

## The Story of Elijah and Elisha A Picture of Baptism

The relationship of Elijah, a spiritual father to Elisha, a spiritual son ... serves as a picture of the relationship of Jesus to believers.

### Background

Elijah ministered as a prophet of God to the Israelites from 883 BC to 868 BC. He was from Tishbe in the Gilead. At the beginning of his ministry Ahab and Jezebel ruled the northern kingdom of Israel consisting of ten tribes: Reuben, Simeon, Levi, Dan, Naphtali, Gad, Asher, Issachar, Zebulun and Joseph (Ephraim and Manasseh). Jehoshaphat ruled over the southern kingdom of Judah, consisting of two tribes: Judah and Benjamin. In 879 BC, Elijah challenged 450 prophets of Baal and 400 prophets of Asherah to a showdown on Mount Carmel. Sometime after this he recruited Elisha as his servant at Abel-meholah.

### Elijah Calls Elisha to Follow Him

*So Elijah departed from there and found Elisha the son of Shaphat, while he was plowing with twelve pairs of oxen before him, and he with the twelfth. And Elijah passed over to him and threw his mantle on him. (1Ki 19:19)*

**READ: 1 Kings 19:1-21**

From the text we see that Elisha was just an ordinary man ... he was a farmer.

The word **mantle** in Hebrew is the word “addereth” and means something ample (large or wide) and is used to describe the following: garment – robe – **glory**. You might think of it like "Joseph's coat of many colors." When Elijah placed his mantle upon Elisha he was in fact calling him to be a prophet and adopting him as his son. In other words he was giving him his **glory**.

*Elisha left the oxen and ran after Elijah and said, “Please let me kiss my father and my mother, **then** I will follow you.” And Elijah said to him, “**Go back again, for what have I done to you?**” So Elisha returned from following him, and took the pair of oxen and sacrificed them and boiled their flesh with the implements of the oxen, and gave it to the people and they ate. Then he arose and followed Elijah and ministered to him. (1Kings 19:20-21)*

Elisha’s request and Elijah’s initial response have a familiar ring to them. Listen to Jesus as He interacts with those he wants to follow Him. *And Jesus said to another, “Follow Me.” But he said, “Lord, permit me first to go and bury my father.” But Jesus said to him, “**Allow the dead to bury their own dead; but as for you, go and proclaim everywhere the kingdom of God.**” Another also said, “I will follow You, Lord; but first permit me to say good-bye to those at home.” But Jesus said to him, “**No one, after putting his hand to the plow and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God.**” (Luke 9:59-62)*

Upon hearing Elijah’s response to his excuse, Elisha slaughtered his oxen, made a fire with his equipment, cooked the oxen and fed the men. **In doing so Elisha showed he was willing to give up all that he had been ... to do what Elijah wanted him to do.**

1. On a scale of 1 to 10 ...what is your commitment level to follow the Lord Jesus Christ? Be honest with yourself ... as God already knows.

### What Did Elijah Look Like?

*They said to King Ahaziah, A man came up to meet us and said to us, “Go, return to the king who sent you and say to him, Thus says the LORD, ‘Is it because there is no God in Israel that you are sending to inquire of Baal-zebub, the god of Ekron? Therefore you shall not come down from the bed where you have gone up, but shall surely die.’” King Ahaziah said to them, “What kind of man was he who came up to meet you and spoke these words to you?” They answered him, “**He was a hairy man with a leather girdle bound about his loins.**” And King Ahaziah said, “It is **Elijah the Tishbite.**” (2 Kings 1:6-8)*

Interestingly, some 900 years later we meet another biblical character who has the same appearance as Elijah ... John the Baptist. **He had a garment of camel's hair and a leather belt around his waist; and his food was locusts and wild honey.** (Matthew 3:4) John, the Baptist was clothed the same way as Elijah. **He had the glory of Elijah and was clothed with it before he began his ministry.**

