

## Baptism and the Covenant

Some would like to know if baptism is a covenant. The answer is: No, it isn't. Now, what is a covenant? Covenant is closely related, in Hebrew, to a cut that is made, as a cut in the flesh. God cut a covenant with Abraham and what emerged from that covenant was what we know as the "Old Testament" (=covenant)<sup>1</sup>. This covenant was entered into between God and Abraham, namely to bring forth, from his loins, a flock that was to serve and obey Him as one and only God.

We can only go to the *Book of Genesis* to see how God went about, cutting the covenant with Abraham to this effect. Faith in God and therefore belonging to God, the believers collectively known as the "flock of God", is a result of the Covenant but it is not in itself the Covenant. The Covenant hinges on the *faith* and *faithfulness* of the Covenant makers. In the Old Testament: (1) Between God, the faithful One, namely *the One who instills faith by proving Himself as the living God*, and, (2) the man Abraham, the one having faith in God – his faith gained through his encounters with God. In the New Testament, the two partners are: (1) God and (2) the man Christ Jesus, His Son who was made flesh – Jesus is the ultimate example of absolute faith in God, His Father, and faithfulness to Him (Heb. 4,5,7,10).

The respective "flocks" of God, both from the Old and the New Testaments, are then the *result* of a covenant that was entered into between two *equally yoked partners*, both having a similar purpose in mind, namely the glorification of God Most High! The most remarkable part to the "covenantal promise" given to Abraham, was of course the miracle child God had given him and Sarah in their old age (Sarah was way beyond her childbearing years). And so from Abraham's loins a nation, indeed many nations, arose, and with Jesus (Yeshua HaMaschiach) in mind, He too "birthed" many children – children God had given Him - on the Cross, from His side, water and blood came forth, bringing to life the New Testament flock of God through *His faith and faithfulness* to God His Father (Heb. 2.13; Jn 19.34; Gen.17; Heb. 3.1-3). And this has nothing to do with replacement theology for God has never forsaken His Old-Testament (Tanakh) flock although they have rejected His Son (Rom. 11).

[The door to the Ark (the entrance) was at the side of the vessel, correlating remarkably with the wound inflicted by the Roman soldier's sword, ripping Jesus' flesh open at the side, affirming that Jesus is the door to Salvation!]

God then *initially* separated a nation unto Himself through a covenant He had entered into. The sign that Israel was indeed God's people, was God's Covenant with Abraham. However, it was entered into by the spilling of animal blood. Animal blood is blood that belongs to this creation, so although God clinched a covenant with Israel "eternally", the blood covenant that had tied them to God Most High, was to continue – carried on or transferred - in the everlasting covenant God, in time to come, was going to cut between mankind and Himself in and through the eternal, divinely created blood of His Son, shed on Calvary (Heb. 9.14).

An Angel of God announced the Holy Spirit conception and birth of the Son of God to Mary (Miriam) and, at the time, God also implicitly made known, through His servant Simeon (Shimon), on the eighth day of the new born child and when he was ready to be circumcised according to the Law of Moses, that the child was born "...for the fall and rising of many in Israel and for a sign that is spoken against" (AMP, Lu 3.34; Isa 8.14,15; Gal. 4; Lk. 1.30-35).

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<sup>1</sup> "Testament" strictly speaking, belongs to the New Testament (Brit Chodesh), derived from Latin but as Paul explains in his letters, applied to the death of the testator – this concisely said.

This sign was the death of God's Son on a Roman Cross and when God Most high decided to cut the everlasting covenant between Himself and mankind in and through His one and only Son, Heir to His Throne, on the sacrificial altar that was destined for Him - God demanding of Abraham to sacrifice his own son, implicitly giving Abraham foresight of what was destined in time to come, namely in His counsel, for His own Son. Therefore the New and Better Covenant as the second, *eternal* covenant, was indeed introduced by eternal blood.

Isaiah (53) conveyed his prophetic word or revelation (his prophecy received from God) in a very graphic way to God's people, depicting for us the Suffering Lamb of God and through whose service and person (the Son having been made flesh) God Most High was going to cut the ultimate, all-inclusive covenant.

