

## What is Baptism?

Eph 2:8-9 — *Grace, faith, baptism...* What in the world is *baptism*? What is *grace*? What is *faith*? Everything is mysterious in Christianity. Calvin and Augustine claim that the gospel requires the hearer to do absolutely nothing. “*It is all God’s work; He did the work for us. It is the gift of God, so we don’t have anything to do with it.*” But this is not true.

Who knows what grace is? There are many expressions of grace, which our Father uses (Eph 4:4-7,11-12). And He causes *all things to work together for the good* (Rom 8:28), in order for His grace to be able to reach us; but we have to be willing to *yield* to His grace, submit to it, and accept it. He does His part; we have to do our part.

For example, it is by His grace that someone notices there is barely any oxygen in the room during our gatherings, or that the sun is shining through the window and blinding someone. And by His grace also, someone will actually do something about it. Unless we understand what *grace* really is, it will still be yet another mysterious word, just as *faith* and *baptism* are sadly misused among Christians.

Grace is an “occasion” given by our Father to cause salvation to reach someone. We must yield to that occasion. We have to yield to the greater grace, to acquire grace. He gives grace, and we yield; He gives faith, and we yield. It is not all His doing without a choice being involved, without our will being involved. Heb 4:16 is our responsibility, our work. The one who hears has to be willing to do His will in order to be able to receive His grace (Jn 7:17). We were all “saved by grace through faith” (Eph 2:8) to *do good works* (Eph 2:10).

Among Christians, who knows what faith really is? Who truly has faith? First, faith comes to a person when he hears the Holy Spirit in a sent one, through his human vocal cords (Rom 10:17). Next, faith leads the hearer to receive that one through whom the Word of God comes. Faith causes a person to hear and obey. That is what faith does.

Faith is persuasion; if a person truly has faith, then he is persuaded to accept the very words he hears (*faith* is #3982, which means to be persuaded), and so he believes the impossible in his heart — that Yahshua was raised from the dead — which is an even greater miracle than our Master Yahshua rising from the dead.

One can hear the gospel and receive it, or hear the gospel and reject it. It is our Father's grace to someone to be able to hear the gospel from a sent one. However, it takes faith to receive that sent one, and be persuaded, leading to baptism. And what is baptism? Receiving baptism is not being dipped in water. Water itself has nothing to do with baptism at all. Baptism is the act of being *immersed* into something new: *out of one place* (the world), and *into another place* (His Body). Baptism means absolute death to one's old life in this world in order to become a *new creation* (2 Cor 5:14-17). Baptism "saves" us from our sin and the world, *transferring* us into the tangible, visible *new* life within the Body of Messiah (Rom 6:4; 1 Pet 3:21; Col 1:13-14, NASB).

Many people have been baptized but did not understand what that meant. Those believers in the first-century church knew what true immersion and true baptism truly meant. It meant all that Acts 14:22 means, even entering a lifetime of persecution. They knew baptism into Messiah meant death, in the same way He died, if necessary. And that is what your baptism means: your willingness to die for Him.

The fact that Christians say, "*Baptism won't save you*" shows that they don't understand what baptism means. Baptism is the only way you *can* be saved, and no one is baptized unless he receives the faith of the Body, and faith comes by hearing! That is what true immersion is, and it is the only way to come into the Body of Messiah. So then baptism *does* save you because you have received faith and grace to die with Messiah, if necessary, in order to be immersed. The knowledge of His sufferings and the expectation of suffering as He did (Phil 3:10) is essential for salvation.

Our Master Yahshua foreknew His sufferings. He knew they were the requirement to be "saved" (Isa 50:5-8; 52:14; 53:3,5,7). When He went into the Jordan River to be

baptized, the preparation was finished and the task had begun. Our Master set His face like flint to go to the cross. The cross was the very purpose He was born for. Peter didn't know what spirit he spoke from, trying to prevent Him from going to Jerusalem (Mt 16:21-23).

All who hear, believe, and are truly baptized are totally outgoing and outspoken. Immersion into our Master's Body is immersion into His sufferings (Rom 6:5-6; Col 1:24). That is baptism. You are baptized into being Messiah Yahshua here on earth, as much as you can be Him. When the believers in the first century were starting to get killed, those who wanted to be part of the Body knew they would be killed too, if they were baptized. But they still were baptized (immersed) into Messiah, into His Body. This is the only way a person can reach His blood and be forgiven.

