

# **BAPTISM FROM THE OLD TESTAMENT PERIOD TO THE END OF TIME**

By C White

**Why baptism? What is its history? We sabbatarians are thoroughly knowledgeable of its meaning and its ritual. But could there be some other aspects to it which we have overlooked?**

**Why does God utilise the metaphor of immersion or complete surrounding or wrapping? Has the earth experienced such immersion in its long history? And if so, is there a connection to human baptism?**

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Some years I undertook a study to reprove to myself that indeed salvation is a process in 3 stages and that our greatest salvation lies ahead which will be fulfilled in the resurrection. Herbert Armstrong's booklets on the subjects of salvation and conversion were again proven to be accurate and crystal clear, indeed making the truth plain.

During this quest the following were also found to be processes in 3 basic stages, culminating in the resurrection:

- glorification
- redemption
- putting on Christ/ the new man/ the new creation
- renewal/re-creation
- Kingdom of God membership

Soon my mind turned to Christian baptism. But before we enter that arena, let us take a quick peek at the baptism theme which appears in the Bible. The baptism theme appears in context to both man and the earth upon which he dwells. God immerses or surrounds man in water to produce a new creature, washing him clean to enable a new life to emerge.

Similarly, as we shall see, God immerses or surrounds the earth in baptismal waters or fire from time-to-time, to cleanse it and to make it ready for a new age within His plan.

## **BAPTISM OF THE EARTH?**

Repeatedly, the earth has been engulfed in gia-enormous upheavals which consign scenes from gripping movies such as *Volcano* and *Dante's Peak* to mere blips. Scientists reckon immense devastation and catastrophism upon the earth to occur at regular, cyclical periods.

In Genesis 1:1-2 we are told:

“In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.

And the earth was [became] 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”

Several matters may be teased out of this scripture which we generally seldom hear about. Firstly, philological studies of “moved” is taken to mean “to brood” like a bird or dove fluttering over his offspring. Others feel that there may be an inference here to hover or coast in the air like an eagle (compare Deut 32:11). Here we find God showing great care for the re-forming of the earth prior to the creation of humankind. What happened prior to Adam’s creation?

If we are to accept dating methodologies indicating that the earth is about 4.6 billion years old, God was indeed active in creative expression long prior to creation of man. It would seem that God may have been busy with various physical creative expressions over a long time. Here are some of the biochronological eras or epochs which earth history may be divided into:

- archeozoic proterozoic (the precambrian era - 4.6 billion to 600 millions years ago)
- paleozoic (including the cambrian, orovician, silurian, devonian, carboniferous, permian eras - 600-230 million years ago)
- mesozoic (including the triassic, jurassic and cretaceous eras - 230- 67 million years ago)
- cenozoic (tertiary and quaternary eras – 67 million years ago to recent times).

The quaternary era consists of the Pleistocene and Holocene periods. The Pleistocene period was a time when the earth experience an horrific Ice Age followed by tremendous flooding during the Holocene period with the latter commencing about 10,000 BC and ending about 4,000 BC (please note that there was enormous flooding, but the entire globe was not subdued with water). Scientists have shown that deserts arose after 4,000 BC. The land bridges between Australia and both Papua New Guinea and Tasmania; and between Siberia and Alaska disappeared at that time, never to be recovered. One source actually states that “sea-levels rose continuously until around 6,000 years ago” (*Encyclopaedia of Aboriginal Australia*, vol 1, 1994, p 473. See also *Archaeology of the Dreamtime* by Josephine Flood, 1983, page 123) which is about 4,000BC, about the time of the creation of man.

One example may be found at Susa, its lowest levels show traces of human occupation about 4,000BC, which fits nicely into the Biblical dating model of creation of man c4000BC (*The New International Dictionary of Biblical Archaeology*, art. “Crafts, Craftsmen”, page 139).

The Australian Aboriginal peoples describe the creation of man thus:

“In the beginning the world lay quiet, in utter darkness. There was no vegetation, no living or moving thing on the bare bones of the mountains. The world was not dead, It was asleep” They then describe how light manifest itself upon the earth. Man was created “in the bodily and mental form of the Baiame ... the Father-God, the Great Spirit” (*Aboriginal Stories* by A.W. Reed, pages 11, 8-9).

By the way, Aboriginal legends also speak of giants and a great Flood! Sound familiar?