**Jesus also was clothed with glory. The Scriptures say that the Holy Spirit descended upon Him like a dove at His baptism. Jesus received His new mantle (His Father's glory – the Holy Spirit) before He began His ministry as well. And Jesus returned to Galilee in the power of the Spirit, and news about Him spread through all the surrounding district. And He began teaching in their synagogues and was praised by all. (Luke 4:14-15)**

*In 868 BC, Elijah was taken up to God in a flaming whirlwind and Elisha took his place.*

### The Faithfulness of Elisha

*And it came about when the LORD was about to take up Elijah by a whirlwind to heaven, that Elijah went with Elisha from Gilgal. Elijah said to Elisha, “Stay here please, for the LORD has sent me as far as Bethel.” But Elisha said, “As the LORD lives and as you yourself live, I will not leave you.” So they went down to Bethel. Then the sons of the prophets who were at Bethel came out to Elisha and said to him, “**Do you know that the LORD will take away your master from over you today?**” And he said, “**Yes, I know; be still.**” Elijah said to him, “Elisha, please stay here, for the LORD has sent me to Jericho.” But he said, “As the LORD lives, and as you yourself live, I will not leave you.” So they came to Jericho. The sons of the prophets who were at Jericho approached Elisha and said to him, “**Do you know that the LORD will take away your master from over you today?**” And he answered, “**Yes, I know; be still.**” Then Elijah said to him, “Please stay here, for the LORD has sent me to the Jordan.” And he said, “As the LORD lives, and as you yourself live, I will not leave you.” So the two of them went on. Now fifty men of the sons of the prophets went and stood opposite them at a distance, while the two of them stood by the Jordan. (2 Kings 2:1-7)*

This part of the story shows us something of the character of Elisha. Twice it was prophesied that God was going to take Elijah from being his master. And three times Elijah told him to stay behind. But Elisha refused. He was **dedicated** to Elijah and **persistent** in regards to his call to serve him, even to the very end.

2. How persistent are you in sticking with the things God has called you to do?

### **Elijah Parts the Waters of the Jordan River**

*Elijah took his mantle and folded it together and struck the waters, and they were divided here and there, so that the two of them crossed over on dry ground. (2 Kings 2:8)*

Elijah and Elisha had walked from Bethel via Jericho to the Jordan River. This was a full day's journey of some twenty-five miles and they would have arrived at their destination late in the afternoon or early evening. When they arrived at the Jordan River, Elijah struck the waters with his mantle. The waters parted and the two of them walked across the river to the eastern side.

**The parting of the waters is a picture of baptism. It indicates that a person has gone through the waters but has not perished and has separated himself from where he had previously been.** The Israelites did not die when they passed through the parted waters of the Red Sea and they were separated from their enemies, the Egyptians and their former way of life. The Apostle Paul puts it this way, *“For I do not want you to be unaware, brethren, that our fathers were all under the cloud (the Shekinah) and all passed through the sea; and all were baptized into Moses in the cloud (the Shekinah) and in the sea.” (1 Corinthians 10:1-2)*

However, God was not pleased with most of the Israelites who had come out of Egypt and they died in the wilderness before entering the Promised Land. **So before the younger Israelites who had been born in the wilderness could enter the Promised Land, they had to be baptized as well.** This time the Israelites went through the parted waters of the Jordan River led by Yahushua (Jesus) and the priests.

**Oh and by the way ... this was the same place where Elijah and Elisha would cross some 550 years after the Israelites arrived at the Promised Land and where Jesus would be baptized by John the Baptist 900 years after that.**

**REMEMBER:** Because Moses had sinned he was not permitted to lead God's people into the Promised Land. So before Moses died God appointed Yahushua (Jesus) to lead the people into Promised Land. **(READ: Numbers 27:12-23)** This serves as a sign ... that by following Moses no one can enter the Promised Land. Access to the Promised Land is only gained by following Yahushua (Jesus).

