

FIRST MENTIONS IN THE BIBLE

Baptism w/Water

First mentions in the Bible can often give clue to correct interpretation to a subject or doctrine. In studying the Bible, I try finding the earliest reference to words or a topic. A text out of context leads to a pretext and how often are wrong deductions made in such cases.

Such is the example with 'water baptism', though I prefer using correct terminology, 'baptism with water'. Why? When people think of baptism in the Bible, they typically think of water though three different baptisms are found alone in one verse... **Mat 3:11** 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**:

Among the religions and hundreds of denominations in the world, baptism with water is one of the most controversial subjects. Finding a 'first mention' or 'first mentions', from where to start in scrutinizing this subject, can be a challenge. I know of at least three things that come into play within this debate:

1. Some form of the word baptism
2. The element of water
3. The mode

Baptism

If one focuses solely on first occurrences in the New Testament, John the Baptist immediately comes into play... "In those days came **John the Baptist**, preaching in the wilderness of Judaea," **Mat 3:1**. There are denominations that claim tie back to John the Baptist. However, and in sticking with a King James Bible, though the word baptism isn't found in the Old Testament, Jews that sent priests and Levites to enquire of John, just who he was, responded saying... "And they asked him, and said unto him, Why **baptizest** thou then, if thou be not **that Christ, nor Elias**, neither **that prophet**?" **Joh 1:25**. In other words, based on their knowledge of the Old Testament, these Jews were expecting one coming baptizing w/water.

In addition to the above, Moses prophesied... "The LORD **thy** God will raise up unto **thee a PROPHET from the midst of thee**, of **THY BREATHREN, LIKE UNTO ME**; unto **HIM ye** shall hearken;" **Deu 18:15**

Acts 7:37 This is that Moses, which said unto the **CHILDREN OF ISRAEL**, A **PROPHET** shall the Lord **your** God raise up unto **you of YOUR BREATHREN, LIKE UNTO ME**; **HIM** shall **ye** hear.

Sure enough, in John's Gospel we read... "When therefore the Lord knew how the Pharisees had heard that **Jesus MADE** and **BAPTIZED more disciples than John**,² (**Though Jesus himself baptized not, but his disciples**,)" **Joh 4:1-2**

Though Jesus didn't personally baptize with water, He is credited with those who were being baptized by the disciples; "And they came unto John, and said unto him, Rabbi, **HE** that was with thee beyond Jordan, to **WHOM** thou barest witness, behold, the **SAME BAPTIZETH**, and all *men* come to **HIM**."

Joh 3:26

Is it then this Jesus who the Jews thought to be either that Christ, or Elias, or that prophet who would be coming? Wouldn't this move the needle in conversation on first mentions of baptism with water in the Bible?

The Element of Water

Then, there is the element of water. Why water? Why wasn't John the Baptist baptizing with sand?

Though references to 'purifying' (**Joh 3:25**), 'bodies washed with pure water' (**Heb 10:22**), and 'baptism doth now save us (not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God)' (**1Pet 3:21**), are found after John's mention of baptizing w/water, shouldn't there be need of an explanation of first indication, of this element, before John's usage? How about something that happened **BEFORE** the divers washings were put in place, relating to the nation of Israel, under law?

The following event took place when establishing the Mosaic Covenant with the nation of Israel.

Moses Sanctifying the People

Ex 19:10-14 And the LORD said unto Moses, **Go unto the people, and SANTIFY them to day and to morrow, and let them WASH their clothes,** ¹¹ And be ready against the third day: for the third day the LORD will come down in the sight of all the people upon mount Sinai. ¹² And thou shalt set bounds unto the people round about, saying, Take heed to yourselves, *that ye go not* up into the mount, or touch the border of it: whosoever toucheth the mount shall be surely put to death: ¹³ There shall not an hand touch it, but he shall surely be stoned, or shot through; whether *it be* beast or man, it shall not live: when the trumpet soundeth long, they shall come up to the mount. ¹⁴ And Moses went down from the mount **unto the people, and SANCTIFIED the people; and they washed their clothes.**

Here, we're reminded of John the Baptist's target group... "The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God; ² As it is written in the prophets, Behold, I send my messenger before thy face, which shall prepare thy way before thee. ³ The voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his paths straight. ⁴ **John did baptize in the wilderness, and preach the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins.** ⁵ And there went out unto him **all the land of Judaea, and they of Jerusalem, and were all baptized of him in the river of Jordan, confessing their sins.**" **Mrk 1:1-5**

As Moses was in the initiation process of the establishment of the Old Covenant with Israel, Jesus was in the beginning stages of... "For if that **first covenant** had been faultless, then should no place have been sought for **the second.** ⁸ For finding fault with them, he saith, Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, when **I will make a NEW COVENANT with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah:**" **Heb 8:7-8**

Believing that there should be consistency (without changing horses in mid-stream), the symbolism that goes along with water should apply across the board to those who baptized w/water, as did... John the Baptist (Mrk 1:4); Jesus (Joh 4:1-2); the 12 Apostles (Mrk 16:15-16; Acts 2:38); Philip (Acts 8); Ananias (Acts 9:17-19) and Paul (1Cor 1:14-17).

