

Handout: 1 Samuel Lesson 2

1 Samuel 7:5-6 ~ *Samuel then said, "Muster all Israel at Mizpah and I shall plead with Yahweh for you." 6 So they mustered at Mizpah and drew water and poured it out before Yahweh. They fasted that day and declared, "We have sinned against Yahweh." And Samuel was judge over the Israelites at Mizpah.*

At the national Assembly at Mizpah, Samuel had the people do three things to humble themselves before Yahweh:

1. The people fasted.
2. They confessed and repented their sins.
3. They ritually purified themselves with water as a sign of their spiritual cleansing.

Old Covenant ritual purification by water was accomplished by pouring water over the believer who had repented his sins: *For someone thus unclean, some of the ashes of the victim burnt as a sacrifice for sin will be taken and spring water must be poured over them, in a vessel* (Num 19:17). This was apparently the ritual Samuel had the people perform at Mizpah. Later, in the Second Temple period (6th century BC-70 AD) immersion was the common practice of ritual purification, as practiced by St. John the Baptist (Greek word for immersion is *baptisma*).

In the New Covenant Sacrament of Baptism, Christians are also washed with the visible sign of water. But there is a difference between the use of water as a sign of repentance in the Old Covenant and the Sacrament of Christian Baptism. St. John the Baptist ritually cleansed the Jews after they repented their sins in preparation for the coming of the Kingdom of the Messiah. St. John said: *I baptize you in water for repentance, but the one who comes after me is more powerful than I, and I am not fit to carry his sandals; he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire* (Mt 3:11). In the Old Covenant, ritual water purification was a public sign of repentance and the demonstration that repentance and God's forgiveness had purified the heart of the person that was once again in fellowship with God. In the Sacrament of Christian Baptism, the Christian receives not just an outward sign but the life-altering, supernatural effects of the sacrament:

1. The removal of all sin (original and personal).
2. Removal of all punishment due to sin (temporal and eternal).
3. Infusion of sanctifying grace along with the theological virtues of faith, hope, and charity, and the gifts of the Holy Spirit.
4. Incorporation into the life of Christ by dying to sin and being raised to new life in the Holy Spirit whereby the baptized becomes a child of God, a co-heir with Christ, and participant in the life of the Most Holy Trinity.
5. Entrance into the Mystical Body, which is the Catholic Church.
6. The permanent imprinting of the baptismal character that enables a person to receive the other sacraments.
7. The right to participate in the priesthood of Christ through the sacred liturgy and to grow in the likeness of Christ through personal sanctification.
8. Baptism in Christ is necessary for one's final salvation.

See Mt 3:11; Jn 1:33; 3:3-5; CCC 265, 523, 720, 950-51, 1023, 1213-15, 1227-28, 1239, 1262-1266, 1267-74, 1280, 2068, 2813.