At the time of John the Baptist, the Jewish people were well aware of the story of Elijah. In fact, the last recorded words ever written in the Old Testament portion of Scripture refers to him and the Jewish people were waiting for his arrival:

*“Behold, I am going to send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and terrible day of the LORD. He will restore the hearts of the fathers to their children and the hearts of the children to their fathers, so that I will not come and smite the land with a curse.” (Malachi 4:5-6)*

The Jews also knew several other things about Elijah: what he looked like, the area that he had last been seen in, that he had gone through the parted waters and that he had not died, but simply went to be with God. So when John the Baptist appeared dressed the same way as Elijah, in the same area and was baptizing people (**parting the waters ... separating them from their former lives.**) they naturally asked if he was Elijah, the prophet. *They asked him, “What then? Are you Elijah?” And he said, “I am not.” “Are you the Prophet?” And he answered, “No.” (John 1:21)* However, Jesus said of him, *“If you are willing to accept it, John himself is Elijah who was to come. He who has ears to hear, let him hear.” (Matthew 11:14-15)*

### A Prophet's Reward

*When they had crossed over, Elijah said to Elisha, “Ask what I shall do for you before I am taken from you.” And Elisha said, “Please, let a **double portion of your spirit** be upon me.” He said, “You have asked a hard thing. Nevertheless, if you see me when I am taken from you, it shall be so for you; but if not, it shall not be so.” (2 Kings 2:9-10)*

Elijah invited Elisha to ask him for something before he departed. It was his way of blessing or rewarding Elisha for having **received** him as a prophet. **When anyone receives a godly person, they in turn receive a blessing or reward.** Jesus said, “*He who receives you receives Me, and he who receives Me receives Him who sent Me. He who receives a prophet in the name of a prophet shall receive a prophet’s reward; and he who receives a righteous man in the name of a righteous man shall receive a righteous man’s reward.*” (Matthew 10:40-41)

Elijah conditioned granting Elisha’s request based on whether Elisha saw him depart or not. Jesus does not condition our requests based on our sight but on our having **received** him as Lord and God. After His resurrection from the dead Jesus told Thomas, “*Because you have seen Me, have you believed? Blessed are they who did not see, and yet believed.*” (John 20:29)

**Jesus invites us, His disciples to ask Him for a reward also.** “*So I say to you, ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you.*” (Luke 11:9) Jesus also said, “*For **everyone** who asks, receives; and he who seeks, finds; and to him who knocks, it will be opened.* (Luke 11:10)

**In the larger context of the passage of Scripture in which these words of Jesus are found, we see that He is encouraging His disciples to ask for more of the Holy Spirit (Christ's glory - the glory of God - the Shekinah) just as Elisha had done.** “*If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him?*” (Luke 11:13) And later, Jesus would go on to say, “*Truly, truly, I say to you, he who believes in Me, the works that I do, he will do also; and **greater (double?)** works than these he will do; because I go to the Father.* (John 14:12)

3. What have you been asking the Lord for?

### Elijah and the Chariot of Fire

*As they were going along and talking, behold, there appeared a chariot of fire and horses of fire which **separated the two of them**. And Elijah went up by a whirlwind to heaven. (2 Kings 2:11)*

Since it was nearing evening when this event occurred it must have been an awesome sight. Fire everywhere! A chariot and horses bathed in fire and a fiery whirlwind that takes them all to heaven! Wow ... what an unforgettable experience.