Baptism is being absolutely, totally identified with Messiah, not EVER having any shame about the fact that He is your Savior, or that you belong to Him, or feeling ashamed that you belong to the Twelve Tribes, the Body of Messiah.

### **Yielding to God's Grace**

So here is a demonstration of what grace, faith, and baptism is:

**Nahum** — I was just in the middle of the bridge, and was just putting on my backpack. Just at that moment, Ahimelech saw me from a great distance and started running, to invite me home.

It was grace that Dieter (Nahum) came over to America, backpacking; it was grace for him that Larry Devoss (Ahimelech) responded to the Spirit and ran to catch him in time; and our Father's grace was in Ahimelech, persuading him to come meet our community (he had to urge him three times). Dieter was saved by grace through faith (Rom 10:14-15).

When Dieter and Martin were saved, they opened up a measure of grace for Germany; and we were sent with Dieter (Nahum) and Martin Mueller (Obadiah), which brought a measure of grace to a certain little hippie commune in Steinenberg. ha-êmeq

and I lived with them for a few weeks when we first arrived in Germany (though I don't think they liked us living in their living room, so much). We called this group "*The Little Flock*."

The first time we gathered, they passed around this little rolled-up thing called a "joint" (marijuana). Each one of them would take a puff or two and pass it along. Of course, I wouldn't take a puff when they passed it to me. I would just pass it on to the next person. I did not want to condemn them. If I had railed down the law on them, they probably would never have listened to us, as it was their way of life. So we did not condemn them, but just started teaching and talking while some of their people translated for us. In about two weeks, things changed.

So because Dieter and Martin had received faith to be baptized, grace came to these people. What if they had rejected our Father's grace? All of Germany would still be without grace. Dieter almost rejected our Father's grace; he almost didn't yield to grace. Rom 10:17 means that we're *saved by grace through hearing* (Eph 2:8). Nahum was saved by *grace*, through *faith*, and was *baptized* into the Body of Messiah, and Martin followed afterwards.

Ahimelech was our Father's grace; until Ahimelech spoke faith to him, he could not receive the invitation to come. After, he started yielding to our Father's gift of grace and mercy. And after a few days living in our community, grace came to him from many brothers and persuaded him to stay. Then slowly, Dieter heard faith and received it, and believed. He started trusting. He was immersed, regardless of the consequences, fully knowing that baptism into Messiah's Body meant salvation, eternal life, and forgiveness of sins.

We need to learn and understand this: baptism means absolute identity with Messiah, through immersion into His Body (Acts 2:44; Rom 6:3-8).

## Baptism into Messiah (Abraham's Seed)

We are saved by grace through faith for good works in the Body (Eph 2:8-10), to fulfill the promises made to Abraham by Yahweh (Gen 18:19; 15:5; 22:17). This promise is a multiplication of his descendants through “exponential growth” (Gen 17:4-6). Here we are: *children of the promise*, through his Messiah and ours — Yahshua (Gal 3:16,26,27).

In obedience to the gospel of salvation, we are doing the same deeds as Messiah, which are the same deeds as Abraham (Mk 10:29; Lk 14:26). Therefore we are *His offspring*, heirs to the promises.

Ps 102:28 — The word *continue* means perpetual, continuous, never-ending. So there will be perpetual growth, forever, in continuation. We have been saved by grace, through faith, in order to rule the universe.

“*His servants shall serve Him... they shall reign forever and ever...*” (Rev 22:3,5).

Imagine it: do you know how long that is, to reign *forever and ever*? That means we will have dominion forever, and ever, and ever... You never reach the end of “ever.” The term *forever* means for an age, but *forever and ever* means continual, without end. So we will reign in the millennial age, but we will also reign in the Eighth Day, the eternal day, which is the result of receiving grace.

We were those who didn't reject the grace of God. When Yochanan Abraham came, he didn't reject His grace. He heard faith (persuasion) and was persuaded by what he heard. And then he was immersed.

So what does baptism mean, in reality? Immersion. And what is a true immersion? It means you come *out* of one place and enter *into* another. It is a whole new life, a whole different culture. If grace doesn't bring someone into a different culture, separate from the world, how will that person actually be *saved*? If you have been “baptized” into the world, you are still in the world; you have to stay in the culture of the

world. And if you are still conformed to the world, is it possible to say that you've been saved? When someone becomes a Christian, he cannot do anything else but live in the world. That is why salvation requires the person who hears faith to come out of one culture and enter into a different culture. He is immersed into a brand new, set-apart, pure culture.