Is there inference in Genesis 1:1-2 of the end of the Holocene period with God intervening to reverse the great flooding all over the earth in readiness for conditions for human existence? This may indeed be the case; and if it is, it may give credence to the theory that God cleanses the planet prior to creative activity. He is the God of fiat creation, not a God guiding evolutionary development. As such, He may determine to create at various times, according

to His great will and wisdom. He created man after readying the earth for him at the end of the Holocene period. But this was not the last time God 'baptised' and cleansed the earth.

## NOAH'S FLOOD

Gradually, historians, in general, are settling on dating of ancient history by reducing events downwards slightly. This has been occurring for some time and now seems to be reaching toward finalisation with the assistance of great works such as *A Test of Time* by David Rohl. For instance it may be that the great flooding recorded in Mesopotamian history and which historians dated at about 2,650BC, could be determined at about 2324BC, 'coinciding' with Noah's worldwide Flood. Great Middle Eastern emperors, heroes and villains, may now be seen to be descendants of Noah. For instance, Assur may have been Sargon of Akkad. Some decades ago he was dated at 3,200BC, but gradually this was reduced with the rest of the dating of the Middle Eastern records to 2,500BC and further since. He was indeed a great and powerful man of the post-Flood world. I may write more about him in a future article.

There is much evidence for the pre-Flood dating of the old Egyptian Kingdom. For instance scientists now admit the erosion of the face of the Sphinx is a direct result of great flooding and not wind erosion and we know that the dating of the Sphinx reveals a pre-Flood origin.

But let us turn to Noah himself. His name means comfort, consolation, rest or regeneration (Gen 5:29). As in Christ's day, the world was wicked (Gen 6:5-9). Like Christ, he was spiritually just, represented a certain ethnic line and walked with God (Gen 6:9); both he and Christ were preachers of righteousness (IPet 2:5) and had great faith (Heb 11:7); this faith was demonstrated by obedience to God (Gen 6:22), which included sabbath observance (Gen 7:4,10; 8:4,10,12).

In considering Noah's ark, and without going into detailed typology in this article, the pitch (probably resin) which covered the ark pictures atonement (Heb "kaphar" = atonement), the period prior to the flood is type of the events leading up to the tribulation; the flood itself the height of the tribulation and Day of the Lord (cp Luke 17:26-27; Rev 12:15-17). On 1 Tishri Noah looked out on the new world. We know that Christ will probably return on 1 Tishri too, to commence His millennial reign. Noah, at that time, commenced his 7<sup>th</sup> century at which time he saw and received the 'promised land'. Similarly, Christ will commence the final 7,000 years of God's Plan at His return. We also know that God made a covenant with Noah – possibly a type of the New Covenant which Christ will finalise at His return (Is 54:8-10; Gen 9:9).

Christ preached to the demon spirits, in Noah's day. It would appear that He may have given them warning about their ultimate punishment which will be fulfilled at the end time. Noah's Flood was a type of the Day of the Lord at which time their punishments will be metered out (IPet 3:19-20). Interestingly, in the following verse the Flood is likened to baptism.

But while God has promised that the earth will not be submerged by water (Gen 9:15), He has also predicted that it will be consumed by fire.

## EARTH'S COMING BAPTISM OF FIRE!

After the second resurrection, the Devil, Beast, False Prophet and the unrighteous, will be cast into the terrible lake of fire (Rev 20:10). It would appear that the lake of fire will then spread and engulf the entire earth and even the entire universe will be cleansed and recreated, made ready for new creations for a dynamic God Family. Peter writes of this most incredible event in history:

“... the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up” (II Pet 3:10)

We are told in Micah that “the mountains shall be molten under Him ... as wax before the fire” (Mic 1:4) as the earth is cleansed. Compare also Luke 3:5.

Our own Sun is a most fascinating body: it is an average sized star as far as we know; its heat is generated by the nuclear fusion of its hydrogen into helium. One day, our glorious Sun will run out of finite hydrogen energy in billions of years time. Of course, God may intervene and speed that process up in due course. In any event, it will begin to burn helium instead of hydrogen, becoming a “Red Giant” and become at least 100 times its current size, engulfing much of the inner solar system.

Eventually the sun will exhaust its supply of Helium fuel and shrink in size, lose its heat gradually and begin to die, becoming a mere White Dwarf star (cp Rev 21:23; 22:5).

From the above three examples, it would seem that God has plunged or baptised the earth into the most catastrophic immersions in water and yet to come fire. While this is of course speculative, nevertheless, it seems to fit a model that He performs such feats from time-to-time. The earth was prepared for man via gigantic flooding; followed by the Noahic Flood and the fiery inferno yet to come.