From the description we know that what Elisha saw was the **Shekinah** ... or “the **glory of God.**” **When the Shekinah appears it indicates the presence of God.** To the Israelites who left Egypt it appeared as a **cloud by day** and a **pillar of fire** by night. *The LORD was going before them in a pillar of cloud by day to lead them on the way, and in a pillar of fire by night to give them light, that they might travel by day and by night. He did not take away the pillar of cloud by day, nor the pillar of fire by night, from before the people. (Exodus 13:21-22)*

Although there are several appearances of the Shekinah (e.g. Mt. Sinai, Solomon’s Temple and Mt. of Transfiguration) I want to specifically focus on one other significant appearance. Just as the Shekinah separated Elijah from Elisha, it also separated Jesus from His disciples when He ascended into heaven. *And after Jesus had said these things, He was lifted up while they were looking on, and a cloud received Him out of their sight. (Acts 1:9)*

### **Elisha Receives the Mantle ... the Glory of Elijah**

*Elisha saw it and cried out, “My father, my father, the chariots of Israel and its horsemen!” And he saw Elijah no more. Then he took hold of his own clothes and tore them in two pieces. **He also took up the mantle of Elijah that fell from him and returned and stood by the bank of the Jordan.***

**When Elisha saw Elijah ascend into heaven he knew that he would receive a double portion of Elijah’s spirit.** That portion or anointing came in the form Elijah’s mantle (his glory), which had fallen from him when he ascended into heaven. **Now he had something better to wear so he tore his old clothes in two, picked up Elijah’s mantle (glory) and put it on.**

4. After Elijah ascended into heaven, what was the first thing Elisha did? **Tore his own clothes in two**
5. Where did Elisha’s new mantle (glory) come from? **Heaven**
6. What did Elisha have to **do** to get his new mantle (glory)? **He had to receive it by picking it up and putting it on.**
7. What would have happened if he had not picked up the mantle? **Nothing**

### **Elisha Uses the Mantle ... Which Is Now His Glory**

*He took the mantle of Elijah that fell from him and struck the waters and said, “Where is the LORD, the God of Elijah?” And when he also had struck the waters, they were divided here and there; and Elisha crossed over. (2 Kings 2:12-15)*

8. What did Elisha do with his new mantle (glory)? **He parted the waters of the Jordan River**
9. What would have happened to Elisha if he had just worn the mantle (glory) as clothing and not used it for another purpose? **Nothing**

After Elisha put on the mantle he walked back to the Jordan River and struck the waters, as he called upon God. The waters parted and he walked back through them to the other side. **In doing so he provided us with a complete picture of baptism:**

- **Elisha went through the waters the first time with Elijah as an ungifted ordinary man.**
- **But when he came back through by himself he was supernaturally equipped to do the work of the ministry.**

## Our Mantle ... The Holy Spirit

As Christians this teaches us about the dual nature of our own baptism:

- When we get baptized we are separating ourselves from our old life and looking forward to the new life we will partake of ... from an ordinary person to a supernatural one. Elisha entered the water the first time with Elijah but came back out with only Elijah's mantle (his glory).
- Christians enter the water with Jesus and come back out of it with only Jesus' mantle (His glory) ... the Holy Spirit. The Apostle Paul put it this way. *Therefore we have been buried **with Him** through baptism into death, so that as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father (The Shekinah - the Holy Spirit), so we too might walk in newness of life. (Romans 6:4)*

*"And behold, I am sending forth the promise of My Father upon you; but you are to stay in the city until you are clothed with power from on high." (Luke 24:49)*

**When a Christian gets baptized he parts the water the first time when he is immersed and he parts the water a second time when he comes forth.**

**What many Christians fail to realize is they are supposed to pick up their mantle (Christ's glory - the Holy Spirit) before they come back up out of the water.** They do this by faith, believing they have received what the Lord promised them. And of course they are to put it on just as the Scripture says. ***Put on the new self (man)**, which in the likeness of God has been created in righteousness and holiness of the truth. (Ephesians 4:24)*

### Are You Still Looking For Jesus?

*Now when the sons of the prophets who were at Jericho opposite Elisha saw him, they said, "The spirit of Elijah rests on Elisha." And they came to meet Elisha and bowed themselves to the ground before him. They said to him, "Behold now, there are with your servants fifty strong men, please let them go and search for your master; perhaps the Spirit of the LORD has taken him up and cast him on some mountain or into some valley." And Elisha said, "You shall not send." But when they urged Elisha until he was ashamed, he said, "Send." They sent therefore fifty men; and they searched **three days** but did not find Elijah. They returned to Elisha while he was staying at Jericho; and he said to them, "Did I not say to you, 'Do not go'?" (2 Kings 2:15-18)*

The sons of the prophets did not know where Elijah had been taken so they wanted to search for him ... but Elisha knew that God had taken him to heaven until the appointed time, therefore it would be futile to look for him.