[Note: On the prophetic word: "a word from or of God", spoken through the Power and Gift of God's Spirit - see also 1 Cor. 12 on the nine gifts of Holy Spirit - is nothing but the "gift" of prophecy (=the anointing coming from God Most High on the tongue of God's chosen vessel, namely freely given to sustain man spiritually and connecting him to God in and through the Power of God's Spirit - God is merciful and gracious and abounding in love and therefore His "gifts" are freely offered and shared with man). It was indeed the prophetic word that had sustained Israel as a nation, binding them to God's promises and filling their hearts with hope and trust in God's Plan and destiny for them. The prophetic word and the covenant God had entered into with His Old Testament flock, was then an outflow of the first (Abrahamic) covenant. The prophetic word was not in itself the covenant but it spoke (often implicitly) of God's covenant He had entered into with His own. This New Testament gift of prophecy operating in the very same way = "word of God" in the Old Testament and in relation to God Most High, it always expresses the Son of God as "Word of God" or Memra: "The testimony (the spoken, inspirational word) of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy" (Rev. 19.10). It is then indeed Jesus, the Son of God acting in the midst of God's flock through prophetic revelation. A word from/of the Lord can also be received through visions and dreams, therefore not only in the usual prophetic manner, announcing through the spoken word, God's will and plan to His flock. This briefly stated as it is the *spoken* word of God that is pointed out here and not so much a comparison between the Old and the New Testament prophetic gift, however, what I would like to say is that it is wrong to regard the Old Testament prophetic word only as foretelling for the prophetic word, although to a large extent in the Old Testament expressed as "foretelling" (prophesying into the future), can also entail current as well as past happenings].

God's chosen people was then bound to God in and through a specific sacrificial blood covenant God had entered into with Abraham, the great Patriarch of the Jewish nation. What, however, was required of them in return, was to keep faithful to God's prescriptions on, e.g. circumcision for circumcision was part of the Abrahamic covenants and directly related to their heritage.

There was also a unique "general" (deluge) covenant God had entered into with the nations, namely that earth would never be destroyed again (or cleansed) by water, and the sign was the rainbow in the sky. This covenant relates to the ark, the refuge for only a few people and of course also a certain number of animals - all done with God's purpose in mind.

The "water covenant" as I would call it here, the washing of the earth from all its uncleanness and which *indirectly* or implicitly relates to the sacrificial altar, was a mere sign in the heavens, therefore not *in the true sense of the word*, a blood ritual connected to an altar, like that God and Abraham had entered into and when an animal was slaughtered for this very purpose. God, however, did clinch His covenant with Noah and his sons, and then also with the rest of the nations (Gen. 9.11, 17). Therefore the rainbow in the sky ("...the sign of the covenant between Me and the land" (Gen. 9.13), to this day, serving as a sign that God will never again send His wrath against sinful man this way. [Noah built an altar and he brought sacrifices to God after the flood. His sacrifice influenced God to never again curse the land (Gen. 8.20-21)].

This covenant was of course implicitly pointing to Jesus, Son of God, Saviour of the world, and who was going to cut the everlasting covenant (as Ark of Salvation) on Calvary for mankind's redemption in God's appointed time (see Jn 19.34). The washing or cleansing of the land through the flood, points to the *necessary* requirement of God for all who have come to knowledge of the Son of God, namely that He died on the sacrificial altar (the Cross) in order to reconcile man to God, His Father. Without getting into the ark, the water of course covering the ark completely - from below the waters were rising and from above the waters came pouring down - not even one would have been saved (pointing of course here to God's grace extended *to the faithful*).

The ark is the symbol of water baptism and those who want to be saved will then have to be baptised – be enveloped with water. Although the baptism is not a covenant, it is the outflow of the New and Better Covenant – it is the sign and symbol of the believer's union with Christ's death and resurrection. Just as a proselyte, operating under the Old Testament covenant, has to be baptised (to this day in Judaism), likewise those believing in Jesus Christ must be baptised in water for water depicts the water grave we must participate in, should we want to unite with Jesus Christ's death and resurrection and should we want to belong to Him and His flock (Rom 6.4). And there is only one way to do so.

The New and Better Covenant was then introduced by the Son of God who acted as only, appropriate, elected-by-God (!) bridge between God and man (1 Tim. 2.5; Ps 40.7-9; Heb. 10.5). Therefore, and because the Son of God is the hiding place (the covering) of those who believe in Him as Messiah, we must do as Peter commanded, through the Holy Spirit, namely to subject ourselves to baptism in the *Name* of the Son of God for it is the Son of God who wrought salvation for us on Calvary. The covenant is therefore useless without the blood sacrifice for only blood can atone for sin and only sacrificial blood can affirm (ratify) the covenant. This is the reason why God instituted the Old Testament fire sacrifices, for the soul of man is in the blood (Lev. 17.11).

Baptism is then indeed necessary for salvation as it unites us with Jesus' substitutionary death on the Cross to God Most High. Without this necessary bridge to God Most High, we would have been lost. It is the shed blood of Jesus that signed the New and Better Covenant of faith and grace for us on Calvary and so that we could be cleansed from sin, not remaining in it (Rom. 6.4-5)! Therefore God the Father sent His Son into the world to save sinners in and through His Son's death on a Roman Cross (1 Tim. 1.15; Jn 3.16). [It is the baptism in the Name of the Son (=the bridge of God) that ties us to the living God!]

