
Illustration 6. The Tabernacle: 1890 Holman Bible	62
Illustration 7: a brass laver.....	67
Illustration 8. Hyssop	79

1. IN THE BEGINNING -WATER

The Earth's watery birth

Genesis 1:2 And the earth was without form, and void; and darkness was upon the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters.

Jeremiah 4:23 I beheld the earth, and, lo, it was without form, and void; and the heavens, and they had no light.

There is a mysterious, almost mystical quality to water. Mysterious because the Bible tells us that “the earth was without form, and void”. The word “void” (Hebrew *bohuw*) simply means “empty”, and yet we are also told “the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters”. This should actually mean that the Earth was *not* empty as it contained water – which, as we all know, weighs quite a lot (1 liter is about 1.000028 kilograms or 3.785 kilograms to a gallon).

Furthermore, the phrase “the face of the deep” serves to confirm the observation that there was plenty of water contained in the Earth before the creation week (assuming that “deep” refers to water). This is puzzling because, at this stage, the Earth was without form which begs the question, “What was the precise location of the water?” If the Earth had no parameters to speak of how did it

contain water? The mental image we are left with from the account in Genesis 1:2 is a gigantic reservoir of water (weighing millions of tons no doubt) floating about like a liquid blob in the vast expanse of space.

God appears to deliberately shroud this account in some mystery. The silence of God is perhaps an invitation for the reader to meditate on the formidable mystery of water. Significantly, in the first act of creation, “the Spirit of God *moved* upon the face of the waters”. In the first step of many steps that would eventually bring about the creation of humans, God reached out for the mysterious element of water. The water was up to this point a colossal force of potential energy (just think of all the benefits e.g. hydroelectric power harnessed from water today) but passive and, essentially, useless until the Almighty began to *move* upon the face of the waters.

King David seems to allude to this fascinating interplay between God’s activities with regards to humans and the unique role of water. In Psalm 18, David, full of thanksgiving and praise, poetically describes the manner in which God responded to his prayer for deliverance from his enemies. Intriguingly, he utters this sentence:

Psalm 18:11 *He made darkness his secret place; his pavilion round about him were dark waters and thick clouds of the skies.*

God is metaphorically described as emerging out of a “secret place” with “dark waters” acting as a “pavilion”. Interestingly, the word “pavilion” (Hebrew *cukkah*) is the same word used for the “booths” or “tabernacles” which the children of Israel constructed to commemorate their desert wanderings in the Sinai. “Ye shall dwell in booths seven days; all that are Israelites born shall dwell in booths” (Leviticus 23:42). Booths were thus associated with remembering the mighty acts of God and His deliverance. Hence, when God remembers His people, when His bowels of compassion are stirred, He inevitably harnesses the mysterious forces of water to bless His people.

To summarize thus far: from the onset, water was shrouded in mystery. This pristine water had tremendous potential energy but existed in a passive state awaiting the move of God which was soon to spark a mind-boggling new world teeming with an incredible array of creatures. No doubt God could have used some other agency to spawn life on Earth. We are in fact told that all things have been created by the Word of God. Everything – animate or inanimate - is contingent upon God’s creative will.

Hebrews 11:3 *Through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that things which are seen were not made of things which do appear.*

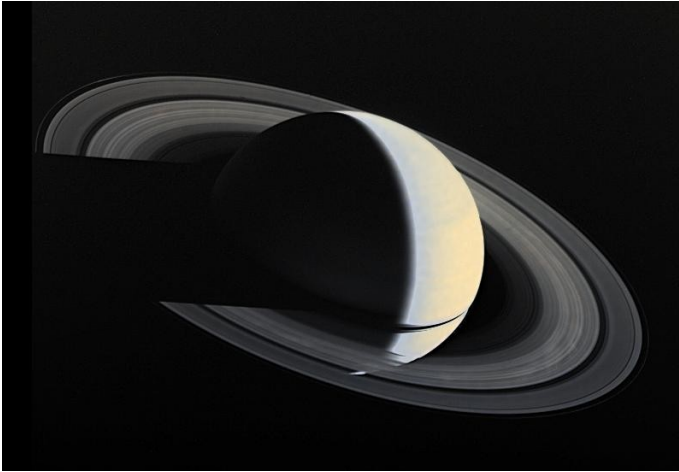


Illustration 1. Saturn's rings are made up of ice particles

The above means that even water was at some point created by God. However, we are not told *when* water was

specifically ordered to appear by God. The Genesis account nowhere has a verse stating: "Let there be water." Obviously, the Bible is not an inventory painstakingly recording the precise nanosecond when each item saw the light of day. Nevertheless, water is of such importance that it would be reasonable to read something about its creation in the chronology of events. After all, it wouldn't make sense to create marine creatures if there was no water to sustain them. Put differently, why are we told about the details of the creation of the whales and other aquatic creatures but nothing about the moment God decreed the appearance of water?

It is such observations which invest a compelling sense of mystery and an aura of spirituality whenever the subject of water is explored in the pages of the Holy Bible.

Genesis 1:7 And God made the firmament, and divided the waters which were under the firmament from the waters which were above the firmament: and it was so.

Jews conceive of the firmament (Hebrew *raqiya*) as the vast expanse which supports water. The sun heats up the surface of the Earth which water utilizes to cool the environment. In a reverse move, water that is cooled releases energy into the environment increasing the temperature (condensation). It is this process of evaporation and condensation – referred to as the water/hydrological cycle – which sustains life and ecosystems on Earth. Indeed, the whole Earth is interconnected through the water cycle which purifies reservoirs of water across the planet replenishing the water supply with fresh deposits while transporting minerals to different parts of the globe.

The infinite knowledge and wisdom of God can easily be grasped in this act of employing water to balance the temperature of the Earth. Much like the water in our bodies which connects all the tissues and organs supplying them with oxygen through the blood, God connected the firmament and land through the agency of water. The Earth became alive; water linked the previously formless and empty Earth into a living, breathing organism, so to speak. The Psalmist celebrates precisely this marvelous synergy of the firmament, atmosphere and water, “Let the heavens rejoice, and let the earth be glad; let the sea roar, and the fullness thereof” (Psalm 96:11).

Scientists warn us today about the dangerous effects of global warming. Human-related activities (anthropogenic) such as deforestation and greenhouse-gas emissions are projected to increase the warming of the earth's surface which in turn will lead to a speeding up of the water cycle resulting in floods and melting snow caps. Writing in *Nature*, one scientist states:

Precipitation patterns are expected to shift, expanding the dry subtropics. What precipitation there is will probably come in extreme deluges, resulting in runoff rather than drought alleviation. Warming causes greater evaporation and, once the ground is dry, the Sun's energy goes into baking the soil, leading to a further increase in air temperature...We clearly need to pursue the most aggressive greenhouse-gas mitigation policies promptly, and put dust-bowlification atop the world agenda (Romm, 2011, p. 451).

Without water, which is the reason the Earth is called the "blue planet", life would disappear as deserts spread rapidly.

Interestingly, the word "desert" comes from the Latin *desertum* which describes an abandoned place (Romm, 2011). It is for this reason that scientists are looking for signs of water on other planets as the absence of water is reliable evidence of lifelessness. So it is water which regulates the otherwise intolerable temperatures of the sun and ensures that our planet stays green to sustain us and other life forms.

The creation week is replete with instances attesting to the indispensable and central role of water in sustaining life. Indeed,

there is a curious verse which seems to suggest that water generated aquatic life in the seas and fowl in the air:

Genesis 1:20 And God said, Let the waters bring forth abundantly the moving creature that hath life, and fowl that may fly above the earth in the open firmament of heaven.

Water which was gathered below in the seas, oceans and subterranean water sources as well as in the atmospheric dimension seems to be tasked with generating marine and fowl species. The Scriptures do not elaborate on the precise dynamics of how water spawned life, if indeed this is the correct reading. Some Christians have even found justification for the theory of evolution in Genesis 1:20. A wise course of action, very useful in Bible hermeneutics, is to remain silent where the Bible is silent. What we can all agree on, nonetheless, is that water has been assigned a critical role in the embryonic stages of the history of our planet.

Water and the natural birth

There appears to be a remarkable parallel between the role played by water in facilitating life on Earth and life in the womb of a mother. Just as water in the atmosphere has a salutary impact replenishing the planet's reservoir of fresh water and distributing

minerals, water in the womb transports nutrients through the blood to the fetus. Furthermore, water is fundamental to the process of flushing out toxins which increase during pregnancy decreasing the risk of urinary tract infections. Again, just as in the case of the Earth, water regulates the temperature of the fetus in the womb. Thus in many respects water re-enacts the role of birthing and sustaining our planet on a microcosmic level.



Illustration 2. 10-week old fetus in the amniotic sac (covered in water).

King David, again, was awestruck at the unfathomable power, knowledge and wisdom required to bring a child into being:

Psalm 139:13 *For thou hast possessed my reins: thou hast covered me in my mother's womb.*

Psalm 139:14 *I will praise thee; for I am fearfully and wonderfully made: marvellous are thy works; and that my soul knoweth right well.*

Psalm 139:15 *My substance was not hid from thee, when I was made in secret, and curiously wrought in the lowest parts of the earth.*

David marvels at the workings of God in the womb. God worked skillfully and secretly in the depths of the womb to bring about a miracle – a fearfully and wonderfully made child. Once again, we see God reaching out to the mystical element of water in order to facilitate life. Once again, the Spirit of God, just like in the beginning, *moves* upon the face of the deep (the womb) to let there be life. Water is the unsung hero in the birth clinic. When the water of a pregnant woman breaks, she is frantically rushed to the hospital where she eventually delivers a child. The joyous and proud parents are congratulated by midwives and other well-wishers. In the roller coaster of emotions that is part and parcel of such a profound experience, few pay much attention to the indispensable role played by humble water. However, some people, in the medical profession aware of the aforementioned importance of water are calling for an extended role. Some midwives are

agitating for the use of water pools to ease labor pain experienced during child birthing, and even for giving birth in water:

Water is an excellent form of pain relief and has been shown to significantly reduce the need for epidurals and pethidine (Cluett et al, 2004). Muscular tension throughout the body decreases, conserving energy and reducing pain. As anxiety fades and the woman's catecholamine levels drop, her flow of pituitary hormones is enhanced. Water stimulates oxytocin for efficient contractions (Odent M, 1997) which can significantly shorten the active first stage (Otigbah et al, 2000) and avoid interventions to augment labour (Cluett, 2004). Endorphins help her relax even more deeply and manage the pain (Miller, 2006, p. 484).

We can thus establish two vital facts thus far: that water was indispensable to the creation of the new Earth and, two, that it is just as vital to the process of facilitating the birth of a human child. These facts in turn are essential to an understanding of the words of the Lord Jesus Christ:

John 3:5 *Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.*

John 3:7 *Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again.*

Notice carefully the words of the Lord. He said “Ye must be born *again*” (emphasis mine). If we are to be born *again* it follows that there was a first birth. Undoubtedly, Jesus was speaking about our first birth which also transpires through the agency of water and

spirit. As God, who “covers us in our mother’s womb” (Psalm 139:13), Jesus is fully aware of the role of water in the first or natural birth. The spirit, of course, is breathed by God into every child. The Lord explained to a baffled Nicodemus that he must undergo a *second* birth also of the water and the Spirit. The Lord gently criticised Nicodemus for demonstrating such ignorance of natural phenomena given his position as a teacher.

***John 3:12** If I have told you earthly things, and ye believe not, how shall ye believe, if I tell you of heavenly things?*

In other words, an honest appraisal of nature and its machinations should lead one to humbly acknowledge the great truths of the Bible. Scientists, especially in the last few decades, have uncovered more and more of the incredible secrets of our universe, and yet many of them are determined to remain atheists despite concessions such as “It seems to me that there is a genuine scheme of things – the universe is ‘about’ something” (Davies, 2006, p. 302). Indeed, if man could only understand some of incredible secrets of this natural world, he would have no problem accepting the mind-boggling and incredible truths about the Kingdom of God revealed in the Bible, and the necessity of water baptism in Jesus name would not sound like some empty religious ritual. Sometimes I wonder why many are comfortable reading fiction stories and

novels while there is so much truth out there which is stranger than fiction.

The shocking discovery recently which indicates that neutrinos travel faster than light illustrates the “Nicodemus” predicament. On September 22, 2011, scientists working in the world’s largest laboratory, Cern, Switzerland, discovered that neutrinos travelled faster than light. The neutrinos travelled a distance of 732 kilometres from Cern to Gran Sasso, Italy, and arrived 60 billionths of a second earlier than they would have done if travelling at the speed of light (Palmer, 2011). The measurement amounts to the neutrinos travelling faster than the speed of light by a fraction of 20 parts per million. Since the speed of light is 299,792,458 metres per second, the neutrinos were evidently travelling at 299,798,454 metres per second. This was a seismic discovery which led many physicists to be sceptical of the finding. Einstein’s theory of relativity $E=MC^2$ sets a limit on speed – nothing travels faster than the speed of light. Interestingly, an experiment carried out in 2007 in Chicago also seemed to indicate that neutrinos arrived faster than the speed of light.

According to scientists, however, if neutrinos do travel faster than light, then this would be a brilliant explanation for a number of hypotheses. For instance, it would fill a gap in explaining the Big Bang explosion because the speeds involved in the first second after

the explosion do not sit easily with the constraints of speed limits. Secondly, this would give further support to String theory – a potential theory of everything. String theory postulates that there are more dimensions of existence than what we are currently familiar with (e.g. backwards & forward; up and down & sideways). The dimensions of String theory can be envisaged as violin strings, only vibrating in every direction with different frequencies and energies.

The electrons, quarks and other matter are conceived of as arranged in strings in membranes which are further placed in bulks.

Professor Marcus Sautoy speculates, along with other physicists, that perhaps the neutrinos, having collided with other neutrinos in the laboratory at Cern, temporarily slipped out into these other dimensions or bulks. One theory Kostelecky and his colleagues put forward in 1985 predicted that neutrinos could travel faster than the speed of light by interacting with an unknown field that lurks in the vacuum.

