

## Baptism (part 3 of 6): Biblical Illustrations 1 By Alan Hitchen

A complicated subject is often made simple by a good illustration. Jesus used parables to illustrate profound spiritual truths. In common events like sowing “*good seed*” or “*tares*,” he could reveal “*the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven*,” “*that many prophets and righteous men desired to see*,” and were “*kept secret from the foundation of the world*.” (Mt. 13)

Sometimes a spiritual truth is so deep, even the illustration is “*hard to explain*.” The Hebrews were chastised because Jesus was “*called by God as High Priest... according to the order of Melchizedek... of whom we have much to say, and hard to explain, since you have become dull of hearing*” (Heb. 5:10-11). Though Melchizedek’s entire life spans only three verses (Gen. 14:18-20) and one prophecy (Ps. 110:4), the Holy Spirit used an entire chapter to illustrate how Christ was a High Priest after the order of Melchizedek and not of Levi (Heb 7:1-28). Paul used a few passages describing Adam’s sin and punishment to explain the power of Christ’s crucifixion: “*Therefore, as through one man's offense judgment came to all men, resulting in condemnation, even so through one Man's righteous act the free gift came to all men, resulting in justification of life. For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so also by one Man's obedience many will be made righteous*.” Clearly some things have great spiritual significance, and only through the Holy Spirit’s use of types, shadows, and parables can we see their fullness.

So it is with baptism. A simple act of immersion in water appears insignificant and many today scoff as Naaman did when told to dip seven times in the Jordan (2 Kings 5). The types and shadows chosen by the Holy Spirit reveal baptism has manifold and great power. Using Christ’s death, burial, and resurrection; Noah’s ark; Israel’s passage through the Red Sea; circumcision; and being born again of water and the Spirit, we are compelled to see baptism’s immersion in water as an exceedingly important ordinance possessing amazing power!

### Noah’s Ark

***the ark... wherein few that is eight souls were saved through water***

***baptism, which corresponds to this, now saves you. 1 Pet 3:20-21***

After the world plunged into evil, God poured his wrath upon them in a flood. Yet in the midst of such evil, “*Noah found grace in the eyes of the LORD*” (Gen. 6:8). God’s grace led to the command to “*make yourself an ark of gopherwood*” (Gen. 6:13-14). Entering the ark was their part in a covenant God made: “*I will establish My covenant with you; and you shall go into the ark— you, your sons, your wife, and your sons' wives with you*.” This is why “*only Noah and those who were with him in the ark remained alive*” (Gen 6:18; 7:23). They had a clear choice: to go into the ark to “*remain alive*” or remain outside the ark where “*all flesh that moved on the earth perished*” (Gen 7:21). The ark was the difference between life and death.

This *corresponds* to baptism! Through baptism we too enter a covenant with God. Wherever the gospel is preached “*he who believes and is baptized will be saved*” (Mk 16:15-16). Ananias told Paul “*why are you waiting? Arise and be baptized, and wash away your sins*” (Acts 22:16). Peter said: “*Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins*.” (Acts 2:36- 41). Baptism “*corresponds*” to the ark in two important ways:

Those in the ark entered a covenant with God and were saved

Those baptized enter a covenant with God and are saved.

Those not in the ark had no covenant with God and perished.

Those not baptized have no covenant with God and will perish.

Peter told the Jews: *save yourselves from this crooked generation. They then that received his word were baptized*” (Acts 2:40-41), and Gentiles: *“Can anyone forbid water, that these should not be baptized who have received the Holy Spirit just as we have? And he commanded them to be baptized in the name of the Lord. (Acts 10:47-48 47). Like Noah he knew as “the world that then was, being overflowed with water, perished,” so now “the heavens that now are, and the earth... been stored up for fire, being reserved against the day of judgment and destruction of ungodly men.” (2 Pet 3:6-7). As those who entered the ark were saved from the flood, those who are baptized are saved from fire.*

### **They Were All Baptized Unto Moses**

*all our fathers were under the cloud, all passed through the sea,*

*all were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea” 1 Cor 10:1-2*

As Peter used the ark, Paul used Israel’s escape through the Red Sea. Today, *“by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body,”* then they were *“all baptized into Moses.”* (1 Cor 12:13; 10:1-2). What did Israel do in passing through the Red Sea with water piled up on both sides and a cloud covering them that so closely imitated what sinners do in baptism that Paul could call their path through the sea a baptism?

There are several parallels between how Israel left Egypt and how we leave the world. They were *baptized into Moses* as we were *baptized into Christ*. They *“all ate the same spiritual food,”* (manna) *“and all drank the same spiritual drink”* (water miraculously provided) in the same way we eat a spiritual food (unleavened bread) and a spiritual drink (fruit of the vine) (1 Cor 10:1-4, 16-17; 11:20-34). So what they did is what we do. From baptism to spiritual food and drink, then their trials, *“these things became our examples. “Now all these things happened to them as examples, and they were written for our admonition”* (1 Cor 10:6,11). Their journey to the Promised Land began as ours. Their relationship with God was similar to ours and their temptations are our temptations.

So what did their *“baptism into Moses”* as they passed through the Red Sea do for them? While in Egypt, *“The Egyptians made the children of Israel to serve with rigor: and they made their lives bitter with hard service”* (Ex 1:13-14). This bondage was so harsh, *“the children of Israel sighed by reason of the bondage, and they cried, and their cry came up unto God”* then *“God remembered his covenant with Abraham, with Isaac and with Jacob”* (Ex 2:23-24).

Pharaoh refused to let them go until the tenth plague, but even after leaving Egypt they were not yet free: *“Pharaoh and his servants had a change of heart toward the people, and they said, What is this we have done, that we have let Israel go from serving us”* (Ex 14:5). As long as Israel was on the Egyptian side of the Red Sea they were not safe. *“The Egyptians chased after them with all the horses and chariots of Pharaoh, his horsemen and his army, and they overtook them camping by the sea. As Pharaoh drew near, the sons of Israel looked, and behold, the*

*Egyptians were marching after them, and they became very frightened; so the sons of Israel cried out to the LORD” (Ex 14:9-10).*

God saved them as *“the children of Israel went into the midst of the sea on the dry ground, and the waters were a wall to them on their right hand and on their left.”* Then when *“the waters returned and covered the chariots, the horsemen, and all the army of Pharaoh that came into the sea after them. Not so much as one of them remained.”* In passing through the Red Sea and *“being baptized into Moses,” “the LORD saved Israel that day out of the hand of the Egyptians.”* (Ex 14:22, 28, 30).

Before this “baptism” they were still in bondage and under Pharaoh’s power. After their “baptism,” Pharaoh and his army were destroyed and they were saved. Here are the similarities of this type and baptism.

We were buried with Jesus in our *“baptism into Christ.”* Rom. 6:4

They were buried with Moses in their *“baptism into Moses”* 1Cor 10:1-2

After *“baptism into Moses”* no longer slaves to Egypt. Ex 14:22, 28

After *“baptism into Christ”* no longer slaves of sin. Rom 6:6

After *“baptism into Moses”* under the dominion of God through Moses.

After *“baptism into Christ”* under the dominion of God through Christ.

Those who refused to pass through the sea perished by Pharaoh’s army and those who refused to enter the ark perished by the flood. Do we see the point? Those who refuse to be baptized will perish in their sins!

In Part 4, we will see additional illustrations in the Bible that clarify the role of baptism.