Finally, Peter seems to tie these three together in II Pet 3:5-7,12:

“ ... by the word of God the heavens were of old [creation of the earth], and the earth standing out of the water and in the water [Holocene period?]:  
“Whereby the world that then was, being overflowed with water, perished [Noahic worldwide Flood]:  
“But the heavens and the earth which are now, by the same word are kept in store, reserved unto fire against the day of judgment and perdition for ungodly men ... wherein the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat. “Nevertheless we, according to His promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness [the final re-creation of the Universe]”.

In time order, the evil are engulfed by fire (Rev 20:10-15; Mal 4:3), followed by the inauguration of the New Heavens and New Earth (Rev 21:1) from which the evil are absent (v8). Sequentially, it would appear that God may bring forward by billions of years the folding up of the physical universe after the lake of fire has spread and engulfed (ie baptised) the entire earth. From there it will engulf the universe, preparing the way for a new creation with dimensions, sights, colours, sounds, and experiences that we cannot even possibly imagine at this stage. But Rev 21 & 22 gives us some insights and clues.

From the above we can ascertain the following consistency: **God practices methods of cleansing via immersion or baptism prior to His involvement with a new creation.**

Of course, it is not just the children of God that will experience the new birth. In sense so shall the earth and even the entire universe seem to crave, which Rom 8:22-23 indicates. Of this, Everett Harrison writes:

“From [Romans 8] v.22 it appears at first sight that “the whole creation” includes man. But v.23 alters this impression, for it sets the entire creation over against the whole body of the redeemed (“we ourselves”) and therefore does not include in it the people of God. The groaning of creation looks back

to its subjection to frustration (v.20), whereas the pangs of childbirth anticipate the age of renewal. In other words, the same sufferings are at once a result and prophecy. Christ spoke of the renewing of the world and called it a "rebirth" (palingenesis. Matt 19:28).

"Paul makes a parallel between the saints and the material creation. In at least two respects their situation is the same – groaning (cf. 2Cor 5:2) and eagerly awaiting the new age (v.23). Perhaps a third element of comparison is intended: "the redemption of our bodies, "answering to the transformation of the earth ..." (*Romans, EBC*, vol 10, page 94).

So, even the earth and the universe, in a sense, will experience a kind of rebirth or recreation!

But before the entire universe is re-created, God wants us all to be re-created and the first step along that rocky road is simple water baptism. Let us now explore the baptism of the people of God found in both Old and New Testaments.

## OLD TESTAMENT BAPTISM

"Water is the element naturally used for cleansing the body and its symbolical use entered into almost every cult, and into none more completely than the Jewish, whose ceremonial washings were proverbial" ("Baptism", *International Standard Bible Encyclopaedia*, Vol 1, page 418).

The Dead Sea Scrolls also depict the baptism ritual as something practised by much of Jewry at that time. To this day Jews practice baptism for both male and female converts who immerse themselves in a ritual bath (*Jewish Literacy* by Rabbi Joseph Telushkin, 1991, page 625).

Long before the Jews practised baptism, pre-Christian baptism is found in the Old Testament. For instance, the passing of Israel through the Red Sea on the final Day of Unleavened Bread, was likened to a baptism by Paul (ICor 10:1-2). And further baptismal and resurrection typology may be found in the crossing of the Jordan River which was a type of entering the Kingdom of God followed by pulling down the strongholds of the enemy (Joshua 3:15-17; IICor 10:4).

In the Wilderness, at the Tabernacle, the Levites were cleansed via sprinkling of water – a type of baptism – to purify them in preparation in service to God and man (Num 8:6-7,11,21). Similarly Christians must be cleansed and sanctified by sprinkling (Heb 10:22; ICor 11:28; IICor 7:1; Titus 2:14).

Further, the Levites had to be bathed or washed clean in water in Ex 29:4 "one of the ceremonial washings referred to in Heb. 6:2, and rendered "baptisms"" (Bullinger, *Companion Bible*, page 113). Similarly, Christians have been baptised and must be 'baptised' by the washing of the spirit each and every day until they die (ICor 6:11; IICor 7:1; Eph 5:25-26). And by connecting Titus 3:5 with IICor 4: 16 and Eph 4:22-24 we can see that we must be washed clean each day by the water and the blood.

Other washing rituals may be found in Lev 14:9; Num 19:18 which are evidently types of Christian cleansing and purification at baptism. Not just the baptism with water upon repentance. But daily washings of the Spirit of God.