Neutrinos are mysterious particles dubbed “ghost particles”. They have a minuscule mass, no electric charge, and pass through almost any material as though it was not there. If String theory is true, this would mean that there exists other dimensions of space. The challenge of this century is to unite the two pillars of physics – the theory of special relativity and quantum mechanics which thus far

have seemed incompatible. If neutrinos do indeed travel faster than light, then there some very alarming implications which up until now would be considered gobbledegook or more at home in science fiction movies like *Back to the Future*.

If the neutrinos are actually going faster than light, though, it might be possible to use them to communicate with the past, Lloyd said. You could send off a faster-than-light message to someone moving at a rapid velocity with respect to you. They could then bounce the faster-than-light message back, and it would arrive before the signal you sent to them. One way to think of this is like a mirror, Lloyd said. You send a message to the mirror, and it reflects it back, but so quickly that "past you" is the one who receives it (Pappas, 2011).

Truth is stranger than fiction indeed. Before I proceed to chapter two, where the saga of the role of water in saving righteous Noah and his family is explored, there is a need to stress, once again, the indispensable role that God has assigned to water in effectuating our salvation. Unfortunately, many Christians, have been programmed to have an instrumental relation with baptism. They are either told that it is a ceremonial issue lacking any real substance, or that one should blindly obey it without appreciating the mystery of water since the dawn of creation. It is for this reason that I feel a need to carefully explore the role of water in the entire Bible would perhaps help others understand that baptism is more than ceremony or ritual – it is a glorious spiritual truth which deserves serious consideration.

BE BAPTISED IN JESUS NAME

2. THE DUAL ROLE OF WATER

Destroying the old world

2Peter 2:5 And spared not the old world, but saved Noah the eighth person, a preacher of righteousness, bringing in the flood upon the world of the ungodly;

This book is about the *role* water plays in salvation. Nowhere is this more visible than in the days of Noah when God judged the world and saved Noah and his family. It is important to register that God employed the agency of water to first destroy the *old world* before He used the same water to *save* Noah and his family. In the last chapter we learnt that water was central to the process of life, both in spawning life and sustaining it.

Once again, the next major event in the Bible features water cast in a “starring role”. The Bible records that the world was decadent and depraved beyond redemption, except for Noah who was righteous. The Bible particularly singles out two sins which sealed the doom of the old world: sexual wickedness and violence (Genesis 6:4). These sins also appear to be prevalent in our contemporary world. This is

not something we feel intuitively alone, but is backed up by statistics. Take violent crime in the UK, for example. In a House of Commons report (1999) entitled *A Century of Change: Trends in UK statistics since 1900*, we are informed that, "The number of homicides in England and Wales has more than doubled since the mid-1960s." In addition, "In 1901 the average prison population was 15,900. By 1998 the figure had increased to 65,300. There were more prisoners in 1998 than in any other year this century." (Joe Hicks & Grahame Allen, 1999, pp. 5,15).

It is a testimony to the love, patience and long-suffering of God that He waited for over a hundred years, striving and admonishing the rebellious people of the day, before He was left with no other choice other than to unleash the destructive force of water on the unrepentant. Let no one assume that God is happy to dish out misery and pain upon His own creation. Earlier, we saw how He *moved* on the waters to create an extraordinary world bursting with life. He said that it was very good. Now, much to His regret, He was compelled to *move* once again on the same waters to destroy what He had created. The Bible affirms God's reticence:

Genesis 6:6 *And it repented the LORD that he had made man on the earth, and it grieved him at his heart.*

2Peter 3:9 *The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.*

We truly live in an age of willful ignorance and skepticism, as the apostle Peter went on to say about the generation in the last days. Many scoff at the idea of a world-wide flood which buried the old world in the days of Noah. Basing their faith on the Qur'an, 1.2 billion Muslims believe that this was not a global flood but a local one around the Caspian Sea. The notion of a global deluge with catastrophic consequences should not be a far-fetched idea at all judging from the damage floods on a smaller, more localized area can do.

Consider the recent Tsunami off the coast of Tohoku, Japan, in March, 2011. Japan is used to earthquakes such as the one which hit the city of Kobe in 1995, but this recent one measured 9.0 on the Richter scale which was unprecedented in Japan's history. Never before had a tsunami with a run-up height of over 39 meters hit Japan. Approximately, 30, 000 people were reported as dead or missing; hundreds of thousands were rendered helpless and had to seek assistance as refugees in their own country. Many of the dead included servicemen which compounded the search and rescue missions. Over 76, 000 houses were smashed and 244, 000 partially damaged. The earthquake started about 345 fires.

The infrastructure also took a battering. 3, 546 roads, 71 bridges and 26 parts of the railway system. The Japanese area of Tohoku, being

earthquake and tsunami prone, actually was supposed to be “well-prepared”. Japanese researchers were puzzled:

Significantly, the Tohoku coast which was heavily damaged by the March 11 event had developed the most advanced anti-earthquake/tsunami system in the world. So why did this tragedy happen? What factors contributed to the high vulnerability of the area? (Mimura et al. 2011)



Illustration 3. Miyako, Iwate, Japan after the tsunami of 20 March, 2011¹.

One reason was the underestimation of the height of the waves. Whereas the authorities had prepared for waves of about 5.7 to 10 meters, the tsunami run-up elevation was about 15 meters. The Fukushima Nuclear Plant No.1 had its cooling system, placed in the

¹ U.S. Marine Corps photo by Lance Cpl. Garry Welch/Released); Operation Tomodachi. Public domain.

basement, knocked out by the tsunami with overheating and radiation threatening the population with a repeat of Chernobyl. The damage costs are estimated to be between 16 and 25 trillion yen leading the Japanese researchers to conclude,

Based on such observations, the earthquake is considered to be a 1/1000 year event...This indicates that the Great East Japan Earthquake and Tsunami was beyond past experiences and our expectation. This event suggests that we should not only implement disaster prevention based on improved scientific understanding, but also take into account the possibility of maximum potential hazards (Mimura et al. 2011).

With all due respect to the victims of the tsunami and the authorities of Japan, no amount of preparation can really brace one for the colossal forces of water. I believe the Bible does not grant anyone the license to exploit such horrendous calamities and “interpret” them privately. This would place us alongside the fetish priests or “rainmakers” of pagan societies. The apostles once brought news of the appalling blasphemies committed by Pilate who mixed the blood of certain Galileans with the daily sacrifice to which the Lord responded: “Suppose ye that these Galilaeans were sinners above all the Galilaeans, because they suffered such things? I tell you, Nay: but, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish.” (Luke 13:2,3). All I am saying is that it would be very foolish to dismiss the account of a global flood in Genesis 6 as a fanciful tale.

Old things are passed away

2Corinthians 5:17 Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.

Water, as previously stated, not only plays a key role in facilitating new life, but is just as vital to the process of attacking and eradicating evil. Undoubtedly, the sight of so much suffering and eventual death outside the Ark must have been a source of much grief for Noah and his family. The thought of his neighbours and friends panicking as the waters slowly prevented the flow of oxygen into their lungs and brain leading to asphyxia must have been too terrible to consider. Noah and his family realized painfully that the old world they were so familiar with was fast disappearing.

On the other hand, however, let us not forget that Noah had no doubt suffered persecution by virtue of adhering to righteousness. His soul was vexed like righteous Lot and his preaching could only serve to further escalate the persecution against him. For over a hundred years he patiently bore the insults and preached with the Ark providing tangible evidence of his faith in the Word of God. Each time he swung the hammer, every log of wood he was seen to carry and all the while the Ark kept growing in size, he was

condemning the old world around him. "By faith Noah, being warned of God of things not seen as yet, moved with fear, prepared an ark to the saving of his house; by the which he condemned the world, and became heir of the righteousness which is by faith" . (Hebrews 11:7). Given this background, I would imagine that he was also glad to see the back of the old world. The name Noah (*nāḥam*) means "He will comfort us" or simply "rest". Sin is indeed a source of much vexation of spirit and soul for the people of God. The apostle Peter refers to the attitude of the world to Christians who no longer delight in old sins.

***1Peter 4:4** Wherein they think it strange that ye run not with them to the same excess of riot, speaking evil of you:*

Let there be no doubt: God hates sin and condemns everything associated with it. Was it not for this reason that He commanded Lot's wife not to look back at the wicked cities of Sodom and Gomorrah? John declares unequivocally:

***1John 2:15** Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him.*

The same water that God *moved* upon to usher in the new world, He once again moved upon to destroy. The new world was now the old world full of violence and sexual immorality. God strove with this world with His Spirit and then raised up preachers like Enoch and

Noah to no avail. Water was the agent which, once again, restored an acceptable equilibrium. Water is like a reset button which erases recent cluttering and disorder. Paradoxically, the same water which gives life also suffocates preventing life (oxygen) from reaching the desperate, gasping individual.

There is a solemn message to be gleaned from all this. Water baptism in Jesus name is an essential part of God's plan of salvation because all of us have the "old world" living in us through the unregenerate sinful nature. This unregenerate sinful nature cannot submit to God but must be buried in the waters of baptism. Why water? Well, as this book explores, water is the agent chosen by God Himself to snuff out life or give new life. This is an intriguing Biblical fact which is consistent throughout the entire Bible. As the author and finisher of life, God retains the prerogative to identify water as the means through which He effectuates salvation. In the New Testament, the identification of water with salvation is explicit:

Mar 16:16 *He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned.*

Act 8:36 *And as they went on [their] way, they came unto a certain water: and the eunuch said, See, [here is] water; what doth hinder me to be baptized?*

Baptism which comes from the Greek *baptizō* denotes an immersion, submersion or overwhelming of something (e.g. a vessel) or a person. God desires all sin-tainted humans to first die to their old,

sinful natures before He moves upon the same water to give new life. Significantly, the people of Noah's day refused to voluntarily repent (symbolized in baptism) which unleashed the force of water. They actually were *baptized* but their baptism did not save them. So, in this sense, baptism is something which every human being will undergo one way or the other, but whether the second, life-giving phase is experienced depends on the individual.

Noah was also submerged by the deluge. The waters above and below him represented baptism, according to Peter: "Which sometime were disobedient, when once the longsuffering of God waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was a preparing, wherein few, that is, *eight souls were saved by water*. The like figure whereunto even baptism doth also now save us (not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God,) by the resurrection of Jesus Christ (I Peter 3:20, 21). The Ark played the role of a coffin for Noah and his family. They "died" to the old world and emerged alive to a new world where they could begin anew.

Jesus the true Ark of salvation

The Ark is a beautiful symbol pointing to Jesus Christ, the true Ark of salvation. Baptism can also be portrayed as being clothed or enveloped by Jesus Christ. Whereas the first Ark was made of wood, the second – the body of our Lord – is begotten of the Holy

Spirit. "Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus. By a new and living way, which he hath consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, his flesh (Hebrews 10:19,20).

Bishop Teklemariam Gezahagne had a vision in the early days of his ministry in Ethiopia in which he saw the Lord Jesus surrounded by concentric circles of glorious light. At that time, he was contemplating whether he should be baptized in Jesus name or not. Until then, he had only been baptized in the Trinitarian formula found in Matthew 28:19 (will be discussed later). The Lord assured him that baptism in Jesus name was the correct mode of baptism. Bishop Teklemariam shared with me that it was as if the Lord unzipped His body and allowed him to enter leaving him experiencing an incredible sense of bliss. The apostle Paul describes the experience of water baptism in Jesus name in a similar manner:

Galatians 3:27 For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ.

God has chosen to meet us in the waters of baptism in Jesus name. It is in the waters that an "exchange" takes place: water returns our adamic bodies to the dust, and Christ gives us His holy body to put on. None of this occurs without the agency of water. Indeed, such a profound revelation ought to fill our hearts with wonder at the mystery of water

3. THE WALLS OF THE RED SEA

Moses: drawn from the water

Like Noah, Moses was also saved by an ark which his mother made to float down the river Nile. His name means “drawn from the water”. Once again, water played the indispensable role of transporting this child away from certain death to life in the presence of God. Moses was saved by water and was instrumental when later God destroyed Pharaoh and his army in another body of water – the Red Sea. God has always utilized water to save the righteous and destroy the wicked. Miriam, the sister of Moses, rejoiced in dance and song saying, “Sing ye to the LORD, for he hath triumphed gloriously; the horse and his rider hath he thrown into the sea” (Exodus 15:21).

Thus the great biblical story of Moses, the man whom God used to take a whole nation out of Egypt and deliver the Law to Israel, began in water. Exodus chapter 1 begins with a horrifying account: Pharaoh commands the midwives to murder all Hebrew male infants and save the females. The rationale for this is as cruel as it is ingenious. With the males out of the way, the females would ultimately have no other alternative other than to marry Egyptian

men or end up childless. This was in effect a death sentence passed upon Israel as a viable nation not to mention an attempt at obliterating the Abrahamic covenant.

So all Hebrew males were cast into the mighty river Nile. All were thrown in by force. We can only imagine the awful horror of Hebrew women from whose hands the babies were snatched and thrown into the Nile. However, in the midst of this chaotic scene, one family calmly and voluntarily placed their child in an Ark to float down the river armed with faith that the child would be saved by the water. Did his parents not fear that the mighty Nile would swallow up their tiny baby?

Interestingly, the Bible tells us that his parents, Amran and Jochebed (Exodus 6:20), were not afraid of Pharaoh's infanticidal commandment at all. God had injected an overwhelming dose of faith in their hearts at the sight of their lovely baby. "By faith Moses, when he was born, was hid three months of his parents, because they saw he was a proper child; and they were not afraid of the king's commandment" (Hebrews 11:23). As previously stated, God has invested water with the dual role of destroying and saving. It was, paradoxically, the same Moses who stretched out his rod over the same river Nile which had saved him as an infant transforming it into a cesspool of blood, stench and death.

