

RUSSELL SANDERS

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THE DAYS OF AWE AND REPENTANCE

WATER BAPTISM – PART 1

The Torah had many commandments requiring cleansing by the washing of water as a means of purification. They understood the role of cleansing by water on a personal level as well as the ceremonial rituals.

During the High Holy Days of Tishri 2-9, the Days of Awe, some Jews would choose to cleanse their soul with water, not just their physical body. This period of time was also called the Days of Repentance, a time to make things right with God. They would find a body of water and as a symbol of their repentance from sin, they would be totally immersed in the water. This is what was called in the New Testament as “water baptism.”

When Jesus’ cousin John was called to preach repentance and turn to God, people understood this to mean they should be baptized unto repentance. John baptized many by immersion. That is why he was called “the Baptist.” It symbolically “washed away” their sins so they could follow God in a more perfect manner.

John’s message of repentance specifically looked forward to the coming of Messiah. When the Pharisees questioned John the Baptist of his identity, he told them in John 1:23, ***“I am the voice of one crying in the wilderness ‘make straight the way of the Lord’ as said the prophet (Isaiah).”***

Later when Jesus came to John, the Baptist declared in John 1:29, ***“Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the (whole) world.”*** John then baptized Jesus by immersing him in the water. This was not for the washing away of sin because Jesus was sinless. It was so the Father could announce the revelation of His only begotten Son and the launching of His ministry.

A marvelous sign occurred as Jesus came up out of the water. The Holy Spirit descended upon Him in the likeness of a dove (John 1:32) and the Father spoke audibly to Him from heaven saying in Mark 1:11, ***“thou art My Beloved Son in whom I am well pleased.”*** (See also Matt. 3:17.)

This baptism announced the “new life” of ministry of Messiah. Our baptism in water by immersion will likewise announce our “new life” as a follower of the Messiah.

No, it does not “save” us. It is our announcement or declaration to the world that we will walk with Jesus. We will discuss more about that tomorrow.