*1 Cor 1:2* — *Sanctified* here means *separated and set apart into a different culture* (into a cluster or community). So if we have been saved by Messiah, we have come into a different environment and culture, and have been brought out of the world's culture.

The purpose of sanctification is to not be engrossed with worldly things, to be freed from slavery to sin (Jn 8:34,31,32). Those who have truly been set free are preoccupied 100% with this new culture, and no longer think about the world's culture. Being saved is not becoming a Christian, living by yourself, and going to church on Sunday. I mean, it is ridiculous; a person is not saved if he is still part of the world's culture. If anyone *remains* a part of what he was supposedly "saved" from, then he will never be saved "from it" (i.e., that is no salvation). Read Acts 2:40, and then verse 41, and then verse 42, and then verses 44 and 45.

*1 Cor 1:2-3* — *Sanctified* has two parts. First, we must come into a new culture, in order to be saved. "*There*" — *where He is (Jn 12:26)* — is where we are sanctified in order to go through *the process of being made holy* — being made like our Master. We are in that process now, through sanctification (Acts 14:22), having been set apart in a place where we can live *servicing Him*, spending our lives doing the works prepared for us (Eph 2:19-22; Gen 18:19).

So now we know what grace is, and where grace comes from. You're hitch-hiking, and a disciple comes and picks you up; or you're crying out to Him, "*God, where are you?*" and the very next day, a sent one meets you and hands you a freepaper. How many people have that testimony? Many, many people have that testimony; and this is

just one measure, just one aspect of grace. Our Father works out our salvation around an “occasion.” So don’t reject it; don’t reject His grace.

**ha-êmeq** — We are blind sometimes to our Father’s “occasions.” Grace is the “magic” part in our life. Hannah goes shopping with \$50, yet comes home with enough food for the whole week’s seminars. Chazaq goes to Home Depot and returns with a story, “*Wait ‘til you hear what happened.*” This is grace. By His grace, we pay our Conference Center bills each month. How can we pay all our bills? It is a miracle; if you put the numbers in the columns, it is shocking; how did we actually pay our bills? It was grace.

You have to yield to our Father’s grace. Grace is not something just automatically in you; you have to yield to it, just as also you yield to someone else’s faith. And you have to submit to being immersed into Messiah, into His baptism: suffering as He suffered, receiving persecution, and perhaps even some day being killed. That was the requirements those disciples in the first century had to meet before being baptized.

If we can understand these things, we will find out who we are. I would say that we don’t really and fully understand who we are yet.

**ha-êmeq** — We must explain baptism, grace, and faith to Christians. For example, one Erev Shabbat, a guest asked, “Can you explain why some of the girls dance without head coverings?” Some disciple responded bluntly, “They aren’t baptized.”

“*Oh... too bad,*” I thought. “*Too bad, she only answered like that.*” The guest knows as much then as she did before she asked. The only picture she got was some ritual we have at twelve years old.

When Paulette, Cindy, Chris, and Ricky first heard about our Master, we didn’t tell them, “Okay, now that you *believe*, get a job, an apartment, and come on meeting nights, if you can.” They stayed with us; we wanted them to. The Bible did not tell us NOT to live together. We were not going to search want-ads, find them a job, and push them out of our life.

When someone is baptized, it is just the same as getting married. Nobody has to tell a husband and wife after the ceremony to live together, have children, and take care of them. Love inside them causes them to do it. Our Master told Peter what love would do for others (Jn 21:15-17). “Flock... Oh, yeah, right... *Flock* means sheep, *sheep* means together, and

*together* means with the shepherd. A shepherd loves his sheep, so he stays with them.

*Shepherd, flock, married, bride...* A flock stays together. Sheep are not alone. Sheep like each other. If you separate them, they scream, as if saying, “Don’t leave me alone! Bring me back with my people!”

**Havah bat Zerubbabel** — Last night, we read some stories about all of you in Reader One — Nahum, Jonathan of Gad, and Nun and Sekel, and Dickie — about different circumstances, like having no electricity, running out of water glasses, or difficulty serving food. Everyone was still thankful. Today is just the same as it was then... the same circumstances come, and it all just works out — like the time John Stringer had faith to have a meal outside, despite the rain.