Exodus 7:21 And the fish that was in the river died; and the river stank, and the Egyptians could not drink of the water of the river; and there was blood throughout all the land of Egypt.

As in the days of Noah, we note that water became a source of dread for sinners. In the Apostolic Church of Ethiopia, the story is often told about fish raining down from heaven upon a drought-stricken area. Apparently, a mighty wind had transported water from a nearby source and deposited the fish where the people of God were. For some, hardened by the skepticism of modern demands for incontrovertible proof, this may sound far-fetched. To deny that God can do such things today is to deny the whole Bible indeed. For what else is the Bible about if not God's miraculous dealings with His people.

The cloud of separation

Ultimately, Pharaoh relented after God killed his firstborn son. Pharaoh's determination to keep Israel as his slaves and sole property was no match for God's determination to adopt Israel as His firstborn son, leave Egypt and serve Him alone. He lost the tug of war. "And thou shalt say unto Pharaoh, Thus saith the LORD, Israel is my son, even my firstborn: And I say unto thee, Let my son

go, that he may serve me: and if thou refuse to let him go, behold, I will slay thy son, even thy firstborn" (Exodus 4:22, 23). In the Bible, it is abundantly clear that water plays a dichotomous role in making an unbridgeable division between sinners and the righteous. From the moment the children of Israel left Egypt, God's presence was concretely symbolized in a pillar of cloud which never left them until they reached the land of Canaan.

Exodus 13:21 And the LORD went before them by day in a pillar of a cloud, to lead them the way; and by night in a pillar of fire, to give them light; to go by day and night:

Exodus 13:22 He took not away the pillar of the cloud by day, nor the pillar of fire by night, from before the people.

How assuring it must have been for Israel to see token evidence of the Lord's presence with them. The cloud was not meant to give visible comfort alone but shielded them from the extreme heat of the desert climate. At night, when the temperatures dropped rapidly, a pillar of fire provided heat and light. Thus water, once again, figures prominently in the annals of God's redemption of His people. Where was the cloud of God leading the children of Israel? The answer is to another body of water – the Red Sea.

God, in His predetermined plan of salvation, has decreed that none shall ever cross from this sinful world into the next without experiencing a watery immersion in water – baptism. The epic events of the book of Exodus, such as the crossing of the Red Sea,

were not some randomly confronted obstacles, but were shadows prefiguring New Testament salvation. The apostle Paul says,

***1Corinthians 10:1** Moreover, brethren, I would not that ye should be ignorant, how that all our fathers were under the cloud, and all passed through the sea;*

***1Corinthians 10:2** And were all baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea;*

In other words, Paul wanted to remind the Corinthian saints that the cloud and the sea represented baptism. A cloud after all is visible liquid droplets or crystals floating in the Earth's troposphere at varying altitudes. Cirrus clouds are wisp-like and are found between 3000 to 8000 meters above the Earth's surface. Cumulus clouds can occur anywhere between the surface and upwards to an altitude of about 2000-6000 meters. When clouds touch the surface they are called fog. Fogs usually restrict visibility but in the case of God's cloud, it was a column distinctly going before them never disappearing or lessening in intensity as other clouds normally do.

According to Paul, the children of Israel were "under the cloud, and all passed through the sea (I Corinthians 10:1). This means the water engulfed them from above at the moment they descended into the Red Sea. They were thus surrounded by water from above, below and beside them – a beautiful picture of baptism. All who will journey from this world, a type of Egypt, to the next, a type of

Canaan land, will invariably find themselves being led to water. Of interest is the fact that Jewish Rabbis have often throughout history baptized proselytes to symbolize the crossing through the Red Sea into the Promised Land:

Jeremias quotes Rabbinic evidence for an early association of proselyte baptism with the idea that the convert enters the promised land through water, as the Israelites had crossed the Red Sea (Lampe, 1952, p. 164)

The children of Israel finally came to the Red Sea. Beyond the beautiful turquoise waters was the land flowing with milk and honey they had heard so much about. How they must have dreamed about this land and all the magnificent land which God said later:

Deuteronomy 11:10 *For the land, whither thou goest in to possess it, is not as the land of Egypt, from whence ye came out, where thou sowedst thy seed, and wateredst it with thy foot, as a garden of herbs:*

Deuteronomy 11:11 *But the land, whither ye go to possess it, is a land of hills and valleys, and drinketh water of the rain of heaven:*

Deuteronomy 11:12 *A land which the LORD thy God careth for: the eyes of the LORD thy God are always upon it, from the beginning of the year even unto the end of the year.*

The prospect of a better life is at the heart of all human endeavor. It seems hardwired into human nature; God has created us this way. It is His good pleasure to give us the Kingdom, according to Jesus, “Fear not, little flock; for it is your Father’s good pleasure to give

you the kingdom” (Luke 12:32). Since there is so much to gain – eternal bliss in the presence of Jesus, our Lord and Savior – why do many reject or downplay the crucial need for baptism in water in Jesus name when the entire Bible proclaims its importance metaphorically and literally? To reject the power of God to save through water is to tragically choose the destroying properties of water.

***Exodus 14:19** And the angel of God, which went before the camp of Israel, removed and went behind them; and the pillar of the cloud went from before their face, and stood behind them:*

Pharaoh and his army were infuriated. His earlier humiliation and submission gave way to a murderous desire for vengeance. Having “owned” the children of Israel for over four centuries, he was not about to relinquish his “property” without a fight. Before he charged through the defenseless Israelites trapped before the Red Sea, something incredible happened. Suddenly, the cloud of God, which up to this point played the role of Comforter and Guide, assumes a new role. The cloud moved back and became a massive column of menacing darkness to the Egyptians. It was a cloud of separation.

***Exodus 14:20** And it came between the camp of the Egyptians and the camp of Israel; and it was a cloud and darkness to them, but it gave light by night to these: so that the one came not near the other all the night.*

Significantly, the cloud plunged the Egyptians into darkness but gave light to the Israelites. The dividing properties of water was triggered into action once again. Earlier God had divided the sky from the Earth using water, land from sea, sinners from the righteous in Noah's time, saved Moses from the Nile, turned the river to blood to chastise Pharaoh and, now, God used water to separate His people from those who rejected Him. I am reminded of a testimony I heard in India in 2002. A sister who entered a church congregation saw in a vision circles of fire around the heads of some individuals and not others. Puzzled she asked the Lord the meaning of this vision to which He replied that the ones with the fire had been obedient to the commandment to be baptized in Jesus name, while the others were disobedient. She immediately conferred with her pastor, Bishop Solomon Goddeti, who confirmed the accuracy of her vision. Water makes a distinction between the righteous and unrighteous. It separates.

2 Corinthians 6:14 *Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness?*

2 Corinthians 6:17 *Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you,*

The children of Israel, unfortunately, were more concerned with physical rather than spiritual death. They berated Moses and Aaron accusing them of conspiring to kill them at the hand of Pharaoh.

Had they known the spiritual significance and poignancy of this moment, they would rather have rejoiced for the Red Sea crossing symbolically represented the place where their adamic bodies and earthly identity would be stripped off. But, said they, “Because there were no graves in Egypt, hast thou taken us away to die in the wilderness? wherefore hast thou dealt thus with us, to carry us forth out of Egypt?” (Exodus 14:11).

Years of experience in baptizing souls in the saving name of Jesus has sensitized me to the precariousness of the moments leading up to baptism. Needless to say, every demon in hell is activated to dissuade the candidate from going through with baptism. I have travelled long distances to baptize some who suddenly were vexed with doubt. Everything that can go wrong does so precisely before the moment of baptism. All this underlines the necessity of diligent prayer and alertness for, as Paul writes, “Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil” (Ephesians 6:11).

Spare a thought for Moses and Aaron. Besides the Lord Himself, none have had to bear the crushing burden of such a large and stiff-necked multitude. Six hundred thousand adults incessantly murmured against them. In our contemporary world of politics, politicians also are on the receiving end of public criticism when their policies backfire. However, these policies were concocted and

promoted by the politicians themselves. In the case of Moses, he was humbly carrying out God's policies, not his own. What the children of Israel never seemed to understand is that this was not Moses' plan or design at all, but God's blueprint for salvation. Moses was powerless to suggest any alternatives. Ministers today should take heed – no one has the liberty to change the plan of salvation. Water baptism in Jesus name is commanded many times in the New Testament (Acts 2 :38; 8:16; 10:48; 19:5; Romans 6:3; Galatians 3:27 etc), a subject which this book will explore later. A minister who rejects or dilutes baptism in Jesus name is carrying out his own policies while duplicitously – whether willfully or inadvertently – using the name of the Lord.

Water not plagues destroyed Pharaoh

Exodus 14:13 And Moses said unto the people, Fear ye not, stand still, and see the salvation of the LORD, which he will shew to you to day: for the Egyptians whom ye have seen today, ye shall see them again no more for ever.

Where was Pharaoh ultimately overthrown to rise no more? It was not the ten plagues which were his undoing but the waters of the Red Sea. Pharaoh, in this sense, embodies Satan himself. There is a mystery here which when unraveled will deepen our appreciation

of baptism in Jesus name. This mystery has its origins in the book of Genesis. You will recall that God had cursed the serpent in this manner:

Genesis 3:14 *And the LORD God said unto the serpent, Because thou hast done this, thou art cursed above all cattle, and above every beast of the field; upon thy belly shalt thou go, and dust shalt thou eat all the days of thy life:*

Now we all know that serpents do not eat dust all the days of their lives. They prefer rodents, lizards, small birds, snails etc. Is there perhaps a symbolic spiritual meaning veiled in Genesis 3:14? Intriguingly, we are informed that even in the days of the hallowed millennium, the serpent will still be eating dust. “The wolf and the lamb shall feed together, and the lion shall eat straw like the bullock: *and dust shall be the serpent’s meat*. They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain, saith the LORD” (Isaiah 65:25). Could the Bible by this be making reference to Satan’s legal authority over the children of Adam who are creatures of dust? We are all carrying the spiritually toxic venom inherited from our first parents. They were infected by the “seed of the serpent”. Therefore, Satan has legal rights over all who are of the lineage of Adam. It was the original sin which effectuated a legally binding contract between the two parties.

Thus as long as humans carry this dust-frame they are under the dominion of Satan. The only place this dust-frame can be discarded

is baptism in water. Note that Pharaoh had experienced ten plagues which literally brought him to his knees. Despite this, he aggressively pursued Israel determined to have the last word. This mad obsession with Israel can only be understood as satanically motivated. We can palpably perceive Satan's desperation not to lose Israel to the waters of the Red Sea where his legitimate hold on them will forever be broken. Take a look at maps which locate the land of Goshen where the children lived in Egypt. It is clear that it would have been less burdensome to cross over to the Sinai peninsula from the area around Goshen (modern-day Cairo and the Suez canal region). Scholars tell us that there were a few shallow marshes up there. Why then does God take them down south to cross across the Red Sea? Because water is important in the plan of salvation. Actually much exciting research is emerging with evidence which indicates that Mount Sinai is in Arabia and not the traditional Sinai peninsula. The Jewish philosopher, Philo (20 BC – 50 AD), placed the location of Sinai to the east of the Sinai peninsula and to the *south* of Palestine; so did Josephus. This would be Saudi Arabia. The Bible declares that Mt. Horeb, where God appeared to Moses in the burning bush, is in the land of Midian where Moses was to bring the children of Israel (Exodus 3:12). Midian is in Saudi Arabia not far from the Jordanian border. Paul also identified Arabia as its location:

Galatians 4:25 *For this Agar is mount Sinai in Arabia, and answereth to Jerusalem which now is, and is in bondage with her children.*

In fact, a major motion picture is soon scheduled to release a film called *The Exodus Conspiracy* where expertise from many fields of scholarly research has been consolidated.² It was Helena, the Emperor Constantine's mother, who allegedly located the present Sinai where a monastery is built. If Sinai turns out to be Jabal al-Lawz in present-day Saudi Arabia, then the crossing occurred over the Gulf of Aqaba and not the Red Sea. In fact, the Saudi authorities have cordoned off the area with barbed wires warning trespassers of dire consequences if found in the area. The discovery that the children of Israel did indeed traverse Saudi Arabia on their way to the Promised Land has geo-political implications which are inimical to contemporary Arab discourse with reference to Israel. Back then, the entire body of water in that region was referred to as the Red Sea as a generic term.

² See the website of the film <http://www.exodusconspiracy.com/>

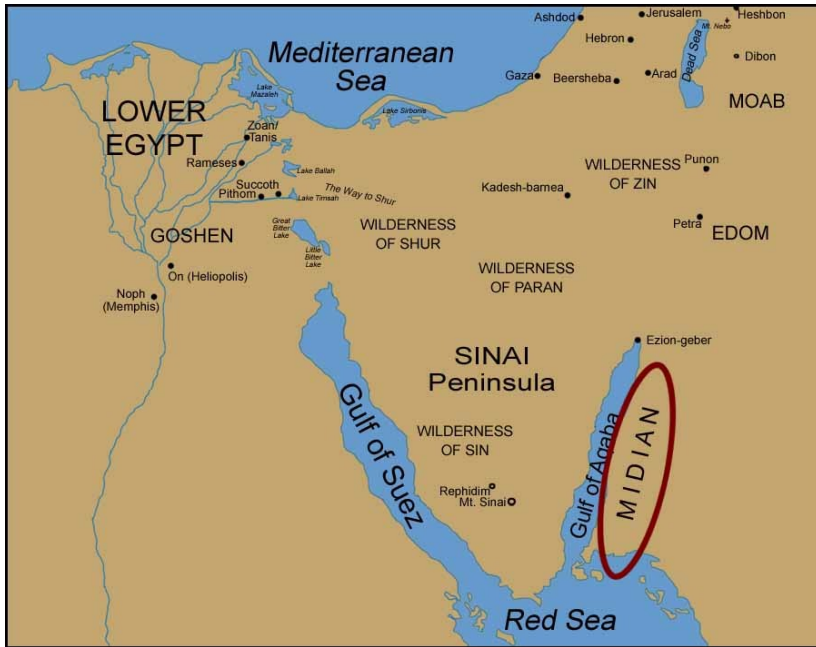


Illustration 4. The real Mt. Sinai is in Saudi Arabia and not the Sinai peninsula.