When Jesus ascended into heaven a similar event took place. *And the disciples were gazing intently into the sky while He was going, behold, two men in white clothing stood beside them. They also said, "Men of Galilee, **why do you stand looking into the sky?** This Jesus, who has been taken up from you into heaven, will come in just the same way as you have watched Him go into heaven." (Acts 1:10-11)* The two angels had to remind the disciples that Jesus would not return until the appointed time.

Upon hearing the angels' words the disciples returned to Jerusalem and waited for their new mantle (Christ's glory - the Holy Spirit) to fall from heaven as the Lord had just commanded them. *Gathering them together, He commanded them not to leave Jerusalem, but to wait for what*

the Father had promised, “Which,” He said, “you heard of from Me; for **John baptized with water**, but you will be **baptized with the Holy Spirit** not many days from now.” (Acts 1:4-5)

Ten days later, on the Feast of Weeks (Pentecost) their new mantles (Christ's glory - the holy Spirit) fell from heaven in a fiery whirlwind. And suddenly there came from heaven a noise like a violent rushing **wind**, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting. And there appeared to them tongues as of **fire** distributing themselves, and they rested on each one of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit was giving them utterance. (Acts 2:2-4)

**The disciples had quit looking for Jesus and went to work using their new mantle ... Christ's glory ... the Holy Spirit ... the glory of God.**

. . .

Then the men of the city said to Elisha, “Behold now, the situation of this city is pleasant, as my lord sees; but the water is bad and the land is unfruitful.” Elisha said, “**Bring me a new jar, and put salt in it.**” So they brought it to him. He went out to the spring of water and threw salt in it and said, “Thus says the LORD, ‘**I have purified these waters; there shall not be from there death or unfruitfulness any longer.**’” So the waters have been purified to this day, according to the word of Elisha which he spoke. (2Ki 2:19-22)

**The Purpose of Baptism is not Cleansing, but Purifying, making something that is Unholy, Holy, pure.**

10. When did Elisha begin his ministry? After his baptism

The people of Jericho recognized the anointing of Elijah upon Elisha and received him as a prophet. So when they asked Elisha for help with the bad water in their spring, he gave them a prophet's reward. He purified the spring of water and from that time until today, Jericho has had pure water and the land is productive. The spring is called Elisha's spring and it has become a major tourist attraction.

11. When did you begin your ministry? \_\_\_\_\_

12. Have you picked up your mantle (Christ's glory - the Holy Spirit)? \_\_\_\_\_

13. How do people receive you? \_\_\_\_\_

14. How many witnesses were there to Elisha's baptism? **Fifty**

15. How many witnesses were there at your baptism? \_\_\_\_\_

**The Apostle Paul said, "My message and my preaching were not in persuasive words of wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power, so that your faith would not rest on the wisdom of men, but on the power of God." (1 Corinthians 2:4-5)**

### **An Exchanged Life**

Following is an illustrated teaching of Jesus' on this principle, of an **Exchanged Life**, with the spiritual issues of communion at the beginning of His ministry when He turned water to wine at the wedding in Cana (John 2:1-11). It was the first of His signs and He used it to convey the basic concept of an exchanged life ("I have been crucified with Christ [symbolized by baptism - water]; and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me [symbolized by communion - wine]; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself up for me." Galatians 2:20) by changing water to wine (blood). Let's briefly look at the power of Jesus' First Miracle, at a Wedding (spiritually a picture of the beginning of our Faith in God and its lifetime commitment to Eternity), of the meaning of an Exchanged Life:

1. Jesus used six (Six is the number of man) large water pots that were set aside for purification purposes.
2. A pot represents a container for something.
3. Throughout Scripture, men are referred to as containers. (Vessels, pots, houses, temples, wine skins, white washed sepulchers, etc)
4. The container is important but in no way compares to the contents for which the container was designed for and made.
5. When a purification pot was filled with water (immersed in or baptized) it became useful for purification of others.
6. Jesus however changed the water to wine.
7. Wine is a symbol for blood, life, the Holy Spirit and joy (see Wilson's Dictionary of Bible Types for a full explanation).
8. Jesus was indicating that true purification would come by blood, an exchanged life, the infilling of the Holy Spirit and that the outcome would produce great joy.
9. The change in the contents of the purification pot indicates a change in the nature of the individual. No longer would water be poured out, but the Holy Spirit (John 7:37-39).
10. Wine produces a change in a person's behavior. Alcoholic beverages are sometimes referred to as "spirits" because of the change it produces in one's behavior.
11. When the disciples were filled with the Holy Spirit they were accused of being drunk.
12. The purification pots (men) that had been filled (immersed in or baptized) with purification water would be changed inwardly (spirit-filled) and then be poured out to effect change in others.

The point of the lesson is true purification comes by blood, an exchanged life, the infilling of the Holy Spirit and that the outcome would produce great joy, **sharing in Christ's strength, holiness, wisdom, and character.**

– Teaching by Michael Gibson of Key2Changes.com

**Mikveh lit. "a collection":** is a bath used for the purpose of ritual immersion in Judaism. In the Hebrew Bible, the word is employed in its broader sense but generally means a collection of water. Several biblical regulations specify that full immersion in water is required to regain ritual purity after ritually impure incidents have occurred. A person was required to be ritually pure in order to enter the Temple. In this context, "purity" and "impurity" are imperfect translations, respectively, in that the negative connotation of the word impurity is not intended; rather being "impure" is indicative of being in a state in which certain things are prohibited until one has become "pure" again by immersion in a mikveh.

Traditionally, the mikveh/baptism was used by both men and women **to regain ritual purity** after various events, according to regulations laid down in the Torah/teaching and instruction of the Lord. The Torah/teaching and instruction of the Lord requires full immersion.

Leviticus 15:24-27, Leviticus 16:24: Most expressively, it turns out that original Hebrew wording of the verse in question was subtly but distinctively mistranslated. The Hebrew word used in this verse is not the word "unclean," but the word which means "impure." This is the same wording used in reference to the High Priest's need to go to the *mikvah* (Leviticus 21:4). This lack of purity has no unique connection with women, nor does it have anything to do with being physically dirty. Rather, the "purity" referenced in both places indicates a spiritual state (of impurity) that both the High Priest and the menstruating woman experience. So what is the *mikvah* really about?

**Going to the mikvah is *not* about getting clean. It's about getting alive.**

We see the Torah/teaching and instruction of the Lord obsessing with "purity" because the Torah/teaching and instruction of the Lord is obsessed with "life" itself. The spirituality of the Torah/teaching and instruction of the Lord is anchored with "Keep my statutes...and *live* by them" (Leviticus 18:5)

The High Priest and the menstruating woman go to the *mikvah* when encountering "death" and embracing new "life."

**For it is not in death that we find the highest form of spiritual fulfillment. It is in the everyday struggle to do the right thing that you and I become "created in the image of God" (Genesis 1:27)**

Although the act described in these Old Testament passages was not specifically called "baptism," it does highlight how important and holy ceremonial (and practical) cleansing is to God. The Lord taught the significance of baptism to the extent that He Himself was baptized by John the Baptist at the start of His ministry (Mark 1:9).