## **IS BAPTISM A PROCESS?**

As we shall shortly see, if we search the entire New Testament we shall ascertain quite clearly that salvation and related or overlapping concepts follow the same patterns: we are saved from past sins, we are being saved on a daily basis by Jesus Christ our High Priest, by washing us clean by His precious blood, by washing of our conscience by the spiritual water (the Holy Spirit) and by the Word (eating daily of the Bible and its teachings and lessons); and we will be finally saved by inheriting immortality in the resurrection. Salvation is nothing without immortality. Past salvation pictured by the Passover is very incomplete without our current salvation of adhering to God's Ways and Laws and receipt of the Holy Spirit to enable us to develop Godly characteristics such as the fruits of the spirit and the beatitudes (pictured by the Days of Unleavened Bread). We are placed within His Church to enable us to have the best means to grow spiritually (Pentecost). Then, at the resurrection, pictured by the Feast of Trumpets, we are finally saved. But even then salvation continues with the removal of Satan (Atonement), the Millennial reign of the Messiah (Tabernacles) and the billions of mankind given a chance of salvation (Last Great Day).

A salvation which concentrates primarily upon the death of Christ misses out on the rest of the story. It is a very limited or even stunted salvation resting upon the historical Christ and little, if anything, upon the eschatological Christ. Let us be certain that our salvation does not begin and end with the Passover sacrifice of Christ. Christ is a lot bigger than merely the four Gospels. He is the whole Word of God and everything he stands for or will do is to be found stated throughout the entire Bible.

It is clear that these overlapping concepts, which are utilised by Almighty God to inculcate in us an understanding of what He is doing in us, are used in the sense of one process in three stages. I ask the reader to bear with me and to examine the many quoted scriptures to prove this point. We find this consistency wherever the Newer Testament speaks of our calling into glory, salvation/grace/blood of Christ, conversion/reconciliation/sanctification/ justification, redemption, put on Christ/the new man/ new creation, resurrection/renewal/re-creation/ glorification and Kingdom of God membership.

My basic argument is simply this: if these aforementioned aspects of salvation are to be found in scripture to fulfil a process in three stages, then why not the washing of baptism by the spirit, water and blood which is fundamental to salvation? It would seem inconsistent if indeed this were not the case.

Could it be true that baptism is a process commencing at our physical immersion (pictured by the baptism of the Red Sea crossing), undergoing growth via trials and pangs whilst being fed spiritual food (pictured by the Wilderness wanderings) and reaching its fullness at the resurrection (pictured by the baptism of the crossing of the Jordan) whence we enter the Kingdom (pictured by the Holy Land) in similitude to the other aspects of salvation?

At this point, before we take a peek at the scripture itself, we should understand that the first stage in all of these aspects of salvation, is a very minuscule part of the whole process. Thus, our past salvation, as important, wonderful and beautiful as it is, should be seen within the overall process: the beginning is so small, it is merely a 'taste' or 'foretaste' of the ultimate reality (see Heb 6:4). Our past salvation is a mere 'molecule' compared to the glory which shall be. A parallel may as well be a comparison of a worm with a butterfly (Rom 12:2); or ant with a human; or, better still, compare an unborn babe with the limited 'knowledge' and senses it has, with a born child (see 1Cor 15:37, 42-43).

## **WASHING OF BAPTISM BY THE SPIRIT, WATER & BLOOD**

Given the aforementioned Biblical principle, is it at all possible that even baptism could be a process paralleling the three stages of salvation, conversion, redemption and so forth? Be prepared for a surprise. Following is a list of scriptures which appear to give credence to the theory that spiritual baptism, is a process in three stages:

**STAGE 1:**

Rev 1:5 And from Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness, and the first begotten of the dead, and the prince of the kings of the earth. Unto him that loved us, and **washed us from our sins in his own blood,**

1John 1:7 But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, **and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin.**

1 Pet 1:18 Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers; But with **the precious blood of Christ,** as of a lamb without blemish and without spot:

1Pet 3:21 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:

Heb 9:14 How much more shall the **blood of Christ,** who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, **purge your conscience** from dead works to serve the living God?

Acts 20:28 Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath **purchased with his own blood.**

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.

Rom 6:3-4 Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death? **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 ["Paul generally speaks of baptism, not as a new birth, but as a "burial with Christ" in the baptismal waters followed by a rising again therefrom" (JH Bernard, *The International Critical Commentary. The Gospel According to St. John*, pages clxiii-iv).

Col 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.