The Water is the arena where we exchange the body inherited from Adam for that of Christ. The Word was made flesh (John 1:14), among others, to furnish us with a new body purpose-made for heaven (Galatians 3:27).

Note that Moses states, “stand still, and see the *salvation* of the LORD, which he will shew to you to day” (Exodus 14:13). It comes as a joyous surprise to God’s people that the Hebrew word for “salvation” is *yěshuw`ah* (Strong’s 3444) from which we get our anglicized *Jesus*. Praise God for this! Moses’ words were Spirit-inspired; the water connoted more than just physical deliverance

but pointed to the New Testament age of grace and salvation through water baptism in Jesus name. Was it not the same Moses who appeared along with Elijah on the mount of transfiguration? (Matthew 17 and Luke 9).

In that account, Luke writes about Moses and Elijah “Who appeared in glory, and spake of his decease which he should accomplish at Jerusalem” (Luke 9:31). Of interest is the Greek word *exodus* which is translated “decease” but also means “exit or departure”. Who better than Moses is associated with an *exodos*? Luke would have us understand the significance of this epic encounter. Moses dedicated 40 years to the exodus of his people from Egypt to Canaan land. The whole venture was actually nothing but a shadow pointing to Christ who accomplishes our exodus from this world into the next.

The dragon’s head crushed in water

***Psalms 74:12** For God is my King of old, working salvation in the midst of the earth.*

***Psa 74:13** Thou didst divide the sea by thy strength: thou brakest the heads of the dragons in the waters.*

***Psalms 74:14** Thou brakest the heads of leviathan in pieces, and gavest him to be meat to the people inhabiting the wilderness.*

In the verses above, Asaph reminds God of the days of old when He delivered His people Israel. Observe the specific reference to

salvation – “working salvation in the midst of the earth” (Psalm 74:12). This salvation, as the next verse shows, was demonstrated in the dividing of the sea (Red Sea) where God broke the head of the dragon or Satan in the water. There appears to be an inextricable link between salvation and water as borne out by such Scriptures.

This link between water and salvation can be thus summarized. As previously stated, the Devil has legal authority over all humans by virtue of their dust frames – dust is his rightful lot. Pharaoh, a type of Satan, relentlessly pursued Israel buffeting her until she entered the waters of the Red Sea where God crushed his head. Since the waters of salvation circumcise or remove the dust body, the legitimate hold of the Devil is forever severed. This resonates with the prophetic declaration of Micah:

Micah 7:19 *He will turn again, he will have compassion upon us; he will subdue our iniquities; and thou wilt cast all their sins into the depths of the sea.*

Once again we observe the dual role of water in the plan of salvation. The Red Sea provides a useful visual illustration of this dual role. God first divided the sea by His strength; next, the people of God pass through with their sins “thrown” into the depths of the waters. Pharaoh, on the other hand, is destroyed in the same waters. Two groups of people enter the sea but only one is given safe passage to emerge unscathed on the other side.

Clearly, God loves to teach through symbolism, allegories and metaphorical pictures. Nevertheless, the various threads all converge on the same beautiful eternal truths. So far we have seen that the mystery of water, as gleaned from the watery birth of the Earth, Noah's deliverance through water and, now, the Red Sea incident, all point to the revelation of water baptism in Jesus name. The revelation in a nutshell is this: all humans have inherited, through the Fall, an earthen body suffused with sin. Our first parents collaborated with the Devil and, as a result, were injected with his death-inducing venom – sin. Once a sinner recognizes and acknowledges this fact, he must also recognize and acknowledge that salvation is only available in the name of Jesus Christ through water baptism. Just as the children of Israel had a rendezvous with God in the waters of the Red Sea, every sinner must come to the water to die to the adamic flesh and receive a new body from Jesus Christ.

Rom 6:3 Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death?

Romans 6:4 *Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.*

Romans 6:5 *For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection:*

Romans 6:6 *Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin.*

In conclusion, this chapter has the title, “The walls of the Red Sea”. This is inspired by the verse below:

Exodus 14:22 *And the children of Israel went into the midst of the sea upon the dry ground: and the waters were a wall unto them on their right hand, and on their left.*

How apt is the statement “the waters were a wall unto them on their right hand, and on their left.” Understanding the crucial role of water in the plan of salvation and submitting to it erects walls of defenses shielding us from destruction. The enormous forces of water were no longer something to dread for the Israelites, but something to welcome and embrace.

4. BAPTISM AS CIRCUMCISION

In this chapter attention will be drawn to the role of water as a “circumcising” agent. By this I mean the manner in which water cuts and removes the corrupt adamic flesh. The Abrahamic covenant of circumcision (Genesis 17) is central to understanding the theology behind baptism as circumcision. Incidents such as the circumcision of Moses’ son (Exodus 4:25, 26) and the children of Israel at Gilgal (Joshua 5) highlight the gravity and permanence of the covenant of circumcision.

However, the main focus will be to show that Old Testament circumcision was only a shadow of water baptism in Jesus name (Colossians 2:11-13). It is, regrettably, this ultimate truth which many in the Christian denominational world have failed to grasp. The Bible declares that it is the act of water baptism in Jesus name which gives us the right to be called the children of Abraham because circumcision is fulfilled in water baptism and nothing else (Galatians 3:227-29). Just as a circumcision of the flesh could not be performed without a circumciser using sharp tools, it will be shown that water is the arena where Jesus cuts away the whole death-infested body of Adam and clothes us with His own heavenly body.

Abraham and the covenant of circumcision

Genesis 17:10 *This is my covenant, which ye shall keep, between me and you and thy seed after thee; Every man child among you shall be circumcised.*

Genesis 17:11 *And ye shall circumcise the flesh of your foreskin; and it shall be a token of the covenant betwixt me and you.*

The Scriptures above trigger some questions: firstly, why is the male child alone circumcised and not the female? Paradoxically, the Torah prohibits any cutting or marking of the human body. “Ye shall not make any cuttings in your flesh for the dead, nor print any marks upon you: I am the LORD” (Leviticus 19:28). It is clear that the prohibition of making incisions in other parts of the body would reduce the significance of the one chief mark which was to be paramount – circumcision of the male genitals. Here I am reminded of the Antichrist’s blatant attempt to rebel against Leviticus 19:28:

Revelation 13:16 *And he causeth all, both small and great, rich and poor, free and bond, to receive a mark in their right hand, or in their foreheads.*

The rationale for severing a part of the male phallus goes back to the Original Sin. When Adam and Eve sinned against God, they inherited a sinful nature and physiology which is exhibited in the acts of sin and physical death, which ultimately affects every single

human being. This tainted biological life (male seed or sperm) in Adam – and every male – is passed down through copulation from generation to generation. Interestingly, and as this book explores, sperm itself is a fluid, watery agent. Life, again, is dependent upon water and its myriad properties. As was mentioned previously, water is the transporting agent upon which hinges the movement and sustenance of life. In the case of human procreation, however, male sperm ironically gives life to a newborn baby who simultaneously has been infected with a spiritual and physical death “virus”. Paul puts it this way:

Romans 7:18 *For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing: for to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not.*

This “no good thing” which dwells in our flesh is no doubt the sinful nature. Abraham was commanded to circumcise the male child alone for two reasons. To begin with, this was a way of allegorically acknowledging the male responsibility for the Original Sin. It was the man, Adam, who failed in his responsibility to implement proper headship. The woman may have been first deceived, but the man bore the brunt of the penalty by virtue of his failure to uphold the integrity of the Word of God.

Romans 5:18 *Therefore as by the offence of one judgment came upon all men to condemnation; even so by the righteousness of one the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life.*

In the light of the above, it is reasonable to assume that the pain inflicted on the male child was also a painful reminder of the consequences of rebelling against God's Word. The woman's pain in child-birthing was amplified and the male was subject to great discomfort in the ritual of circumcision. Ronald Goldman, PhD, a liberal Jew, surprisingly rejects Jewish male circumcision on the following grounds: it induces intense physical pain - for example, infants lapse into a semi-coma; it precipitates psychological trauma (negatively impacts infant-mother bonding) and, reduces sexual pleasure (Goldman, 1997).

Clearly, Goldman has not understood the spiritual significance underpinning circumcision. Circumcision was deliberately intended to be an unpleasant experience, just as enhanced labor pains are not beneficial or pleasant to the mother either. Few Jews agree with his assessment and anti-circumcision advocacy. One source states:

There is therefore no debate within Judaism about the necessity for circumcision in Jewish law. There is no reason to seek justification based on health or other grounds; circumcision is a commandment (a mitzvah) and as such no intervention would persuade religious Jews to stop performing this ritual. Indeed, even when the death penalty was imposed on the Jews for performing circumcision at different times in the history the community went on circumcising their male babies (Glass, 1999, p. 17).

Circumcision may have some adverse health effects for a tiny minority of male infants but research seems to convincingly indicate

that it reduces HIV infection by up to 60%, which has led the United Nations (UNAIDS, WHO) to openly call for countries in Sub-Saharan African, where this disease is most prevalent, to implement circumcision of males. In an article entitled, *Male circumcision for HIV prevention: current evidence and implementation in sub-Saharan Africa (2011)*, co-authored by 12 researchers, we are informed: “Implementation of male circumcision (MC) for HIV prevention in sub-Saharan Africa remains disappointingly slow despite its proven efficacy of greater than 60% based on the results of three randomized controlled trials (RCTs) conducted in the region” (Wamai et.al 2011, p. 1). In fact, the efficacy of male circumcision in reducing the contraction of HIV is so overwhelming that many international bodies (e.g. the Cochrane Committee³) declare that no further trials are necessary.

Although this is all fascinating with regards to what may be perceived as a prescient injunction issued in the arid deserts of the Middle East over 3000 years ago, our study must return to the spiritual connotation of circumcision and leave others to debate the pros and cons from a medical perspective. The foreskin was cut off

³ The ISAD Cochrane Committee is for Fellows with a particular interest in the Cochrane collaboration project. The Cochrane Collaboration Depression, Anxiety and Neurosis (CCDAN) group is a worldwide collaboration of health care professionals, with links in all disciplines of mental health. <https://www.isad.org.uk/committees/cochrane.asp> Accessed 19.11.2011.

BE BAPTISED IN JESUS NAME

to symbolize God's rejection of the seed of Adam, for it was through this part of the male anatomy that the seed of Adam surfaced. When Abraham submitted himself and his entire family to this ritual, he was acknowledging by faith this profound truth. The children of Israel, who obeyed the command to circumcise were declaring – although unaware at the time – that they put no confidence in the works of the flesh. Paul declares:

Philippians 3:3 *For we are the circumcision, which worship God in the spirit, and rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh.*



Illustration 5. Male child circumcision

Put differently, circumcision was a shadow which pointed to the day when Jesus would circumcise believers in the waters of baptism in His own name. It was an acknowledgement of the fact that we humans pass on seed of death (waters of death). All they could do in the Old Testament was await the great day when Messiah would be revealed and Himself cut off, not only the foreskin of Adamic flesh, but the entire body. It is this mystery which Paul explicates:

Colossians 2:11 *In whom also ye are circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, in putting off the body of the sins of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ:*

Colossians 2:12 *Buried with him in baptism, wherein also ye are risen with him through the faith of the operation of God, who hath raised him from the dead.*

Jesus is the *mohel* (In Jewish tradition the person who performs circumcision) who steps invisibly into the water and cuts off the body/seed of Adam. This occurs only in the waters of baptism because God has chosen water as the mysterious element where death and life transpire. Baptism, we must remember, implies a submersion, a burial. There is no better place to bury our sins than the depths of the sea.

Micah 7:19 *He will turn again, he will have compassion upon us; he will subdue our iniquities; and thou wilt cast all their sins into the depths of the sea.*

It is also salutary to keep in mind that a male child was only named after circumcision. "Traditionally, a boy is given his name

immediately after the circumcision has been performed” (Glass, 1999, p. 19). The angel Gabriel revealed the name to be given to the Lord before Mary conceived. Yet she obeyed the angelic injunction after circumcision on the eighth day.

***Luke 2:21** And when eight days were accomplished for the circumcising of the child, his name was called JESUS, which was so named of the angel before he was conceived in the womb.*

In the case of our Lord, His obedience and submission to the Law was ceremonial and not impacting on His spiritual status at all. In other words, He was the fulfillment of the Law. For every other human, however, the timing of the naming is crucial: our names will only be written in the Book of Life after we are baptized in Jesus name.

***Isaiah 62:2** And the Gentiles shall see thy righteousness, and all kings thy glory: and thou shalt be called by a new name, which the mouth of the LORD shall name.*

***Revelation 3:12**...and I will write upon him the name of my God, and the name of the city of my God, which is new Jerusalem, which cometh down out of heaven from my God: and I will write upon him my new name.*

To recapitulate, the covenant of circumcision given to Abraham was a shadow teaching pointing to the coming of Christ who would baptize or cut off the body of death in the waters of

baptism. Circumcision was a bruising, painful experience which left a permanent imprint on the body because God, in this manner, highlighted His condemnation of the adamic dust-body. This uncompromising disapproval of the adamic body is what I will explore in what follows.

God's zeal for circumcision: Zipporah and Gilgal

Exodus 4:24 And it came to pass by the way in the inn, that the LORD met him, and sought to kill him.

Exodus 4:25 Then Zipporah took a sharp stone, and cut off the foreskin of her son, and cast it at his feet, and said, Surely a bloody husband art thou to me.

Exodus 4:26 So he let him go: then she said, A bloody husband thou art, because of the circumcision.

