

## The Two “Primal Elements” of Creation

### **Introduction**

One of the “keys” to understanding Scriptural concepts, is to become familiar with the culture of the **time** that Scripture was written. This is because the way that Scripture is written is based upon the culture of its writers. Of course, **all** of the Biblical authors (except Luke) were Israelites who lived in ancient times – and therefore, it is important to understand the ancient Israelite culture, when studying Scripture.

Many of the ancient cultures of the world – including the Babylonian and Egyptian cultures – held that there were four “classical elements”. According to that theory, *everything* in creation is comprised of those four “building block” elements. The four classical elements are: **air, earth, fire and water**.

The ancient Israelite culture was undoubtedly very familiar with this “classical element” theory. After all, the Israelites – through Abraham – were originally from ancient **Babylon**; and they were enslaved in ancient **Egypt** for multiple generations.

So, let’s take a look at the Biblical creation account – and see what *additional* items can be discovered, when the “classical element” theory is considered.

### **The Biblical Account**

To start with, let’s take a look at the very beginning of the Biblical creation account. When reading that account, keep in mind the four “classical elements”:

#### **Genesis 1:1-10 (ESV):**

<sup>1</sup> In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth. <sup>2</sup> The earth was without form and void, and darkness was over the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters.

<sup>3</sup> And God said, “Let there be light,” and there was light. <sup>4</sup> And God saw that the light was good. And God separated the light from the darkness. <sup>5</sup> God called the light Day, and the darkness he called Night. And there was evening and there was morning, the first day.

<sup>6</sup> And God said, “Let there be an expanse in the midst of the waters, and let it separate the waters from the waters.” <sup>7</sup> And God made the expanse and separated the waters that were under the

expanse from the waters that were above the expanse. And it was so. <sup>8</sup> And God called the expanse Heaven. And there was evening and there was morning, the second day.

<sup>9</sup> And God said, "Let the waters under the heavens be gathered together into one place, and let the dry land appear." And it was so. <sup>10</sup> God called the dry land Earth, and the waters that were gathered together he called Seas. And God saw that it was good.

There are several different items to consider, when one compares the Biblical account to the four "classical elements". Here is a summary of those items:

**Item 1:** First, Scripture explicitly states – in the very *first verse* of the Bible– that God created the earth. So, the classical element of **earth** is mentioned "by name", in the Biblical creation account.

**Item 2:** Scripture also states – in the first verse – that God created the "heavens". In Scripture, there are *at least three* different meanings of the word "heaven", as follows:

- The place where God resides;
- Outer space;
- The atmosphere around the earth.

Of course, the atmosphere around the earth is composed of air. So, in **this** context, it appears very likely that Scripture is referring to "air", when it states that God created "the heavens". As a result, the classical element of **air** is also mentioned as being created by God in the Biblical account.

**Item 3:** The Biblical creation account also mentions water, in numerous places. However, Scripture does **NOT** state that God created water! Basically, Scripture describes what God did with water; but there is absolutely **nothing** in the Biblical account which states that God ever created water in the first place!

In other words, in the Biblical account, it would seem that water **already existed** – even before God created anything. This can be seen most clearly in verses 1 and 2 – verse 1 states that God created the **heavens** and the **earth** – and then verse 2 states that the Spirit of God was hovering over the **waters**.

So, what is going on here? Why is there no mention of **water** ever being created?

**Item 4:** The final item to note is that the Biblical creation account does not mention **fire** *anywhere*. In other words, the classical element of fire is completely **missing** from the Biblical account. This would be very confusing, to a culture that had a "classical element" understanding of creation.

As shown above, the Biblical creation account states that God created the heavens (air) and the earth; but it does not say anything about God creating water or fire.

Interestingly, the medieval Jewish sage called Rashi wrote about that very subject. Basically, Rashi's interpretation is that water and fire were "pre-existing elements" – i.e., that water and fire already existed, even before God created the heavens and the earth. He arrived at that conclusion for two main reasons – the fact that Scripture does not mention God creating water or fire; and from the **relationship** between the Hebrew words for "heaven", "water", and "fire". Here are the Hebrew words in question. (Remember that Hebrew is written right to left):

Heaven: shamayim שמים

Water: mayim מים

Fire: aish אש

As shown above, the word for heaven is *shamayim*, and the word for water is *mayim*. Of course, the word mayim is contained **within** the word shamayim.