Our life is not just a fiction story like “Little House on the Prairie,” where you can only *wish* you were a part of it. Our life is still fully alive. And why? Because of those who *REALLY* were baptized, who *REALLY* gave up their life, immersing their whole self to make this life what it is.

**Nun** — Ahimelech ran after Nahum to extend the invitation of the gospel. We need to be like those disciples who urged our Master, in Lk 24:29.

They didn’t see it was our Master, just as Nahum didn’t see Him right away, either.

**Nun** — Ahimelech was so in tune with our Father that he was stirred to keep urging and prevailing upon Nahum. He was at the right place, at the right time. Even all the brothers prevailed and prevailed upon him, to stay.

**Nahum** — After three days of that, I mean, I just surrendered my resistance, because I started seeing something.

**Nun** — You finally yielded. Grace, that super-natural magic, won through. Then the true miracle took place: you were saved! But it was more than just you being saved; salvation was opened to all of Europe.

Ahimelech running to Nahum is just like the story in Acts 8:26-38. Philip ran to talk to a Chamite man, sitting in a chariot reading Isa 53:7-8. Though he was the treasurer for the Queen of Ethiopia, he was not proud; he was looking to be taught the Scriptures. He did not say, “Of course I know,” but, “How can I understand unless someone guides me?” With a response like that, for sure he was ready to hear. Being so far out in the desert, unable to find anyone with answers, grace came to him.



**Neshef shel Zerubbabel** — Hearing what “saved by grace” is, we realize the Holy Spirit creates circumstances. If I do not yield to our Father, I shut off grace from reaching a person who His angels are laboring to bring home.

The other day, someone parked in our lot to use their cell phone. When I asked if they needed help, they said, “No, we’re fine.” I thought, “Okay, good,” at first; but then, “No, they aren’t fine... they aren’t saved...” So I ran and got a paper just before they drove away. We have an awesome responsibility: to be ready to share our faith in and out of season, regardless if the supper is burning or the laundry is late.

**Tamiym** — Sharing all things in common is being in the “flock of sheep.” As a mother broods over her children, seeing to their every need, we brood over each other, since we love each other. Brooding is like passing on faith. Someone with faith does not give up trying to persuade others. When you receive faith, you gain eternal life and so want others to have it.

### God’s Dwelling Place

Eph 2:21-22 — Eventually “we who believe” will understand who we are. “Carefully joined together” refers to being *adjusted down*, in order to do Eph 2:10, the works prepared for us, to build His temple — His Dwelling Place, His Habitation — where His “home” is manifested *in and through us* forever (Rev 21:3). We are actually in the process of building an eternal dwelling place for the Triune Elohim — the Father, the Word, and the Holy Spirit — to live in, forever and ever. We build His house by building up the Body of Messiah, (“whose house we are,” Heb 3:6), under His direction, fitted together perfectly, as each part does its own special work... helping the other parts grow (Eph 4:16; 2:21-22).

Acts 2:44 — *All those who believe* are His home, His dwelling place, the Church. Without us, He is homeless (Ps 68:5-6). Thus, the whole Body of Messiah is His home. He is right now in the process of building Himself a “home” — an *eternal* home.

## The Culture of Love

Eph 6:24 — Someone, *in love*, goes out and buys food for us, and prepares meals for us. That is just what one part of the Body does as its special work. We would not be a healthy (or spiritual) body if all of us starved. Besides, our Father promised that He would provide for those who “seek first His Kingdom and His righteousness” (Mt 6:33). “All else will be added” — food, clothing, shelter (which the Gentiles eagerly seek for). Our life is not about each person going into GAP clothing stores or whatever, searching through, looking for clothes, rushing around. “I want this style, but not that color, etc.” Someone gets our clothing for us; someone else does laundry, another brings in an income, etc. Whatever we do, it is done in love; everything we do is not for ourselves, but for the Body of Messiah — for the building up of the Body. You can see love right before your eyes. Therefore, there is no complaint in the Body; and we are all submissive to one another (Eph 5:18-21). There is no independent action in the Body; there are no lawless deeds, or we will not enter the Kingdom. Remember, the end of *selfishness* is the end of Satan’s reign, which in turn is the end to Death’s reign.