Mode of Baptism w/Water

Yes, a King James Bible gives light as to mode used in baptism w/water.

Mrk 1:8-10 I indeed have baptized you **with water:** but he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost. ⁹ And it came to pass in those days, that Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee, and was baptized of John **in Jordan.** ¹⁰ And **straightway coming up out of the water,** he saw the heavens opened, and the Spirit like a dove descending upon him:

John the Baptist baptized **WITH** water **IN** Jordan and contrary as to what some preachers would have you believe, Jesus was **COMING UP OUT OF THE WATER** when the Spirit like a dove descended upon

him. Deceptively, there are pictures that portray the Spirit as hovering over John and Jesus as Jesus' head and shoulders appear to have just broken the surface of the water; an argument presented by some immersionists.

Without exception to the rule, die-hard immersionists anchor their boat in Romans 6, while Jew and Gentile recipients, of this epistle, understood the parallel Paul was making in that **NOW Jews and Gentiles** were being baptized, by the Spirit, into one body.

Ex 12:36-38 And the LORD gave the **people** favour in the sight of the **Egyptians**, so that **they** lent unto **them** *such things as they required*. And **they** spoiled the **Egyptians**.³⁷ And the **children of Israel** journeyed from Rameses to Succoth, about six hundred thousand on foot *that were* men, beside children.³⁸ And a **MIXED MULTITUDE** went up also with **them**; and flocks, and herds, *even* very much cattle.

1Cor 10:1-4 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;² And were **all baptized unto Moses** in the cloud and in the sea;³ And did **all** eat the same spiritual meat;⁴ And did **all** drink the same spiritual drink: for **they** drank of that spiritual Rock that followed **them**: and that Rock was Christ.

1Cor 12:12-13 For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body: so also *is* Christ.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**.

Rom 6:3-5 Know **YE** not, that so **many of US** as were **BAPTIZED into Jesus Christ** were **BAPTIZED into his death**?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.⁵ For if **WE** have been planted together in the likeness of his death, **WE** shall be also *in the likeness* of *his* resurrection:

Along with the **nation of Israel**, a **mixed multitude** was baptized **UNTO** Moses. Now, both **Jew** and **Gentile** were being **baptized INTO** Christ, as one body, **BY** the Spirit.

The eyes of the twelve were veiled concerning Christ's death, burial & resurrection (Mat 16:21-22; Mat 17:22-23; Mrk 9:31-32; Lk 18:31-34; Joh 20:9) when baptizing during Jesus' earthly ministry. Baptism mentioned in Romans 6:3-5 is, as the idiom goes..., dry as a bone!

Modes Used in the Divers Washings

Using a Bible concordance or search feature in a Bible software program, one can quickly query words used in association with the divers washings put in place, under the law, AFTER that first sanctification process mediated by Moses. Here is a list of some terms that one would find: bath; clean; cleanse; purification; purify; rinsed; running water; sanctified; sprinkle; statute; water of separation; wash.

My argument isn't that someone can't be dipped into water to be washed/baptized... "And his servants came near, and spake unto him, and said, My father, *if* the prophet had bid thee *do some* great thing, wouldest thou not have done *it*? how much rather then, when he saith to thee, **Wash**, and **be clean**?¹⁴ Then went he down, and **DIPPED himself** seven times in Jordan, according to the saying of the man of God: and his flesh came again like unto the flesh of a little child, and **he was clean**." **2Ki 5:13-14**.

My argument is the arguments used that demand a particular mode. Churches that don't have a baptismal pool come up with resourceful means of accommodating a baptism via immersion. In reading the New Testament, one can't help but notice that baptisms took place immediately after a profession of faith. I wonder how prepared Ananias was when baptizing Saul (Acts 9:18), or Paul & Silas were when baptizing the Philippian jailer (Acts 16:33)?

Baptism of Repentance for Remission of Sins

Preaching the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins was a major theme behind the kingdom gospel to Israel. A further element and promise were added after Christ's resurrection.

MrK 1:4-5 John did baptize in the wilderness, and **preach the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins.** ⁵ And there went out unto him **all the land of Judaea, and they of Jerusalem,** and were **all baptized of him in the river of Jordan, confessing their sins.**

Acts 2:36-38 Therefore let **all the house of Israel** know assuredly, that God hath made that same Jesus, whom **ye** have crucified, both Lord and Christ. ³⁷ Now when **they** heard *this*, **they** were pricked in **their** heart, and said unto Peter and to the rest of the apostles, Men *and* brethren, what shall **we** do? 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 3:19-20 Repent **ye** therefore, and **be converted**, that **your sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord;** ²⁰ And **he shall send Jesus Christ,** which **before was preached unto you:**

If one understands how Israel's sins were dealt with on both a daily and yearly basis under the Old Covenant, then what John & the Apostles were PREACHING & PROMISING makes perfect sense!