1Cor 12:13 For by one Spirit are **we all baptized into one body,** whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit.

**STAGE 2:**

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;**

Heb 10:22 Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, **having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water.**

2Cor 4:16 For which cause we faint not; but though our outward man perish, yet **the inward man is renewed day by day**.

1Cor 10:16 The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not **the communion of the blood of Christ**? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ?

1Cor 6:11 And such were some of you: **but ye are washed**, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God.

Eph 5:26 That he might sanctify and cleanse it with **the washing of water by the word**.

John 15:3 Now **ye are clean through the word** which I have spoken unto you.

### STAGE 3:

Matt 3:11-12 I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance: but he that cometh after me is mightier than I, whose shoes I am not worthy to bear: **he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost, and with fire**: Whose fan is in his hand, and he will thoroughly purge his floor, and gather his wheat into the garner; but **he will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire**.

Mark 10:38 But Jesus said unto them, Ye know not what ye ask: can ye drink of the cup that I drink of? and **be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with**? [here Christ was speaking of His future sufferings, death and resurrection. Cp Ps 11:6; 42:7; 69:1-3; 124:4-5; Is 51:17].

Luke 12:49-51 I am come to send fire on the earth; and what will I, if it be already kindled? But I have a **baptism to be baptized with** [His future sufferings, death and resurrection]; and how am I straitened till it be accomplished! Suppose ye that I am come to give peace on earth? I tell you, Nay; but rather division.

From the above we may deduce the following:

Firstly, we have been both physically baptised and spiritually washed clean of all sin and impurity by the precious blood of the Son of God (the bath of regeneration) in order to make us pure, righteous, upright and thus God-like. Secondly, God continues to wash us clean by the blood of Christ upon repentance of sins on a daily basis. And, as Christians are spiritual priests after the order of Melchizedek, inheriting the functions of the physical Levitical priesthood in a spiritual service to God, they must be bathed on a daily basis, in the waters of the holy spirit in contact with God via His Word. In effect, they are spiritually washed as the priests were physically washed as a type of baptism as we have seen.

Thirdly, we see that Christ's death and resurrection and the final resurrection are likened to a baptism. If so, then why not the first resurrection for Christians? Perhaps we will experience another 'washing' of the spirit - actually putting on Christ and becoming composed of the spirit - at this time. How like a baby at the 'breaking of water' at the time of birth and then its washing by the nurse or mid-wife. Does this not fit the overall schema and God's plan of salvation?

Theodore of Mopsuestia (c 350-428AD) wrote in terms of baptistry as a womb which, he believed, was for preparing Christians for birth; incredibly, he even describes the baptismal water as the water of second birth, which was itself typed by the fluid surrounding the foetus in the mother's womb (*Commentary of Theodore of Mopsuestia on the Lord's Prayer and on the Sacraments of Baptism and the Eucharist*, pages 53-54).



There seems to be some credibility to this: the embryo 'floats' in amniotic fluid within the sac. An outer membrane, the chorion, encloses the amniotic sac. This is known as the womb or uterus. The amniotic sac is also known as the water bag. When it breaks upon birth, the fluid and blood washes over the baby almost like some kind of baptism. Further, the baby is then washed by the midwife or nurse. Could this be a type of baptism of the resurrection at which time our 'midwives', the angels, deliver us to Christ? See Matt 24:31; 1Thess 4:17.

In a future paper on the Christian spiritual Exodus, the 'baptism' of the Red Sea will be revealed to be equivalent to Christian water baptism and the 'baptism' of the River Jordan will be shown to represent the resurrection of spiritual Israelites.

Peter Toon in *Born Again. A Biblical and Theological Study of Regeneration* (Baker BookHouse, Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1987) likens baptism to a mere seed of new life (page 87). He further states that

"... the verb used in Mark 12:10 to describe Jesus' arising from the water is *anabaino*, the very verb used in John 3:13; 6:62; 20:17; and Ephesians 4:8-10 to refer to the ascension of Jesus. Thus there is probably an allusion to the ascension of Jesus in his coming up out of the river. And, of course, following this ascent there was the descent (*katabaino*) of the Spirit upon him" (page 22).

Of course, for baptism pictures the repentant being washed clean, dieing to sin and rising with Christ, partaking of His sufferings, plus one's future resurrection. A future baptism of a bodily death and resurrection awaits all Christians at the return of Christ.

Finally, whilst parts of this article may be considered speculative, I hope that it has been sufficiently interesting and beneficial to readers.

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