So, that shows us a link between heaven and water – but what about fire? Well, if you remove "mayim" from *shamayim*, you are left with the "sha" syllable. That syllable is represented by the Hebrew consonant shin – the ש letter. Also, the word for fire – *aish* – only has **one consonant** sound in it – the "sh" sound. Again, that sound is represented by the Hebrew letter shin – ש.

As a result, if you place the letter "shin" – the "sh" sound – from fire, next to the "mayim" for water, you wind up with "shamayim" – which is the word for heaven. So, based upon that word composition – along with the details of the Biblical account – Rashi makes the argument that heaven was "constructed" from water and fire – and that water and fire were "pre-existing elements".

Certainly, the above interpretation from Rashi is very interesting. However, it is always necessary to *substantiate* commentary from Scripture. So, let's examine Scripture further, to determine if water and fire have "prominent" roles in any other Biblical accounts. If they do, then that would lend credence to the idea that water and fire have "special significance" in the Bible.

## **“Prominent Roles” for Water and Fire**

There are many passages in Scripture, which feature water or fire – or both – in very important roles. The following are three separate examples of such accounts – and in each of those accounts, water **and** fire are quite prominent.

### **Account 1: The Exodus**

One example of water and fire playing important roles is in the account of the Exodus from Egypt. Two of the most significant events in the Exodus were: the parting of the Red Sea, and the giving of the 10 Commandments at Mt. Sinai. As it turns out, those events feature **water** and **fire** very prominently.

It is rather obvious that the parting of the Red Sea event had **water** in a prominent role; for example:

#### **Exodus 15:21-22 (ESV):**

<sup>21</sup> Then Moses stretched out his hand over the sea, and the LORD drove the sea back by a strong east wind all night and made the sea dry land, and the waters were divided. <sup>22</sup> And the people of Israel went into the midst of the sea on dry ground, the waters being a wall to them on their right hand and on their left.

The giving of the 10 Commandments requires a bit more explanation. Basically, most people are aware that God wrote the 10 Commandments on two tablets of stone. However, before God did that, He **spoke** the 10 Commandments, to all of the Israelites, from Mt. Sinai. When God spoke the commandments, He descended onto Mt. Sinai, in a blaze of **fire**. That very event is described in the following passage:

#### **Deuteronomy 4:11-13 (ESV):**

<sup>11</sup> And you came near and stood at the foot of the mountain, while the mountain burned with fire to the heart of heaven, wrapped in darkness, cloud, and gloom. <sup>12</sup> Then the LORD spoke to you out of the midst of the fire. You heard the sound of words, but saw no form; there was only a voice. <sup>13</sup> And he declared to you his covenant, which he commanded you to perform, that is, the Ten Commandments, and he wrote them on two tablets of stone.

So, the parting of the Red Sea, and the giving of the 10 Commandments, use **water** and **fire**, respectively, as their “primary elements”.

## Account 2: The Seventh Plague

Another very important event from the Exodus was the **seventh** plague. Most people are aware that that plague caused hail to fall on Egypt; but there was actually more to the plague than that. Consider the following passage:

### **Exodus 9:22-24 (ESV):**

<sup>22</sup> Then the LORD said to Moses, “Stretch out your hand toward heaven, so that there may be hail in all the land of Egypt, on man and beast and every plant of the field, in the land of Egypt.” <sup>23</sup> Then Moses stretched out his staff toward heaven, and the LORD sent thunder and hail, and fire ran down to the earth. And the LORD rained hail upon the land of Egypt.<sup>24</sup> There was hail and fire flashing continually in the midst of the hail, very heavy hail, such as had never been in all the land of Egypt since it became a nation.

As shown above, the seventh plague caused **two** separate items to fall on Egypt: hail and fire. Of course, hail is actually frozen drops of rain – i.e., it is water. So, the seventh plague actually contained both **water and fire!**

In addition, the passage above states that there was “fire flashing continually in the midst of the hail”. Many scholars believe that means that fire was “encased” **inside** each piece of hail. That is, each ball of hail had a fire burning inside of it!