We have seen how God gave the covenant of circumcision to Abraham in Genesis 10 – a covenant He expected the children of Israel to observe meticulously. Regrettably, for some undisclosed reason, the children of Israel, particularly of the Exodus generation, seemed in no hurry to implement circumcision. In fact, as we shall soon see, the adults who left Egypt ignored the circumcision of their male children. God had warned that failure to observe this covenant would result in death, something which almost befell Moses' own son. I am just as puzzled by Moses' failure to circumcise his own son as anyone else reading Exodus 4:24-26. Perhaps at this stage

Moses was still a neophyte in the ways of God, but he would soon find that God's commandments are there to be obeyed.

Here is something to ponder: why did God go to the drastic step of almost killing Moses' son? In Exodus 4:22 & 23 the Lord talks about two sons: Pharaoh's son and His own son, Israel. God issues a stark threat to Pharaoh: "and if thou refuse to let him go, behold, I will slay thy son, even thy firstborn"(verse 23). Now, on what basis does God differentiate between the two sons? The answer is the covenant of circumcision. God's children are circumcised emulating the example of Abraham, the father of faith. The children of God are those who have cut off the foreskin - an act which in essence declares, "By faith I cut off this body of sin inherited from Adam as I wait for the Messiah who will perform the true circumcision and give me His heavenly body."

Such is the importance of this covenant that God ambushed Moses' own family. What a shock this must have been for Moses. He had just been commissioned by God to go to Pharaoh and warn him. Moses must have felt supremely confident and assured of God's protection and favor. He soon found out, however, that God is no respecter of persons. A millennia and a half later, another great man of God, Peter, learned this truth the hard way:

Acts 10:34 Then Peter opened his mouth, and said, Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons:

The subsequent history of Israel shows how deeply ingrained the covenant of circumcision was. For instance, David was infuriated after hearing the insults of Goliath saying, “for who is this *uncircumcised* Philistine, that he should defy the armies of the living God?” (I Samuel 17:26). Later, before his death, Saul tells his armourbearer to kill him with his sword, “lest these *uncircumcised* come and thrust me through, and abuse me” (I Samuel 31:4). Israel was a nation whose consciousness was marinated in this dichotomous way of thinking. To be uncircumcised was to choose alienation from the covenant of God and associated with all that was ungodly and loathsome.

What does all this have to with us today? In short, it forcefully drives home the crucial need for baptism in Jesus name. As previously stated, Paul explains that baptism is the New Testament (covenant) fulfillment of circumcision (Colossians 2:11-13). Our voluntary immersion in the water identifies us with Christ’s death and burial. In these same waters the Lord performs a spiritual circumcision exchanging our old bodies with His heavenly one. Contrary to what many churches preach today, baptism in Jesus name is an absolutely essential part of the plan of salvation. Moses not only loved God but had just been commissioned to go to Pharaoh when the Lord almost killed his uncircumcised son. Obedience is critical. To reject baptism in Jesus name is to place yourself outside the covenant of God.

The same apostle Paul, who declared baptism to be the New Testament fulfillment of circumcision, followed this conviction up in his preaching and ministry. For example, he once encountered the disciples of John the Baptist in Ephesus, Asia Minor (contemporary Turkey). Having spent some time in their company he must have discerned a lack of anointing and grace which only comes with the infilling of the Holy Spirit. Paul decided to confront them gently working much like a doctor who meticulously seeks to arrive at the root of the ailment:

Acts 19:2 He said unto them, Have ye received the Holy Ghost since ye believed? And they said unto him, We have not so much as heard whether there be any Holy Ghost.

Acts 19:3 And he said unto them, Unto what then were ye baptized? And they said, Unto John's baptism.

Act 19:5 When they heard this, they were baptized in the name of the

Act 19:6 And when Paul had laid his hands upon them, the Holy Ghost came on them; and they spake with tongues, and prophesied.

Note how the apostle makes a necessary link between the Holy Spirit and baptism in Jesus name. You cannot have one without the other. We read in the last chapter that God went as a pillar of cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night (Exodus 13:21). A cloud represents water whereas fire represents the Holy Spirit. Following God requires one to acknowledge and submit to the power of both in the plan of salvation. Sadly, today, there are many uncircumcised

churches deceived into thinking that they are the children of God when they are not. My pray is that they repent and obey the doctrine of the apostles – men of God who were invested with heavenly and earthly authority to open or shut the gates of heaven. I once met a man in India who refused to submit to baptism in Jesus name arguing, “I would rather obey the words of Jesus and not the apostles.” This is a ludicrous argument for the Lord Himself declared:

***Luke 10:16** He that heareth you heareth me; and he that despiseth you despiseth me; and he that despiseth me despiseth him that sent me.*

It is with sorrow that Apostolic Christians have been left with no other choice but to come out from among them and be separate. Water always separates the God-fearing from the rebellious. God denies fatherhood of uncircumcised children. Churches which water down (pardon the pun) the doctrine of water baptism in Jesus name, need to heed the words of the Lord:

***Matthew 5:19** Whosoever therefore shall break one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so, he shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven: but whosoever shall do and teach them, the same shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven.*

Before concluding this chapter on circumcision and its New Testament equivalent, water baptism in Jesus name, one more

related issue will be put under the spotlight – the mass circumcision of Israel at Gilgal.

***Joshua 5:2** At that time the LORD said unto Joshua, Make thee sharp knives, and circumcise again the children of Israel the second time.*

***Joshua 5:5** Now all the people that came out were circumcised: but all the people that were born in the wilderness by the way as they came forth out of Egypt, them they had not circumcised.*

***Joshua 5:9** And the LORD said unto Joshua, This day have I rolled away the reproach of Egypt from off you. Wherefore the name of the place is called Gilgal unto this day.*

As mentioned earlier, the generation which had left Egypt were circumcised but not their children. We can only conclude that this was a failure of monumental proportions given the gravity of the covenant of circumcision. Despite the otherwise sterling leadership qualities of Moses, he had failed to implement this commandment among the adult generation which had all passed away by the time of Joshua. Nevertheless, man's shortcomings do not invalidate or impede the eternal commands of the Almighty. God will reign supreme among His people.

Of significance is the fact that the children of Israel were on the verge of entering the Promised Land. All that stood between them and the "the land that flowed with milk and honey" was the river Jordan. It must have come as a surprise to them to be told to suspend every activity and submit to circumcision. One could legitimately question the timing given that it was a time of war with

their enemies waiting to exploit any weakness. The surrounding hostile nations would have welcomed the news of the temporary incapacitation of their most dreaded enemy. In short, this had the appearance of an ill-conceived decision at a very sensitive time - a colossal faux pas from a military perspective. All this actually goes to reinforce the preeminence of the covenant of Abrahamic circumcision. Canaan was a type of heaven and no one can enter heaven without removing the flesh of dust. This removal was epitomized in the cutting off of the foreskin which, again, pointed to baptism in Jesus name.

***1Corinthians 15:50** Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; neither doth corruption inherit incorruption.*

Those who were circumcised had seen a number of victories wrought under the leadership of Moses. No doubt they themselves had participated in some battles and seen the hand of God work mightily on their behalf. Despite all this, they were still carrying the sin of Egypt which was expunged only after they were circumcised, for God states,

***Joshua 5:9** And the LORD said unto Joshua, This day have I rolled away the reproach of Egypt from off you. Wherefore the name of the place is called Gilgal unto this day.*

Gilgal means “roll away”. To reiterate, their sins were remitted only after they were circumcised and not *before*. This should serve as a stark warning to all who would follow Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior. Many today believe that they are saved and have even seen some impressive miracles wrought by the hand of the Lord, yet they deem baptism to be a non-issue or optional. Some erroneously believe that Acts 2:38 is superseded by Romans 10:9. In fact, it has become a de facto all-sufficient “mini-Gospel” for them. “That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved.” This can be easily shown to be a misapplication of the plan of salvation.

To begin with, who were these Romans to whom this epistle was addressed? They were mature Christians of whom Paul writes, “First, I thank my God through Jesus Christ for you all, that your faith is spoken of throughout the whole world” (Romans 1:8). They were not novices for whom Paul had to spell out the fundamental doctrines of salvation. This was a letter he wrote to seasoned Christians hence there was no need to preach repentance, baptism in Jesus name and receiving the Holy Spirit, which no doubt would be patronizing. Secondly, we can easily infer from this epistle that these Roman Christians had been baptized in Jesus name for Paul states rhetorically:

Romans 6:3 *Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death?*

Given the above, it is frankly dishonest to proclaim the watered down “Gospel” of Romans 10:9. In our McDonaldized world, where time has become a scarcity, some churches have opted for Romans 10:9 to replace the more “time-consuming” Acts 2:38 in order to sell the Gospel “faster” and thus attract more people. They fail to understand that miracles, victories and other benefits of the Lord are not evidence of salvation – it is the observance of God’s eternal plan of salvation which is decisive.

Hosea 6:6 *For I desired mercy, and not sacrifice; and the knowledge of God more than burnt offerings.*

Luke 6:46 *And why call ye me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?*

Matthew 23:2 *Saying, The scribes and the Pharisees sit in Moses’ seat:*

Matthew 23:3 *All therefore whatsoever they bid you observe, that observe and do; but do not ye after their works: for they say, and do not.*

God desires us to understand that only the “rolling away” of the body of sin (Gilgal) in the waters of baptism in Jesus name can truly remove the sin of this world. The New Testament commandment encapsulated in the Acts 2:38 supersedes all prior covenants simply because they find their fulfillment in the declaration of Peter to repent, be baptized in Jesus name receive the gift of the Holy Ghost. Everything else is now but a shadow.

5. WATER IN THE TABERNACLE

The tabernacle in the wilderness was a microcosm of the plan of salvation. It is difficult to exaggerate its importance: In the words of one writer: "Next to the exodus itself and the revelation of the law, the tabernacle forms the third great theme in the book...The law and the tabernacle-centered worship are the central institutions of Israel's identity" (Klein, 1996, p. 264).

The various items of furniture were concrete manifestations each symbolizing a key aspect of the plan of salvation. In essence, there in the middle of the desert, was Acts 2:38 concretized in the form of the tabernacle. Repentance was symbolized in the brazen altar of sacrifice; baptism in the laver made of brass after which came the Holy of Holies and the *shekinah* glory of Yahweh Himself. Because all these elements, indispensable as they are to the plan of salvation, are present in the tabernacle, God could declare:

Exodus 29:45 And I will dwell among the children of Israel, and will be their God.

My focus, obviously, will be on the brass laver (basin) which so beautifully symbolizes baptism in Jesus name. However, on a broader scale, the tabernacle will be explored as the identity and

ministry of the Lord Jesus Christ Himself, for the tabernacle is ultimately a foreshadowing of the Word that was made flesh and dwelt (tabernacled) among us (John 1:14).

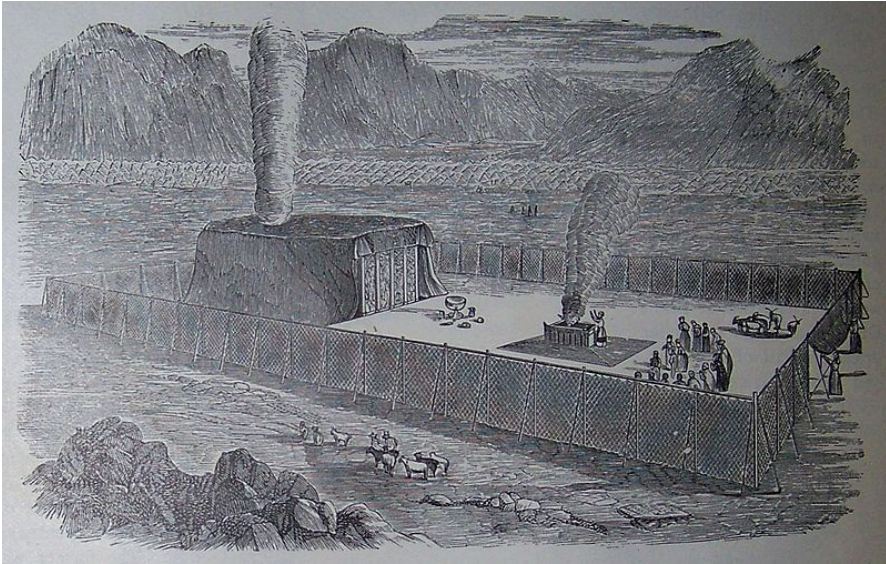


Illustration 6. The Tabernacle: 1890 Holman Bible

The brass laver

Exodus 30:18 *Thou shalt also make a laver of brass, and his foot also of brass, to wash withal: and thou shalt put it between the tabernacle of the congregation and the altar, and thou shalt put water therein.*

Exodus 30:19 *For Aaron and his sons shall wash their hands and their feet thereat:*

Exodus 30:20 *When they go into the tabernacle of the congregation, they shall wash with water, that they die not; or when they come near to the altar to minister, to burn offering made by fire unto the LORD:*

The mobile, portable tabernacle in the wilderness consisted of two parts: the outer and inner courts. Unlike the items of furniture in the inner court, the items in the outer court – the altar of sacrifice and the brass basin - were visible to anyone who entered the door of the tabernacle. In approaching God, there are some acts that are of a public nature while others are hidden from common view. The fire and the smoke from the animal sacrifices, followed by the constant washing of hands and feet by the priests, was a sight the children of Israel could publicly witness.