**READ: Colossians 3:1-17 (Put On the New Self)**

**Acts 19:4 -7**, <sup>4</sup>Paul said, "John's baptism was a baptism of repentance. He told the people to believe in the one coming after him, that is, in Jesus."<sup>5</sup> On hearing this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. <sup>6</sup>When Paul placed his hands on them, the Holy Spirit came on them, and they spoke in tongues and prophesied. <sup>7</sup>There were about twelve men in all.

The New Testament clearly points out that the baptism of John was from God. It came from heaven (Matt 21:25). It was administered for the spiritual purpose of proclaiming repentance and receiving forgiveness of sins (Mark 1:4).

### **Requirements during use of a mikveh**

Immersion in a mikveh is obligatory in contemporary Orthodox Jewish practice in the following circumstances:

- Women
  - Following the period after menstruation, prior to resuming marital relations
  - Following the period after childbirth, prior to resuming marital relations
  - By a bride, before her wedding

- Either gender
- Converts to Judaism are required to undergo full immersion in water.

### **Customary immersion in Orthodox Judaism**

Immersion in a mikveh is customary in contemporary Orthodox Jewish practice in the following circumstances:

- Men
  - By a bridegroom, on the day of his wedding, according to the custom of some communities
  - By a father, prior to the circumcision of his son, according to the custom of some communities
  - By a High Priest prior to a service in which he will recite the priestly blessing, according to the custom of some communities
  - Before Yom Kippur, according to the custom of some communities
  - Before a Jewish holiday
  - Weekly before Shabbat
  - Every day, under Hasidic customs

*The parallel of the purpose a woman having to mikvah/baptize and our Spiritual Rebirth:* The menstruating woman honors the egg that has been shed, which will never house a human soul, as she embraces a fresh potential for life that she can now bestow unto the world. This is the magic of the woman, "mother of all life" (Genesis 3:20), as her monthly cycle represents a lesson that even the highest of priests must model -- that we can honor the death of lost opportunities but treasure the life that our new choices create **And through the birthing process, we are Baptized when the water breaks and we must move through the conversion process, which is a separation, through the narrow path, of the Old life to the New Life, which is what we Celebrate Today.**

Far from being "dirty," the woman's cycle is of the highest purity, for it reminds us that it is the cycles, changes, and opportunities of this physical life that defines our greatest spirituality. In other words, the spiritual rebirth of going to the *mikvah/baptism* is one of refocusing on life and fresh beginnings.

**Luke 3:15-16, 21-22 (John the Baptist Prepares the Way)**, <sup>15</sup>As the people were in expectation, and all were questioning in their hearts concerning John, whether he might be the Christ, <sup>16</sup>John answered them all, saying, "I baptize you with water, but he who is mightier than I is coming, the strap of whose sandals I am not worthy to untie. **He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire.** <sup>17</sup>His winnowing fork is in his hand, to clear his threshing floor and to gather the wheat into his barn, but the chaff he will burn with unquenchable fire . . . <sup>21</sup>Now when all the people were baptized, and when Jesus also had been baptized and was praying, the heavens were opened, <sup>22</sup>and the Holy Spirit descended on him in bodily form, like a dove; and a voice came from heaven, "You are my beloved Son; with you I am well pleased. "

### **A Word of Caution:**

In the course of time Elisha obtained a servant named Gehazi. When Elisha healed Naaman, an Aramean, of his leprosy he declined any payment for the miracle. However, Gehazi, who was greedy for money, ran after Naaman and told him a lie. Gehazi said that Elisha had changed his mind and would receive some payment for the miracle. Naaman gladly gave it! When Gehazi returned to Elisha, his treachery was revealed and Elisha put Naaman's leprosy on Gehazi and his descendents after him. This story reminds us of what Jesus said, ***"Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse the lepers, cast out demons. Freely you received, freely give. (Mathew 10:8)***