Heb 8:10-13 For this *is* **the covenant** that I will make with the **house of Israel after those days,** saith the Lord; I will put **my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts:** and **I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people:** ¹¹ And **they shall not teach every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord: for all shall know me, from the least to the greatest.** ¹² For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and **their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more.** ¹³ In that he saith, A **new covenant,** he hath **made the first old.** Now that which **decayeth and waxeth old is READY** to vanish away.

The acceptance or rejection of John's baptism determined whether one justified God or not... "And **ALL THE PEOPLE THAT HEARD HIM, and the PUBLICANS, JUSTIFIED God, BEING BAPTIZED WITH THE BAPTISM OF JOHN.** ³⁰ But the **PHARISEES and LAWYERS REJECTED THE COUNSEL OF GOD AGAINST THEMSELVES, BEING NOT BAPTIZED OF HIM."** Lu 7:29-30

The Apostles were given power to either remit or retain sins... "Then said Jesus to **them** again, Peace *be* unto **you:** as *my* Father hath sent me, even so send I **you.** ²² And when he had said this, he breathed on **them,** and saith unto **them,** Receive **ye** the Holy Ghost: ²³ **Whose soever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them; and whose soever sins ye retain, they are retained."** Joh 20:21-23

Why Jesus Didn't Baptize w/Water

We now reflect back to an observation made earlier. So, why didn't Jesus baptize disciples for remission of sins? The real question is, why would He? Why would he who has authority to forgive sins baptize for

the remission thereof? And, on rare occasion, Jesus demonstrated that authority if for no other reason than to irritate the scribes & Pharisees.

Luk 5:20-24 And when he saw their faith, he said unto him, **Man, THY SINS ARE FORGIVEN THEE.** ²¹ And **the scribes and the Pharisees began to reason, saying, Who is this which speaketh blasphemies? WHO CAN FORGIVE SINS, BUT GOD ALONE?** ²² But when Jesus perceived **their thoughts**, he answering said unto **them, What reason ye in your hearts?** ²³ Whether is easier, to say, Thy sins be forgiven thee; or to say, Rise up and walk? ²⁴ **But that YE MAY KNOW THAT THE SON OF MAN HATH POWER UPON EARTH TO FORGIVE SINS,** (he said unto the sick of the palsy,) I say unto thee, Arise, and take up thy couch, and go into thine house.

What Relevance for Today

What relevance does the fact that Jesus didn't personally baptize with water have to do with us today in this dispensation of the grace of God... **Eph 3:1-2** For this cause I Paul, the prisoner of Jesus Christ for you **Gentiles,** ² If ye have heard of the dispensation of the grace of God which is given me to **you-ward:**?

Unlike the ministries of John the Baptist & Apostles, Paul's message is one of direct access to God... "For *there is one God*, and **one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus;** ⁶ **Who gave himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time.** ⁷ **Whereunto I am ordained a preacher, and an apostle, (I speak the truth in Christ, and lie not;) a teacher of the Gentiles** in faith and verity." **1Tim 2:5-7**

Once a beginning or home base is established in the scriptures for a particular topic, one must proceed always keeping in mind the who, what, when, where, why's and how; this is considered to be a dispensational approach to the Bible. Moving along from the Gospels and through the book of Acts, we see transition of ministries from the Jew, to the Gentile, to the heathen. Along with this transition we notice a change in the means & method of justification.

Paul's epistle to the Romans goes into great detail discerning difference between justification 'by faith' for the circumcision and 'through faith' for the uncircumcision... "Is *he* the God of the **Jews** only? *is he* not also of the **Gentiles**? Yes, of the **Gentiles** also: ³⁰ Seeing *it is* one God, which **shall justify the circumcision by faith, and uncircumcision through faith.**" **Rom 3:29-30**

How the imputation of righteousness is imputed today, in contrast as to under law and for the Jew under the kingdom gospel, demonstrates the relevance as to why Jesus didn't personally baptize during his earthly ministry.

Rom 10:4-10 For **Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth.** ⁵ For Moses describeth the righteousness which is of the law, That the man which doeth those things shall live by them. ⁶ But the righteousness which is of faith speaketh on this wise, Say not in thine heart, Who shall ascend into heaven? (that is, to bring Christ down *from above*;) ⁷ Or, Who shall descend into the deep? (that is, to bring up Christ again from the dead.) ⁸ But what saith it? The word is nigh thee, *even* in thy mouth, and in thy heart: that is, **the word of faith, which we preach;** ⁹ **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.** ¹⁰ **For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.**

Today, access to God isn't through a John the Baptist or a professing apostle, a priest or a preacher baptizing one for remission of sins. But via the faith like the man with palsy before the Lord Jesus Christ.

First mentions in the Bible are good starting places in understanding the scriptures!