Repentance and baptism have always been practiced in full view of others. The King and people of Nineveh, as one community, humiliated themselves in public at the preaching of Jonah. John the Baptist openly called the children of Israel to repentance and baptism in the Jordan. Repentance and baptism in Jesus name are, by their very nature, expressive and demonstrative. Understood in this light, the words of the Lord take on a deeper meaning:

***Luke 12:8** Also I say unto you, Whosoever shall confess me before men, him shall the Son of man also confess before the angels of God:*

Just as the altar of sacrifice and the brass basin were fundamentally distinct pieces of furniture in the outer court, there is a need to make a distinction between repentance and baptism in Jesus name. An individual who approaches the presence of God (enters the tabernacle) first encounters the brass altar. He brings an animal with

him which no doubt cost him a small fortune. The sight of the terrified animal, the blood, fire and smoke drives home the horrible nature of sin and its consequences. The thought that the animal is substituting for him must have sent a chill down his spine. The altar represents repentance – in essence, that the individual has accepted his status as a sinner and petitions God for forgiveness. God, on His part, says, “I forgive you.” What this means is that the Lord will not slay him for his sin, only pardon him. However, to pardon someone does not mean that they no longer carry the seed, nature and body of death. Sin is not yet forgiven, only the wrath of God has been turned away temporarily. It is for this reason the apostle Paul links baptism in Jesus name with “the remission of sins”:

Acts 2:38 Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.

What we observe, then, is the following: a person seeking reconciliation with God must first feel a conviction which stirs his heart to experience genuine remorse. The Holy Spirit initiates this process through conviction. In speaking of the Holy Spirit, Jesus said, “And when he is come, he will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment” (John 16:8). Repentance, thus, is predicated on the genuineness and sincerity of what goes on inside the individual. However, baptism in Jesus name is the arena where the penitent sinner is “prepared” to enter the very presence of God

in the tabernacle. This is because, as this study expounds, water is the arena God has chosen, since the beginning of time, for radical newness to transpire – where the body of Adam is circumcised and we receive the heavenly body of Jesus Christ.

Notice how strategically the brass basin is placed. It is so aptly situated *before* the door of the Holy Place (the inner enclosure of the tabernacle). This was not just a coincidence or random arrangement. Moses was strictly commissioned: “And look that thou make them after their pattern, which was shewed thee in the mount (Exodus 25:40). Not only was God teaching the builders of the tabernacle the need to exercise obedience but they were being sensitized to the powerful heavenly symbolism invested in the tabernacle.

Their implementation follows the divine commands in excruciating detail, and this has the effect of signaling both their obedience and the overwhelming importance of this material (Klein, 1996, p. 265).

Inside this Holy Place we have the seven-branched lamp stand (menorah) which testifies that Jesus is the “light of the world” (John 8:12). In addition, the Holy Place contained the table of showbread which clearly points to Jesus as the bread of life (John 6:35). Finally, the altar of incense points to Jesus, the true High Priest, who intercedes for us through His prayers.

Rom 8:26 *Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered.*
Hebrews 7:25 *Wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them.*

Just as a priest who refused to wash himself would be proscribed from entering the Holy Place, anyone who trifles with baptism in Jesus name will, regrettably, find himself having no access to the body of Christ which the tabernacle is a type. The penalty for refusing to wash in the basin was death.

Exodus 30:20 *When they go into the tabernacle of the congregation, they shall wash with water, that they die not; or when they come near to the altar to minister, to burn offering made by fire unto the LORD:*

If such a serious punishment was meted out for a violation of the shadow, how much more serious is it to neglect baptism in Jesus name, which is the fulfillment of what the brass laver symbolized? Why did Moses forfeit the coveted blessing of entering the Land of Canaan? It was because he struck the rock twice, rather than speak to it (Numbers 20:8). The rock represented Christ who was to be smitten only once on the Cross of Calvary, not twice. Moses had breached the shadow for which he was severely punished. What every God-fearing person must remember is that the teachings of the Bible – however convoluted they may seem – are pregnant with

profound heavenly truths which find their consummation in the New Testament dispensation.

Matthew 5:18 For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled.

Washing and new clothes



Illustration 7: a brass laver

We have seen that repentance does not do away with the sin-scarred adamic body. The altar of sacrifice led straight to the brass basin of water where the Levites were commanded to wash before entering the Holy Place.

Significantly, it was only after washing that the High Priest could put on a new set of clothes specifically designed with material and in a style dictated by God.

Leviticus 16:4 He shall put on the holy linen coat, and he shall have the linen breeches upon his flesh, and shall be girded with a linen girdle, and with the linen mitre shall he be attired: these are holy

Think about it:
of all the places
in the entire
tabernacle, the
only place
associated with
changing clothes
is the water
basin.

garments; therefore shall he wash his flesh in water, and so put them on.

In another book, *Understanding Holiness: Holiness and Dress* (2011), I mentioned that linen appears to represent the heavenly body of our Lord Jesus Christ. There are various reasons for this. Linen, like the body of Jesus, has to undergo a process of beating, retting and drying before it is ready for wear. In addition, it has properties which make it an excellent

garment for the warm climates of the desert: linen keeps one cool, ventilated and simultaneously does not easily get dirty. Finally, the pure white colour aptly captures the spiritual condition of a born-again saint whose garments are now washed white as snow by the blood of Jesus (Isaiah 1:18).

The redeemed church in heaven wears linen: “And the armies which were in heaven followed him upon white horses, clothed in fine linen, white and clean” (Revelation 19:14). Notice that God referred to Aaron’s clothes made of linen as “holy garments” (Leviticus 16:4). Clothes can only be “holy” if they represent the body of our precious Lord – the Word made flesh (John 1:14). What a wonderful picture this paints about baptism in Jesus name. We all, like Aaron, must first wash in the water in Jesus name if we are to

entertain any hope of putting on the heavenly flesh and blood of our dear Lord.

God fashioned diverse kinds of bodies to adapt to their environments. The genotype and phenotype of an organism impacts on its chances of replication. All terrestrial bodies possess traits which can function upon this planet alone, and in different ways upon this same shared planet. Paul puts it this way:

1Corinthians 15:39 *All flesh is not the same flesh: but there is one kind of flesh of men, another flesh of beasts, another of fishes, and another of birds.*

However, just as the priests, who entered the Holy Place had to wash and don new garments made of linen, anyone seeking to make heaven his home, must also remove their earthly, sin-stained adamic body and don the robes of heaven – the body of Christ. As soon as the Levites put on their linen, “holy garments”, they crossed over from this earthly threshold to a heavenly one, symbolically speaking. This nexus between water and clothing can help us make sense of Jesus’ account about the man who was cast out of the wedding banquet in heaven.

Matthew 22:12 *And he saith unto him, Friend, how camest thou in hither not having a wedding garment? And he was speechless.*

Are we to assume the Lord thrust this man out because he did not have a wedding garment in literal terms? What becomes, then, of all

those who are invited to the wedding and cannot afford a princely looking wedding garment? Building upon the interpretation of garments in this chapter, it makes sense to conclude that the wedding garment was none other than the heavenly body of Jesus Christ. The unforgiveable error committed by this man was the sin of neglecting the command to be baptised in Jesus name, references to which are legion in the New Testament preaching of the apostles.

The heavenly garments are free to put on in the waters of baptism. Apparently, this was a man who had not disciplined himself to understand the severe consequences which result from a laissez-faire attitude to God's holy commandments. We remember that such an attitude almost resulted in the death of Moses' children (Exodus 4:24). As the apostle Paul reminds us:

***Galatians 3:27** For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ.*

In summary, the tabernacle in the wilderness demonstrates the deep desire of God to dwell with His people. Prior to the building of the tabernacle, Moses alone had access to the presence of God on the summit of Mount Sinai. Now, however, with the completion of the tabernacle, God's presence is not limited to the summit of Sinai which Moses alone could access exclusively. Rather, God condescends to dwelling in a portable structure fellowshiping with His people and facilitating their journey through the punishing

wilderness of Sinai. The tabernacle is called the tent of meeting more than thirty times in the Book of Exodus.

Such was the mercy of God upon His people. Nevertheless, all He asked them to observe in return was the various ordinances concerning the tabernacle among which was washing in the brass basin and changing their garments before entering the Holy Place. The very location of the basin serves to reinforce the indispensability of baptism in Jesus name. Put differently, if one's objective is to enter into the Holy of Holies, the very throne-room of God, the only way there is through the brass laver. Hence the question of Jesus, "Friend, how camest thou in hither..." (Matthew 22:12).

Baptism as a mirror

Exodus 38:8 And he made the laver of brass, and the foot of it of brass, of the looking glasses of the women assembling, which assembled at the door of the tabernacle of the congregation.

The verse above is fascinating with much scope for exposition. As an aside, the reader registers that women back then were not very different from more modern ones. Even in the blistering heat and inhospitable conditions of the desert, a premium was placed on looking attractive. The din and chaos – just think of all the children

screaming, livestock everywhere and unsanitary conditions - was trumped by the enduring nature of vanity. All this (confessedly from the perspective of a man) evokes a sense of baffling enigma not unlike the type experienced by Nick Carraway in his first encounter with Miss Baker in the classic American novel, *The Great Gatsby*:

The younger of the two was a stranger to me. She was extended full length at her end of the divan, completely motionless, and with her chin raised a little, as if she were balancing something on it which was quite likely to fall. If she saw me out of the corner of her eyes she gave no hint of it – indeed, I was almost surprised into murmuring an apology for having disturbed her by coming in (Fitzgerald, 1926; 1994, pp. 14,15).

The biblical account does not shed light on whether the women's "sacrificial" offering of looking glasses for the brass basin was voluntary or not. However, Matthew Henry, the noted Bible commentator, is of the opinion that this was an act of penitence: "Those women that admire their own beauty, are in love with their own shadow, and make the putting on of apparel their chief adorning by which they value and recommend themselves, can but ill spare their looking-glasses; yet these women offered them to God." Henry goes on to suggest that they had abused these mirrors and were now surrendering them over to the work of the Lord having been "convinced of their folly".

Be that as it may, what is of greater importance is the use to which the mirrors had been put. Since the brass was used as looking glass – mirrors – the basin itself no doubt shone and reflected the image of anyone approaching it. Imagine the scene: a priest approaching the burnished surface of the basin must have been taken aback to behold his reflection covered in blood and bits and pieces from the animal entrails. This, I argue, must have been intentional. The condition of sin and its distortion of the human body is amplified in approaching the waters of baptism. Just prior to crossing the Red Sea, the sinful wrath of Pharaoh was in full bloom like never before. Sin, in other words, is never more ghastly and dreadful than before it is extinguished in the waters of baptism in Jesus name. In fact, it has been the observation of many ministers of God, mine included, that the period before baptizing a soul in Jesus name can be one filled with frustrations and trials.

There is a parallel between the polished surface of the brass laver and the waters of baptism even from a purely physical aspect. Water, too, when still can reflect a person's image. Obviously, however, it is the spiritual aspect which the Old Testament shadows seek to draw attention to. None should enter into baptism without a hiatus of soul-searching. Sadly, I have seen some Pastors, who under pressure from their headquarters to tabulate results, baptized individuals who clearly were no more pious than the Pharisees and Sadducees whom John the Baptist called a "generation of vipers".

Note that these religious leaders actually came to be baptized by John, who greets them in this fashion:

***Matthew 3:7** But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees come to his baptism, he said unto them, O generation of vipers, who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come?*

All I am saying is that baptism must be entered into after some serious soul-searching and contemplation. People have to see the vileness of their sin. Baptism, like the looking glasses is a mirror of the soul inducing heartfelt repentance.

6. THE WATER AND THE NAME

In this chapter questions revolving around the name to be administered in water baptism will be considered. There is some confusion in the Christian world in relation to this issue. Whereas some invoke the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, others call on the name of Jesus alone. The former often quote Matthew 28:19 as their mandate whereas the latter point to several Scriptures in the Book of Acts, in particular, to claim that baptism in the name of Jesus alone was the norm.

Matthew 28:19 Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost:

Acts 2:38 Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.

Acts 19:5 When they heard this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus.

I have conversed with yet others who try to incorporate all names and titles when baptizing in the hope of appeasing every faction. This chapter will argue that, contrary to the views of some, baptism is meaningless without invoking the name of Jesus Christ alone. The most convincing argument one can summon is simply this: since there is no salvation without God manifesting Himself in flesh, and

since the only name that this God assumed is Jesus, it follows that only the invocation of the name of Jesus is efficacious in baptism.

Jesus – the tabernacle of blood and water

1John 5:6 This is he that came by water and blood, even Jesus Christ; not by water only, but by water and blood. And it is the Spirit that beareth witness, because the Spirit is truth.

When God was manifest in the flesh (John 1:14) and tabernacled among us, He carried in His body the salvific elements of Spirit, blood and water. We can now understand in hindsight that the Old Testament tabernacle in the wilderness was a type pointing to Jesus Christ Himself. We recall, from the last chapter, that the tabernacle had all these elements present in it. The blood was collected at the altar of sacrifice which represents the Cross of Calvary. The priest washed in the laver of water and carried the blood into the Holy of Holies where the *shekinah* glory of God awaited. In addition, the blood was poured on the mercy seat on top of the Ark of the Covenant (Leviticus 16:14). All this culminated in the outpouring of the Spirit of God symbolized by the cloud of glory which filled the tabernacle.

Exodus 40:35 And Moses was not able to enter into the tent of the congregation, because the cloud abode thereon, and the glory of the LORD filled the tabernacle.

Approximately a millennia and a half later, the true tabernacle was manifested in the flesh. Now we can understand and appreciate the true meaning behind the tabernacle. This tabernacle was enfleshed and revealed to us as the Lord Jesus Christ. The Lord Jesus can be pictured as the tabernacle which one enters, repents, *is baptized* and receives the Holy Spirit. All these crucial aspects of salvation occur *in His body* and *through His name*. As Paul says, “And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him” (Colossians 3:17).