However, although we need the water as without water we cannot enact the ritual of baptism, we are not sanctified by water. We are sanctified by the Name of Jesus (1 Cor. 6.11) and we are united in and through the water bath to the New and Better Covenantal Messiah, Jesus the Christ, who came to testify of His Father and *who reconciled us unto His Father* in and through His shed blood - it was the shed blood of Jesus that reconciled us unto God the Father, not our good deeds, nor the water regeneration bath of the Essenes, although the baptismal water bath is indeed necessary (2 Cor. 5.18-19; 1 Pet. 3.18; 1 Pet. 3.21 – in the latter case Peter points to baptism, not serving as an ablution to remove bodily impurities - as was the custom among the Jews and especially the Essenes who were bent on ritual cleansing and purification - “...but by providing you with the answer of a good and clear conscience”, AMP).

It is therefore necessary to be baptized in the Name of Jesus just as the apostles of Jesus had set the example for us. Why? It was an Essene practice to baptize in the Name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit – Peter was clearly educating those who had joined the apostles' *ekklesia* or those who have still rivalled with them. It is the Old Covenantal Name that was linked to this formula and this formula was imposed on Christendom via the schism that had taken place in apostolic ranks and of which Paul, John, Peter, even James (implicitly) speak in their letters (2 Thes. 2). The rejection of Jesus as Messiah, was clearly a deliberate move applied by the schismatics before the destruction of Jerusalem (70CE), and the rejection of the Name of Jesus *in baptism* must then have taken place relatively shortly before the schism for we can infer from the apostolic letters that the apostles spoke out against the rejection of the Name of the Son of God.

The “great schism” is then something that had happened in the apostolic age - it should therefore not be transferred to a later date as many are apt to doing (see 2 Thes. 2; 2 Pet. 2.1; Col. 3.17; Gal. 3.27; 1 Jn 3.23; Eph. 4.5; also the *Didache*). It is amazing how far people are prepared to go in order to declare the Scriptures *properly*, yet failing time and time again to bring Jesus the glory

that rightly belongs to Him as Son of God for He is the door and we can only enter into the Kingdom of God through Jesus (Jn 10). Baptism in the Name of Jesus, the Son of God, binds us to the New and Better Covenant!

We must therefore be immersed in water for baptism (*baptizo*) is immersion, pointing to complete covering by Jesus' death and resurrection (outlining salvation - without being baptized the apostolic way, we cannot lay claim to salvation for salvation (to be saved/to be freed or delivered/to be redeemed) is the outflow/the result of repentance, namely to answer God (=te)shuvah=to turn around/to go in the opposite direction). Those pricked in the heart, asked Peter: "What shall we do *to be saved*" (Acts 2.37-38)?

We are therefore indeed not saved unless we are baptised and I would like to add, the *proper* way. The Name in baptism is then crucial for without the Cross, linked to Jesus, the Son of God, we are not acceptable by God for God never goes back on His word and His word was spoken through Peter on Pentecost Day, for there in the Upper Room the Holy Spirit was poured out, namely the Spirit of Truth to glorify Jesus (Acts 1-2). The Spirit of Truth was indeed laid on Peter's tongue (Jn 15). Only a Gnostic and an Essene would have denied this Gospel Truth!

Baptism is therefore our way of answering God (1 Pet. 3.21). We must understand that we cannot make our own rules. This privilege belongs to God and therefore we worship Him as *God*, wanting to obey Him! Jesus brought us back into the fold of God. He wrought salvation by working reconciliation on the Cross, the altar of grace on our behalf. His hands were ripped open and likewise His body, in order to bring about redemption/freedom from the slavery of sin for us. Without redemption, worked by totally holy, Spirit created blood, we are not saved (we have no share in salvation). The Holy Spirit operates/contracts in Jesus' blood (Heb. 9.14).

Baptism is then our answer to God (repentance = to answer God): "What shall we *do* to be saved" (Acts 2.37-38)? "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ!" Peter and Silas answered the jailer this way and as if to say, "...in case you had Zeus or Jupiter in mind"! Repentance goes hand in hand with faith in God. And then – after having confessed faith in the Son of God - they were *baptised* – according to the *Acts of Luke*. So, coming with this idea that salvation and baptism don't go hand in hand, is fallacious. Baptism is the natural result of salvation we obtain by faith in the Son of God!

We are therefore baptised because we *understand* the requirements of the Scriptures, proving that we must be cognitively ready to undergo baptism. "He who believes AND is baptised (who agrees to be baptised) shall be saved" (Mr 16). Baptism carries us (sustains us) just as the waters carried the Ark, housing the faithful.

So there is no excuse for those who want to rationalize the water baptism for the constant hammering on immersion by speakers of Truth (that is over against sprinkling on the forehead as was the custom in paganism) has shed light on the Word of God.

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