

# Baptism

Before Jesus: The Practice of Baptism in Israel

“In the fifth hour, the morning work session came to an end and everybody gathered for the midday meal in the community centre. First, they **immersed** themselves in the ritual baths. These were plaster-lined cisterns into which a staircase, occupying the whole width of a cistern side, descended. The staircase was divided by a low partition wall, symbolic rather than functional – to separate those descending from those ascending. After bathing, naked except for loincloths, they changed into neat, white dress and went quietly to the assembly hall...”

Qumran Community Ritual (1<sup>st</sup> century A.D.)

Ritual Baths of  
the Jewish  
Second Temple  
Period (200 B.C.  
to 70 A.D.)

- The Old Testament influenced the early christian's understanding of baptism in two ways:
  1. Events in Hebrew history were regarded as **types**, while **baptism was the antitype**

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- In general, authors see in past events **meanings** that are associated with present realities
  - E.g., the Passover is a **type** of the Lord's Supper which is the **antitype**
  - The **meaning** of the Passover is **ultimately fulfilled** in the Lord's Supper
- Type/Antitype analysis must be approached with caution – the **safe analysis is to restrict ourselves to what the Spirit specifically revealed**
  - Naaman's washing (II Kings 5) is sometimes interpreted as a type of baptism
  - The Spirit did not so specify
  - We should exercise extreme caution

## Understanding **Types** and **Antitypes**

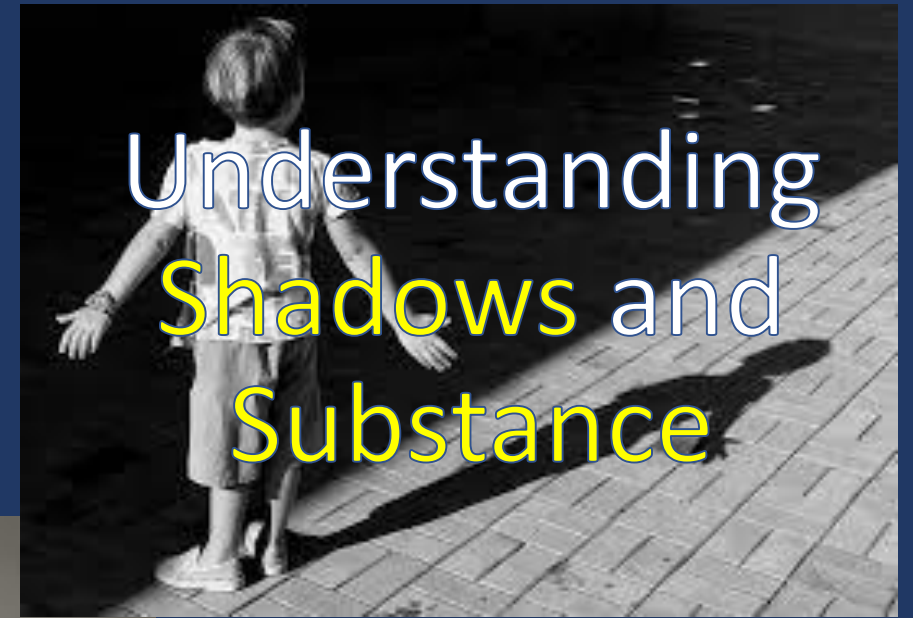
Chicken isn't a  
**"type"** of meat!

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1. Events in Hebrew history were regarded as **types**, while **baptism was the antitype**
  - Peter calls baptism the **antitype** of Noahic flood (type),  
I Peter 3:18-21
  - Paul refers to the crossing of the Red Sea as **type** (exemplification) of baptism (antitype),  
I Corinthians 10:1, 6
  - **Types embody principles that are also expressed in the christian's baptism**
2. Water immersion in Israel is a **shadow** of christian's baptism,  
Hebrews 8:5; Colossians 2:17
  - Ritual baths of priests, Leviticus 16:2-4
  - Ceremonial washing for ritual cleansing,  
Leviticus 14:8-9; Matthew 10:8

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- In general, authors see in past events things caused by present events
  - When you observe the shadow, you must ask yourself “What objective reality or substance cast this shadow?”
  - The shadow cannot stand on its own
- It is important to refrain from assigning characteristics to the substance based on the appearance of the shadow



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- The **referents** changed in christian's baptism
  - In the **name** of Jesus
  - **Remission** of sins (more on this later)
  - The imparting of the **Holy Spirit**

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