So, like the tabernacle in the wilderness, Jesus contains within His body the precious elements of salvation – water, blood and Spirit. John, the beloved apostle, was quite captivated by these elements. Years before he wrote I John, he had witnessed blood and water pouring out of the side of Jesus when the soldier pierced his side. This was something he deemed necessary to record for posterity:

John 19:34 *But one of the soldiers with a spear pierced his side, and forthwith came there out blood and water.*

John 19:35 *And he that saw it bare record, and his record is true: and he knoweth that he saith true, that ye might believe.*

Again, the reader can perceive a profound mystery in these elements gauging from the hold they seem to have on the beloved apostle. Throughout this book, the focus has been on the element of water and its significant role in the plan of salvation. We can all

agree that water is indispensable to the process of new birth. However, now, we need to consider another element – blood. One without the other cannot effectuate salvation. Water has the power to bury and strip off the adamic body, but it has no power to forgive and make atonement for sin. Water cannot be a *ransom* for sin. The Greek word for ransom is *antilytron* (Strong's G487) meaning “what is given in exchange for another as the price of his redemption”. The blood of Jesus alone has the power to eradicate the scourge of sin. Put differently, water partners with the blood of Jesus and His Spirit to redeem us from the curse of sin. This is what John was avidly testifying to.

This is not a novel teaching. God, who has a predilection for teaching in types and shadows, already presaged this wonderful teaching in the formal ratification of the old covenant. He commanded Moses to sprinkle the children of Israel with blood and water.

Hebrew 9:19 For when Moses had spoken every precept to all the people according to the law, he took the blood of calves and of goats, with water, and scarlet wool, and hyssop, and sprinkled both the book, and all the people,

Interestingly, we are informed that, “Because of its strong, camphor-like smell, Hyssop is known mainly as a cleansing herb.”⁴ This is an apt picture of Christ who purges and cleanses us from the awful

⁴ <http://www.gardensablaze.com/HerbHyssop.htm> retrieved 3.12.2012

effects of sin with His blood and water. King David, shattered by the damage caused by his sin with Bathsheba, petitions God, “Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean: wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow” (Psalm 51:7).



Illustration 8. Hyssop

For an individual's baptism to be effectual he or she must invoke the name of Jesus Christ who is the one true God carrying within His body these saving constituents of salvation – the blood water and the Spirit. Take one example from the pages of the Book of

Acts. Cornelius, the Roman centurion, received the Holy Spirit but had not experienced baptism in water in Jesus name. The apostle Peter was quick to command him (commanding the commander) to be baptized in Jesus name because he fully well knew that the water and the blood, essential to the purging of sin and burying the adamic flesh, would only be available in the baptism in Jesus name.

Act 10:47 Can any man forbid water, that these should not be baptized, which have received the Holy Ghost as well as we?

Act 10:48 And he commanded them to be baptized in the name of the Lord. Then prayed they him to tarry certain days.

In all honesty, the whole debate about which name to invoke in baptism is a red herring. Let us hear Peter:

Acts 15:7 And when there had been much disputing, Peter rose up, and said unto them, Men and brethren, ye know how that a good while ago God made choice among us, that the Gentiles by my mouth should hear the word of the gospel, and believe.

It is as simple as paying attention to what Peter, the man whom God Himself chose, said and did. Note that Peter identifies Jesus with God, for it was Jesus who gave him the keys to the kingdom of heaven (Matthew 16:19). Jesus commissioned the apostles to preach the Gospel in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria and the ends of the earth (Acts 1:8). The Book of Acts demonstrates clearly that in each of these places, individuals were baptized in the name of Jesus in obedience to the Lord's command.

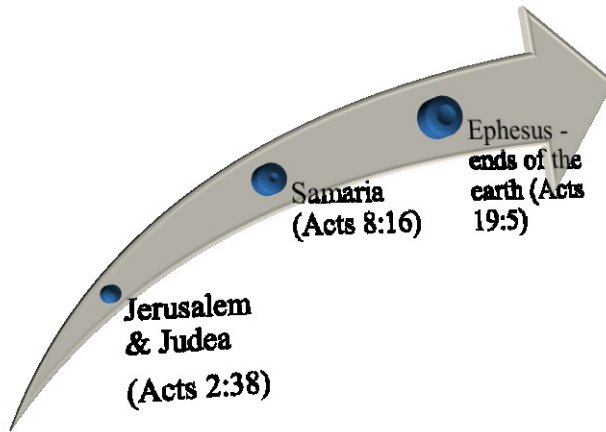


Figure 1. Acts 1:8 duly fulfilled: apostles baptized in Jesus name in every location.

Thus the geographic locations may change, but the command to be baptized in Jesus name remains unchanged. The Pharisees and leaders of Jerusalem inquired of Peter and John, “And when they had set them in the midst, they asked, By what power, or by what name, have ye done this?” (Acts 4:7). Since baptism has power to deliver from the power of Satan, it must be administered in a name and by a power. The name is Jesus, simply because, “Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved” (Acts 4:12).

Jesus name in baptism

...his point is that there can be no baptism in the name of Paul or any other teacher, because only Christ was crucified for the believer and it is only through baptism into him that the saving effects of the Atonement can be applied. Such application implies forgiveness, the washing away of sin (cf. 1 Cor. 6.11; Eph. 5.26-7). This takes place only because baptism signifies union with Christ and consequently the state of being in the Spirit which justifies and sanctifies (1 Cor. 6.11). As the Israelites in the Exodus were baptised into Moses, so the Christian baptised in Christ's name is given the status of being in Christ (1 Cor. 10.2) (Lampe, 1952, p. 170).

The above succinctly summarizes the argument of this chapter. That baptism is in the name of *someone* is a vital point to grasp. Paul rhetorically asks the question to the sectarian Corinthian church: "Is Christ divided? was Paul crucified for you? or were ye baptized in the name of Paul?" (I Corinthians 1:13). This is further reinforced in Paul's statement, "I thank God that I baptized none of you, but Crispus and Gaius; Lest any should say that I had baptized in *mine own name*." (I Corinthians 1:14,15; emphasis mine).

Why is it so important to invoke the name of Jesus alone in baptism? Contrary to the meaning and importance attached to names in our modern world, naming and names were perceived very differently among the ancients. In the Book of Judges, for example, we read of the visitation of an angel of God to the house of Manoah. Manoah plucks up the courage to ask the angel his name to which the angel responds, "And the angel of the LORD said unto

him, Why askest thou thus after my name, seeing it is secret?" (Judges 13:18). The Hebrew word (Strong's Hebrew 6383) for "secret" is "wonderful", "incomprehensible" or "extraordinary". We know that names said something about a person's character as in the case of Jacob (supplanter) who was named so because of the way he held on to his twin brother Esau's heel during childbirth. Later, when the angel of God blessed him at Bethel, the blessing was concretized in the form of a new name – Israel, one who has power with men and with God.

A name was also eschatological – pointed to a particular destiny. Hence Jesus changed the name of Simon to Peter epitomizing the radical transformation of a man who would lead the church of Christ on earth. Given the above, there should frankly be no discussion or caveats in relation to the proper name to be administered in baptism. The name that God Himself selected when He robed Himself in flesh is Jesus; the name of the God who's crucifixion we identify with in baptism is again Jesus. When Peter turned Jerusalem upside down for having healed the lame man at the gate called "beautiful" (Acts 3), he responded:

Acts 3:16 *And his name through faith in his name hath made this man strong, whom ye see and know: yea, the faith which is by him hath given him this perfect soundness in the presence of you all.*

The most incontrovertible evidence we have for baptism in the name of Jesus is in the practice of the apostles themselves. Acts 2:38; Acts 8:16; Acts 19:5; Acts 22:16 (ASV & RSV use “calling on his name”); Romans 6:3 & Galatians 3:27. In the epistle to Titus, Paul states that Jesus, our God and Savior, saved us by “the washing of regeneration” which is a clear reference to baptism in water.

***Titus 3:4** But after that the kindness and love of God our Saviour toward man appeared,*

***Titus 3:5** Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost;*

What is truly puzzling and indefensible is statements by some to the effect that they would rather obey Jesus’ command to baptize in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Ghost (Matthew 28:19), rather than the name of Jesus as preached and practiced by the apostles. Not only does this betray a poor theological understanding of the meaning of baptism in water, but leaves one open to the charge that the Bible is peppered with inconsistencies and contradictions, as the opponents of the Gospel have asserted. It is absurd to create a heuristic stand-off between the Lord and His beloved apostles of whom He said:

***Luke 10:16** He that heareth you heareth me; and he that despiseth you despiseth me; and he that despiseth me despiseth him that sent me.*

In relation to Matthew 28:19, there is no warrant in the Scriptures to interpret the text as a command to repeat such a formula much less as promulgating the doctrine of the Trinity. The doctrine of the Trinity is a gross violation and assault on the *Shema Israel* so holy to Jews (Deuteronomy 6:4). Even one of the chief architects behind the doctrine of the Trinity, Gregory of Nyssa, (335-394), appeared confused as to the implication and use of Matthew 28:19. We are told:

Interestingly, Gregory interpreted the three immersions in the water with reference not to the three divine Persons of the Godhead, but rather to the three days Christ spent in the grave (Mikoski, 2006, p. 177).

Thus by the time of Gregory in the fourth century AD, baptizants were immersed *three* times, one for each of the Trinity. In a further obfuscation of an already distorted practice, Gregory justified this on the basis of the 3 days the Lord was buried. As I have already explained in the chapter on circumcision, baptism is a fulfillment of circumcision which means that, just as circumcision was performed only once, so too, should baptism in the name of Jesus. Not only did the church change this New Testament practice by baptizing the candidates three times but changed the name to be administered in water baptism from Jesus to Father, Son and Holy Spirit. The Lion Handbook's *The History of Christianity* (1990) makes the following statement:

Although at first people were often baptized in the name of Christ alone, it soon became standard to be baptized in the name of the Trinity (Dowley, 1990, p. 116).

In addition, a Church of England vicar from Lancashire confirms this historical fact. Writing in *The Scottish Journal of Theology* (1965), he states:

Similarly, in the Acts of Paul and Thecla, written in the middle of the second century, Thecla is represented as baptizing herself and saying, "In the name of Jesus Christ do I baptize myself for the last day." If we may assume that we have here a case of a formula in ordinary use adapted to extraordinary circumstances, then it appears that the formula in ordinary use must have been "I baptise thee in the name of Jesus Christ" (Whitaker, 1965, p. 6).

So why, may we ask, did it become *standard* to be baptized in the name of the Trinity? One can only shudder at the audacity of those individuals who co-opted such authority to themselves. We will always do well to remind ourselves the severe warning of the Lord:

Revelation 22:18 *For I testify unto every man that heareth the words of the prophecy of this book, If any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book:*

Plotinus, Gregory and Matthew 28:19

In order to more fully arrive at the core of the baptismal controversy, one must understand the immense influence of the doctrine of the Trinity. Simply put: the gradual alteration of the

baptismal formula had everything to do with the development of the doctrine of the Trinity. The reason no one was baptized in the triune formula of Matthew 28:19 in the Book of Acts and almost for another 150 -200 years is that the doctrine of the Trinity was still under construction. Certainly the apostles had no inkling as to what this doctrine entailed. We do not have anything in the New Testament remotely approaching the official doctrine of the Trinity as declared in the Council of Constantinople (AD 381). It was the aforementioned Gregory of Nyssa along with his two Hellenistic partners, Gregory of Nazianzus and Basil, who are credited with fleshing out the doctrine of Trinity at Constantinople. Gregory fused the Trinity into virtually every aspect of church life and doctrine, including baptism:

At the center of the baptismal rite Gregory found the whole doctrine of the Trinity in highly condensed form. At the crucial moment, the baptizand is baptized into the one name that is three. Gregory paid very close attention to the fact that baptizands are baptized into 'the name . . . of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit' (Mikoski, 2006, p. 179).

This book is not the forum to lock horns with the doctrine of the Trinity which shall be the subject, the Lord willing, of another book, but I will briefly gravitate into the territory of Neo-Platonism in order to demonstrate the pagan origins of the doctrine of the Trinity.

It is a documented fact that the architects behind the Trinity were Hellenized to the core. By this I mean they were products of the school of Greek thinking and reasoning most famously associated with the Greek triumvirate of Socrates, Plato and Aristotle. The theologian, Roger Olson, of the University of Minnesota, writes:

Gregory spent much of his time reading and studying both Scripture and the writings of the Platonists and Neo-Platonists, those mystical pagan philosophers whose beliefs seemed so compatible with Christianity to many fourth and fifth century church fathers. Gregory soaked in their message about the absolute unity, spirituality and transcendence of God and sought to combine the best of it with his Christian reflections on the Trinity and attributes of God (Olson, 1999, p. 179).

So Gregory, infatuated with Neo-Platonism, decided to cherry-pick from the insights of pagans, weave these insights with his reflections on the Trinity and thus come up with a new, syncretic “Christianity”. It is plain to see, then, that whatever Gregory distilled from his “reflections” was a new and bastardized type of religion which could not bear any resemblance to what Peter and Paul preached.

Neo-Platonism is mainly associated with Plotinus (204-270), whose writings, among others, impressed Gregory. Plotinus postulated the existence of a *monad* – the One impersonal god-force. Although this One is transcendent, from him emanates the *nous* (logos or divine mind, will or order). In a further hierarchical emanation, the

nous gives rise to the world soul from which humans, nature and the lower orders emanate. To Plotinus' mind, these three hypostases are united and indivisible. In fact, he believed that everything was divine as everything has its source in the One. This holistic doctrine has parallels with Hinduism and other Eastern philosophies where the goal of religious acts is to attain oneness with the One (Brahman in Hinduism). This has since the psychedelic 1960s been the dream of new agers. Interestingly, although an atheist, Aldous Huxley, author of the famed *Brave New World* (1932), stated in the foreword to an edition of his book in 1946 that if he were to re-write his classic book, he would give the Savage (a religious misfit in the book) a third option – to live in a community where:

Religion would be the conscious and intelligent pursuit of man's Final End, the unitive knowledge of the immanent Tao or Logos, the transcendent Godhead or Brahman (Huxley, 1932, 2007, p. xliii).

Those who unwittingly embrace the Trinity need to study its pagan history and denounce it. Reading Plotinus had the effect of triggering the idea of the Trinity in the mind of Gregory and his compatriots. Imaginary critics may counter that the word "Trinity" was already in existence before Gregory, but they will have to concede that it meant little or nothing before Gregory came along. Tertullian first used the word *Trinitas* in 210 AD, but he believed the Son was subordinate to the Father, a notion heretical to later Trinitarians.

