

# The WildBranch Ministry

*...thou bearest not the root, but  
the root thee. Romans 11:18*

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## Baptism Part 1

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Many years ago I became heavily involved in 'witnessing' to the members of our dominant religion here in Utah. Many of us had spent numerous hours absorbed in anti-Mormon tracts. These were short one or two page documents that contained information and Bible verses that focused solely on refuting Mormon doctrines. I recall spending many evenings in the homes of local Mormons mowing down their beliefs with my ecclesiastical AK-47. I dutifully memorized all the 'come-back' verses that I had poured over in the tracts I was given. I also knew full well that most of the faithful LDS I was 'ministering' to had gone through just such a process with respect to their religion. So in hindsight, I had become much like them. Spewing out responses in knee-jerk fashion and concluding that silence from their end meant that I had won. Greek thinking at it's best. There are winners and there are losers.

One of the responses we had learned concerned our many learned refutations of the Book of Mormon. One of the issues we addressed concerned Joseph Smith's mention of baptism in this so-called additional testament of Jesus. The Book of Mormon mentions water baptism many times. This, we were told in our handy dandy anti-Mormon tracts, was clear evidence that the Book of Mormon was not a document about the people of God from 600 B.C. to 400 A.D. as the book had claimed. Our come back was that anybody knows that baptism is a New Testament sacrament practiced AFTER the resurrection of Jesus Christ. At that moment my faithful partner and I would exchange a sarcastic smile and cock our heads to the side ever so slightly. The unspoken conclusion was clearly GOTCHA!

I tell this story to my own shame. It is a clear example of my loyal participation in a religious system that is designed to proliferate the system rather than the scriptures. Please keep in mind, however, that I am in no way condoning the

Mormon religion. It has enough false doctrine without the baptism issue. The bottom line was that I was very proficient in Christian doctrine but did not really know the scriptures. The subject of baptism is still under the microscope today in various denominations. The debate still carries on as to whether water baptism is to precede salvation or to follow it. Is it part of our reconciliation to God or is it just an outward expression of an inward transformation that has already taken place? Here are just a few examples taken right from reference Bibles and popular commentaries.

The Dictionary of Basic Bible Truths by Larry Richards

*"Baptism is a distinctively New Testament Practice."*

Unger's Bible Dictionary

*Baptism, the application of water as a rite of purification or initiation; a Christian sacrament."*

The New Commentary on the Book of Acts

*Commenting on Acts 2:38 "It makes it doubly certain that remission of sins follows baptism, and is therefore to be expected by the baptized."*

NIV Reference Bible

*Commenting on Acts 22:16 "Baptism is the outward sign of an inward work of grace. The reality and the symbol are closely associated with the New Testament."*

The Oxford Companion to the Bible

*A term first appearing in the New Testament as a purification ritual used by an unorthodox Jewish figure name John the Baptist."*

The Roman Catechism

*Baptism is the sacrament of regeneration by water in the word."*

Disciples of Christ Statement of Faith

*"Baptism in the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) takes water -- plenty of water. Disciples practice "baptism by immersion" because it mirrors New Testament practice."*

World Council of Churches Faith and Order

*"The universal practice of baptism by the apostolic Church from its earliest days is attested in letters of the New Testament, the Acts of the Apostles, and the writings of the Fathers. The churches today continue this practice as a rite of commitment to the Lord who bestows his grace upon his people."*

It is certainly true that I could fill this web site with quotes similar to these regarding baptism. For the sake of fairness there are some, a handful, of Christian commentaries that do recognize baptism to be taken from the Old Testament. I will quote them occasionally as we proceed in spite of the infrequent mention. No matter what differences exist in Christendom regarding the application and practice of baptism, the thread that remains fairly consistent is that this is a New Testament concept and sacrament. The concept part we will research, the sacrament part they can have.

It will behoove us to begin with the etymology of the word and words directly associated with it before we trace it's origins and first appearance. It is my contention, as it has been with most biblical words so far, that the meaning and purpose of this subject in the New Testament is born in the Old Testament. The English word 'baptize' comes from the Greek word *baptizo*. This word, in turn, comes from the Hebrew *taval*. This parent verbal root is formed by a *tet*, *bet*, *lamed*. The pictographic meaning here is to be surrounded by the leader of the house. It's meaning in our context and use is to dip or to plunge into water, i.e., to surround or immerse something into water. It's cognate (family) meaning is the act of pressing down. This same word is used to describe a woman dyeing a linen garment. *Tevilah* is the act of dipping white linen into colorful dyes to change their color. The Greek word *baptizo* maintains this same definition, for it, too, means to dip, plunge or immerse. There are two other Hebrew words from whence we get *baptizo*, and there is one other Greek word that the Hebrew word *tavalis* translated into. We will cover these interesting words later.

The first occurrence of a word always lays the foundation for it's literal and symbolic use. The first appearance of the word *taval* translated into *baptizo* is in Sh'mot 12:22:

"And ye shall take a bunch of hyssop, and **DIP** it in the blood that is in the basin, and strike the lintel and the two side posts with the blood that is in the basin; and none of you shall go out at the door of his house until the morning."

The first occurrence of this word is directly associated with the 'pressing down' of the hyssop into the bowl containing the blood of the passover lamb. The first occurrence is found in the immersion into the blood of the lamb rather than the oft cited water. Blood outside of the body represents death. This is why our Redeemer shed His blood for us. The partakers of the Passover had their doors covered with blood the representation of death, so when YHVH came through He passed over the houses with the blood or death applied. In other words, YHVH could not smite what was already dead. This is the background to Paul's remarks in Romans 6:1-8:

"What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound? God forbid. How shall we, that are **dead** to sin, live any longer therein? Know ye not, that so many of us as were **baptized** into Messiah Y'shua were **baptized** into his **death**? Therefore we are buried with him by **baptism into death**: that like as Messiah was raised up from the **dead** by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his **death**, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection: 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. For he that is **dead** is freed from sin. Now if we be **dead with Messiah**, we believe that we shall also live with him:

Can you see how many times baptism is associated with death? The picture God is drawing from the beginning is that when the end comes and judgment falls, those who are already judged (dead in Messiah) will be passed over. You cannot kill that which is already dead. The death pictured here is the old man of sin. This is pictured by the blood on the doorposts. You and I are immersed in His blood, which represents His death for us. This is our first occurrence of the Hebrew word for baptism in the Tanakh, but this is not the first occurrence of a baptism. The place in which a *tevilah* was to take place was called a *miq<sup>e</sup>veh*. This word comes from the root *qavah*, which means to gather together for a purpose. I have stated before that most Hebrew words that are associated with

righteousness and holiness all share an etymological background of oneness, unity and gathering into one. Most Hebrew words that are associated with unrighteousness and evil all share an etymological background of scattering, breaking, mixing and dividing. The word for a baptismal is no exception. The first occurrence of a baptizing is actually in the very beginning. I will start from there in our next teaching on this subject.

Shalom Alecheim!

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