

A Solitary Place

Adj. 1. Experienced or performed alone: a solitary walk 2. A place unfrequented

As Long as I Live

by Ayn Al-Quzat Hamadani, one of the founders of doctrinal Sufism who at the age of thirty three was put to death.

As long as I live, I will eat and drink the grief of loving you. I will never give it up to anyone, even when I'm dead. Tomorrow at the Resurrection, I will walk forward with this violent thirst still storming my head.

Baptismal Feasts

Historically, baptism has been used as a rite of initiation, showing the inductee's entrance into a new belief or observance. Baptism in the church is also a token of the forgiveness of sins we experience at salvation—in much the same way that Pilate attempted to show his innocence by washing his hands with water (Matthew 27:24). Christians show they are cleansed by Christ when they are baptized by water.

1) The baptism of Moses or National baptism (1 Corinthians 10:1–4) – when the Israelites were delivered from slavery in Egypt, they were “baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea.” That is, they were identified with Moses and his deliverance by passing through the Red Sea and following God's presence in the cloud (Exodus 13:21). Paul uses this as a comparison to the way that Christians are identified with Christ and His salvation. Those who followed Moses passed through the water and were thus initiated into a new life of freedom and Law-keeping; those who follow Jesus Christ, who is greater than Moses, pass through the waters of baptism and are thus initiated to a new life of freedom and grace.

2) John's baptism (Mark 1:4) – as John the Baptist preached repentance of sins in preparation for the coming of the Messiah, he baptized people in the Jordan. Those who were baptized by John were showing their faith in John's message and their need to confess their sin. In Acts 18:24–25, a disciple of John's named Apollos preaches in Ephesus; however, only knowing the baptism of John and the need for repentance, he needed to be further instructed in the death and resurrection of Christ. Later in the same city, Acts 19:1–7, Paul encounters some more followers of John. These disciples had been baptized for repentance, but they had not heard of the new birth or the Holy Spirit. Paul taught them the whole message of salvation in Christ, and they received the message and were subsequently baptized in Jesus' name.

3) The baptism of Jesus (Matthew 3:13–17) – this was Jesus' act of identifying with sinful humanity. “He has saved me from death, my eyes from tears, my feet from stumbling” Ps. 116:8 (NLT). Although Jesus did not need to repent of sin, He came to John to be baptized. John balked at performing the baptism, saying that Jesus should be the one baptizing him (Matthew 3:13–14). But Jesus told John to proceed with the baptism: “Let it be so now; it is proper for us to do this to fulfill all righteousness” (verse 15). ‘This is applied to the term ‘foot washing’. He rescues them from the grave so they may enjoy the light of life” Job 33:30 (NLT). To join in baptism was to leave darkness and come into the light. As Jesus came up from the water, the Father spoke from heaven, and the Holy Spirit

descended in bodily form upon Jesus (Matt. 3:16–17).

4) The baptism of believers (Matthew 28:19) – this is to symbolize the action of the Holy Spirit in a believer’s heart. **Believer’s baptism** is one of the two ordinances given to the church. When we are saved, we are “buried” with Christ and “rise” to newness of life; our sins are “washed away,” and we are cleansed. It is Spirit baptism that saves us, but water baptism is our outward expression of that event. “All of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death [.] We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life” (Romans 6:3–4).

5) The baptism of the Holy Spirit (Ephesians 1:13–14; 1 Corinthians 12:13) – John also predicted that Jesus would baptize men with the Holy Spirit (Matthew 3:11). This is a spiritual baptism, and it is the baptism that saves us. “If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children: how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him?” (Luke 11:13). The Spirit covers us, indwells us, fills us, and makes us a part of the spiritual body of Christ. The baptism of the Spirit is what initiates us into new life in Christ. The first people to experience the baptism of the Spirit were the believers in Acts 2 on the Day of Pentecost. “According to the law almost all things are purified with blood, and without shedding of blood there is no remission (Heb. 9:22). *The spiritual entity known as the body of Christ is formed by this baptism:* “We were all baptized by one Spirit so as to form one body” (1 Corinthians 12:13). And as it is appointed for men to die once, but after this the judgment, so Christ was offered once to bear the sins of many. To those who eagerly wait for Him He will appear a second time, apart from sin, for salvation (Heb. 9:27, 28).

6) The baptism of fire (Matthew 3:11–12) – John prophesied that Jesus would baptize men “with fire.” This speaks of Jesus’ judging the world for its sin (see John 5:22). Immediately after mentioning the baptism by fire, John describes Jesus as overseeing a harvest to come: “His winnowing fork is in his hand, and he will clear his threshing floor, gathering his wheat into the barn and burning up the chaff with unquenchable fire” (verse 12; cf. Matthew 13:24–30, 36–43). Those who are judged by Christ in the last day will be cast into the lake of fire (Revelation 20:15).

7) The baptism of the cross or **martyrdom** (Mark 10:35–39) – Jesus used the language of baptism to refer to His sufferings (and those of His disciples). James and John, the Boanerges, had come to Jesus asking for a place of honor in the kingdom. Jesus asked them, “Can you . . . be baptized with the baptism I am baptized with?” (Mark 10:38). They replied that they could, and Jesus confirmed it: “You will . . . be baptized with the baptism I am baptized with” (verse 39). The “baptism” Jesus speaks of here is the suffering He was to endure. James and John would suffer, as well.

A novice wishing to become a member of the Essene community would be taught doctrine and correct conduct and be on probation for up to a year before his first “covenantal” immersion took place. The immersion had to be preceded by a properly pious attitude and by actions which adequately reflected that attitude in order for the physical immersion to be effective. These actions included turning from evil and disobedience to the road of obedience to God’s commandments, including proper conduct toward one’s neighbors (1QS I 9–10; IV 2–6). The fact that the effectiveness of ritual immersion was hampered by deceit and sin made repentance a necessary part of the initiation ceremonies and of any subsequent immersions for any reason during the remainder of the year and indeed for the rest of one’s life.

The unity of the community was dependent upon continued immersions which kept the community whole and distinct from the outside world. The individual who wished to become a Son of Light experienced a multistage process of induction, described in both 1QS VI and Josephus, *Wars of the Jews* II.8.4 The turning points during this process were carried out annually in the

third month (June) during **the covenant renewal ceremony** when the community as a whole accepted or rejected new applicants and reviewed the status of regular members. The process of induction may be reconstructed as follows...