Plotinus was not a Christian nor did he ever mention Christianity in his teachings although he lived in a world where Christianity was spreading rapidly. Keep in mind that in those days Greek Hellenistic thought pervaded every strata of society. To the Greek mindset, the Christian belief that God suffered was totally unacceptable because the *monad* or the One was transcendent and impassible (cannot suffer). This posed a serious obstacle for the reception of the Gospel of Christ.

Before we proceed, allow me to revisit the biblical fact that God was in Christ and, therefore, suffered in His own flesh and blood (2 Corinthians 5:19). To believe in the doctrine of the Trinity is to fall into the trap of Gregory and his friends who invented the Trinity precisely to promote the idea that the second member of the Trinity suffered, and not God Himself, to appease the Hellenized majority in the Roman world they were seeking to proselytize. If Jesus was not God Himself manifested in the flesh (I John 1:1,14), then someone else ransomed us from the grave and not the one true God of the Old Testament. This person would be an imposter. But what does Scripture say?

Hosea 13:14 *I will ransom them from the power of the grave; I will redeem them from death: O death, I will be thy plagues; O grave, I will be thy destruction: repentance shall be hid from mine eyes.*

4 times in the verse above God confirms that it is Him alone who will redeem us from the grave. But the doctrine of the Trinity denies

that Jesus is the Father Himself robed in flesh. They deny the claims of Jesus to be the Father Himself, “Jesus saith unto him, Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known me, Philip? he that hath seen me hath seen the Father; and how sayest thou then, Shew us the Father? (John 14:9). When Jesus was born, it was not a “distinct second member of a diffuse Trinity” who was born, but Immanuel, meaning God with us (Matthew 1:23). The sooner we understand this magnificent revelation, the quicker the whole debate about Matthew 28:19 dissipates.

Gregory and his friends found an excellent model in the 3 hypostases teaching of Plotinus from which they could plagiarize and adapt. The *monad*, *nous* (*logos*) and *world soul* with their oneness, distinction and emanation provided the perfect “Trojan horse” from which they could assail and seduce the unsuspecting Hellenized world. We can easily confirm Gregory’s plagiarism and adaptation by reading from the writings of Plotinus himself. In the *Fifth Ennead* (from *The Six Enneads* AD 250), we find the following:

Again, all that is fully achieved engenders: therefore the eternally achieved engenders eternally an eternal being. At the same time, the offspring is always minor: what then are we to think of the All-Perfect but that it can produce nothing less than the very greatest that is later than itself. The greatest, later than the divine unity, must be the Divine Mind, and it must be the second of all existence, for it is that which sees The One on which alone it leans while the First has no need whatever of it. The offspring of the prior to Divine Mind can be no other than that Mind itself and thus is the loftiest being in the

universe, all else following upon it- the soul, for example, being an utterance and act of the Intellectual-Principle as that is an utterance and act of The One (Plotinus, 250).⁵

It doesn't take a genius to figure out that the above is where the doctrine of the Trinity received much impetus. To Gregory and Origen before him, the statement, *therefore the eternally achieved engenders eternally an eternal being* fit perfectly with their belief that God the Father eternally begat the Son. Jesus, the Son of God, became the *logos* or *Divine Mind* not in the way envisioned by the apostle John (John 1:1), but in the way envisioned by Plotinus. The *logos* was a "thought" or "the divine order" in Hellenistic thought and this passed on to Jesus. Christ became the *loftiest being in the universe* who created all things as the *offspring* of the One. Gregory hit the "Jackpot" in stumbling across such statements which he could now promote under the guise of Christianity. No wonder Paul warns:

Colossians 2:8 *Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ.*

Returning now to Matthew 28:19, as I stated earlier, it was and is the current investiture of Gregory's Hellenized Trinitarian views into this text which compounds the problem. The Trinity is totally alien to the biblical universe and must be discarded as it is nothing short

⁵Plotinus. AD 250. The Fifth Ennead. The Internet Classic Archives.
<http://classics.mit.edu/Plotinus/enneads.5.fifth.html> Accessed 6.12.2011

of paganism, as many theologians have conceded. Simply put: rather than arguing about the precise implementation of Matthew 28:19, should we not observe the practice of the apostles who were there and knew what the Lord was saying? They always baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for this is the saving name of God now.

7. CONCLUSION

We have seen in this journey the indispensable role water plays in God's preordained plan of salvation. In his eternal wisdom, God has chosen water to play a pivotal role in the creation of all life. His Spirit moved on the face of the waters to produce this world teeming with stupendous life-forms. Not long after, when sin had spread its canopy of death upon the inhabitants of the earth, God chose water to obliterate and cleanse it giving rest to Noah and his family who were saved by water (I Peter 3:20).

Furthermore, we have seen how water was the chosen agent by which the children of Israel escaped the murderous wrath of Pharaoh and entered the Promised Land. The ten plagues on Pharaoh may have weakened his resolve, but It was only water which finally delivered Israel from their nemesis. Moses shouted, "Stand back and see the *yěshuw`ah* of the Lord (Exodus 14:13). The Red Sea crossing points to the Christian's baptism in water for the remission of sins. It is when we are baptized in water in Jesus name that we shall see the salvation of the Lord.

Furthermore, this book has made a case for discarding the traditional but misleading practice of baptism in the name of the titles – Father, Son and Holy Ghost. Those who insist on baptizing in these titles are informed by a Trinitarian mindset which does

violence to the unassailable doctrine of the One indivisible God as many Scriptures testify (Deuteronomy 6:4; 32:39; Exodus 20:3; Malachi 2:10; Isaiah 43:10; Isaiah 44:8; Mark 12:32; I Timothy 2:5 James 2:19 and countless others). I have briefly shown the manner in which Hellenistic philosophy, inspired by the likes of Plotinus, infiltrated the theology of men like Gregory of Nyssa, a major architect of the doctrine of the Trinity at the Council of Constantinople (AD 381). It is incumbent on Bible-believers to reject this non-biblical doctrine.

Above all, the example of the holy apostles of the Lord Jesus Christ demonstrates to one and all that baptism was and should be administered in the name of Jesus Christ alone. We all know that baptism saves and as such we must invoke the name of Jesus Christ who alone saves to the uttermost. Christ's blood and Spirit are present in the waters of baptism to circumcise the corrupt adamic body and robe us with His own heavenly flesh (Colossians 2:11-13; Galatians 3:27). Such is the importance of water baptism in Jesus name that Philip began with Isaiah 53 but soon was urging the eunuch to be baptized. May you respond as the latter did:

Act 8:36 *And as they went on their way, they came unto a certain water: and the eunuch said, See, here is water; what doth hinder me to be baptized?*

Bibliography

- al, R. G. (2011). *Journal of the International AIDS Society* , 14 (49), 1-17.
- Davies, P. (2006). *The Goldilocks Enigma: Why is the Universe just Right for Life?* London: Penguin.
- Dowley, T. (1990). *The History of Christianity*. (T. Dowley, Ed.) Oxford: Lion Hudson.
- Fitzgerald, F. S. (1926; 1994). *The Great Gatsby*. London: Penguin.
- Glass, J. (1999). Religious circumcision: a Jewish view. *BJU International (British Journal of Urology)* , 83, 17-21.
- Goldman, R. (1997, Fall). *Circumcision: A Source of Jewish Pain*. Retrieved November 19, 2011, from Jewish Circumcision Resource Centre: <http://jewishcircumcision.org/spectator.htm>
- Huxley, A. (1932, 2007). *Brave New World*. London: Vintage Classics.
- Joe Hicks & Grahame Allen. (1999). *A Century of Change: Trends in UK statistics since 1900*. UK Parliament, SOCIAL AND GENERAL STATISTICS SECTION. London: House of Commons Library.
- Klein, R. (1996). Back to the Future : The Tabernacle in the Book of Exodus. *Interpretation* , 50, 264-276.
- Lampe, R. G. (1952). Baptisma in the New Testament. 5, 163-174.
- Mikoski, G. S. (2006). Baptism, Trinity, and ecclesial pedagogy in the thought of Gregory of Nyssa. *Scottish Journal of Theology* , 175-182.

Miller, J. B. (2006). All women in labour should have the choice of water birth. *British Journal of Midwifery* , 14 (8), 484-485.

Nobuo Mimura, Kazuya Yasuhara, Seiki Kawagoe, Hiromune Yokoki & So Kazama. (2011). Damage from the Great East Japan Earthquake and Tsunami - A quick report. *Mitigation and Adaptation Strategies for Global Change* , 16, 803-816.

Olson, R. E. (1999). *The Story of Christian Theology: Twenty centuries of tradition & reform*. Illinois: InterVarsity Press.

Palmer, J. (2011, September 23). *Speed-of-light results under scrutiny at Cern*. Retrieved November 5, 2011, from BBC News: Science and Environment: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/science-environment-15017484>

Pappas, S. (2011, September 23). *live Science*. Retrieved November 5, 2011, from Faster-Than-Light Discovery Raises Prospect of Time Travel: <http://www.livescience.com/16207-faster-light-discovery-time-travel.html>

Plotinus. (250). *The Six Enneads*. Retrieved December 6, 2011, from The Internet Classic Archives: <http://classics.mit.edu/Plotinus/enneads.5.fifth.html>

Romm, J. (2011). The next dust bowl. *Nature* , 478, 450-451.

Whitaker, E. C. (1965). The History of the Baptismal Formula. *The Journal of Ecclesiastical History* , 16, 1-12.

Index

- adamic, 24, 33, 41, 43, 51, 66,
68, 77, 79, 93
- apostle Paul, vi, 24, 29, 54, 63,
69
- Apostolic Church of Ethiopia,
27
- Ark, iv, 20, 23, 26, 75
- Asaph, 39
- Bible hermeneutics, 7
- birth, iv, 1, 7, 9, 10, 41, 77, 95
Water and birthing, 9
- Bishop Teklemariam
Gezahagne, iii, 24
- bohuw, 1
- booths*, 3
- born again, 10
- Brahman, 88
- brass laver, iv, 60, 61, 65, 70,
72
- Cern, 12, 13, 95
- Chernobyl, 19
- circumcision, iv, 43, 44, 46, 47,
48, 49, 50, 51, 52, 53, 54, 55,
56, 84, 94
- circumcision for HIV prevention*,
47
- cloud, iv, 27, 28, 29, 31, 32, 54,
75, 76
- Cochrane Committee, 47
- Constantine, 37
- Cornelius, 79
- Crispus and Gaius, 81
- Davies
Paul, 94
- Divine Mind, 90, 91
- dragon, iv, 39, 40
- dust, 6, 24, 35, 36, 40, 51, 57, 95
- Egyptians, 27, 31, 32, 34
- Einstein, 12
- Elijah, 39
- evaporation, 5, 6
- Exodus, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 31,
32, 33, 34, 37, 38, 42, 43, 51,
52, 54, 60, 61, 64, 65, 69, 70,
76, 81, 92, 93, 94
- firmament, 5, 7
- foreskin of Adamic flesh, 49
- Gabriel, 50
- genotype and phenotype, 68
- Gilgal, 56
- Goliath, 53
- Gran Sasso, 12
- Gregory, v, 84, 86, 87, 88, 89,
90, 91, 93, 94
- Gulf of Aqaba, 37
- Helena, 37
- homicides, 16
- hydrological cycle, 5
- Hyssop, 78
- John the Baptist, 54, 62, 72
- Joshua, 43, 56, 57
- King David, 2
- land of Canaan, 28
- Levites, 66, 68

- linen, 66, 67, 68
- male seed, 45
- Manoah, 82
- Marcus Sautoy, 13
- Matthew 28:19, 74
- Matthew Henry, 71
- Midian, 36
- Miriam, 25
- monad*, 88, 90
- mount of transfiguration, 39
- Mount Sinai, 36
- Mt. Horeb, 36
- Neo-Platonism, 87
- neutrinos, 11, 12, 13, 14
- Nicodemus, 10, 11
- Nile, 25, 26, 27, 32
- Nineveh, 62
- Noah, 14, 15, 17, 20, 22, 23, 25, 27, 32, 41, 92
- nous*, 88, 90
- pavilion, 3
- Peter,, 52, 79
- Pharaoh, iv, 25, 26, 27, 31, 32, 33, 34, 35, 36, 40, 52, 53, 72, 92
- Pharisees and Sadducees, 72, 73
- pillar of cloud, 28, 54
- Plotinus, v, 86, 87, 88, 90, 91, 93, 95
- Qur'an, 17
- Repentance, 60, 62, 63
- Roger Olson, 87
- Ronald Goldman, 46
- Saudi Arabia, 36, 37, 38, 98
- shekinah*, 60, 75
- Shema Israel*, 84
- Sinai*, 3, 36, 37, 38, 69
- Socrates, Plato and Aristotle, 87
- Sodom and Gomorrah, 21
- String theory, 12, 13
- Switzerland, 12
- tabernacle, v, 60, 61, 62, 64, 65, 69, 70, 75, 76
- tabernacles*, 3
- Teklemariam Gezahagne
- Gezahagne, vi
- Tertullian, 88
- The History of Christianity*, 85, 94
- the serpent, 35
- The Six Enneads*, 90, 95
- Tohuku
- Tsunami, 17
- Trinitarian, 24, 91, 92
- Trinitas*, 88
- wall unto them, 42
- wedding banquet, 68
- world soul, 88, 90
- yěshuw`ah*, 38, 92

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Paul Thomas is a minister in the Apostolic Church International Fellowship. He has lived in countries as diverse as Saudi Arabia, India, Norway and the UK. He is currently pursuing a doctorate in Education (King's College, London, University of London). His main research interests center around epistemological issues relating to faith in the context of schooling and the curriculum.

For further correspondence:

hpaulsilas@hotmail.com

Website: www.apostolicinternational.org