In any case, it is evident that the seventh plague was **extremely** dramatic – because the seventh plague is the **only** plague which caused Pharaoh to admit that he was wrong:

### **Exodus 9:27 (ESV):**

<sup>27</sup> Then Pharaoh sent and called Moses and Aaron and said to them, “This time I have sinned; the LORD is in the right, and I and my people are in the wrong. <sup>28</sup> Plead with the LORD, for there has been enough of God's thunder and hail. I will let you go, and you shall stay no longer.”

Pharaoh did not admit that he had sinned after any *other* plague – not even the **tenth** plague – he only admitted it after the **seventh** plague. So, the way in which water and fire were used **together** in the seventh plague must have been extraordinarily impressive.

### **Account 3: The Two “Destructions”**

Most people are familiar with the Biblical account of the flood. Since the flood was a cataclysmic event, Scripture states that the flood “destroyed the world”. Interestingly, Scripture states that there will be **another** “destruction of the world” as well. Consider the following passage:

#### **2 Peter 3:5-7 (AMP):**

<sup>5</sup> For they willingly forget [the fact] that the heavens existed long ago by the word of God, and the earth was formed out of water and by water, <sup>6</sup> through which the world at that time was destroyed by being flooded with water. <sup>7</sup> But by His word the present heavens and earth are being reserved for fire, being kept for the day of judgment and destruction of the ungodly people.

There are several important items to note in the above passage. First, the passage mentions two “destructions” of the world, as follows:

- The world was destroyed in the past, by being flooded with **water**;
- The world is being “reserved for **fire**” in the future, for the destruction of ungodly people.

So, the first “destruction of the world” was by **water**, and the second “destruction” will be by **fire**!

The above passage also states that “the earth was formed out of water and by water”. In other words, the passage mentions that God used water, to **create** the earth. So, that passage provides *additional* evidence that water is a “primal element” – i.e., that water already existed, **before** God created the earth.

### **Figurative Representations of Water and Fire**

The accounts above provide examples of *literal* water and fire being used in very important events. Of course, Scripture often uses terms in *figurative* ways as well. For example, God’s people are referred to as “oaks of righteousness”; and God Himself is referred to as “a sun and shield”.

These types of figurative representations are very useful in understanding spiritual concepts. So, the passages below display water and fire used in figurative ways – in order to provide further information about the significance of those elements.

There are many figurative references to **water** in Scripture. Many of those references refer to water as a “cleaning” agent – in particular in reference to us being made clean (i.e., forgiven) from our sins. However, many *other* passages refer to water as **life**. In other words, water is used to symbolize God giving us our lives. Consider the following passages:

**Jeremiah 17:13 (ESV):**

O LORD, the hope of Israel,  
all who forsake you shall be put to shame;  
those who turn away from you shall be written in the earth,  
for they have forsaken the LORD, the fountain of living water.

**Hosea 6:1-3 (ESV):**

<sup>1</sup> “Come, let us return to the LORD;  
for he has torn us, that he may heal us;  
he has struck us down, and he will bind us up.  
<sup>2</sup> After two days he will revive us;  
on the third day he will raise us up,  
that we may live before him.  
<sup>3</sup> Let us know; let us press on to know the LORD;  
his going out is sure as the dawn;  
he will come to us as the showers,  
as the spring rains that water the earth.”

**John 4:13-14 (ESV):**

<sup>13</sup> Jesus said to her, “Everyone who drinks of this water will be thirsty again, <sup>14</sup> but whoever drinks of the water that I will give him will never be thirsty again. The water that I will give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life.”

**Revelation 22:1-2,17 (ESV):**

<sup>1</sup> Then the angel showed me the river of the water of life, bright as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb <sup>2</sup> through the middle of the street of the city;

<sup>17</sup> The Spirit and the Bride say, “Come.” And let the one who hears say, “Come.” And let the one who is thirsty come; let the one who desires take the water of life without price.

Another item to note is that the apostles baptized people in water, in the **name** of Jesus. For example:

**Acts 10:46-48 (ESV):**

Then Peter declared, <sup>47</sup> “Can anyone withhold water for baptizing these people, who have received the Holy Spirit just as we have?” <sup>48</sup> And he commanded them to be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ.

Of course, baptism in water does symbolize the forgiveness of our sins. In addition to that, though, Paul tells us that water baptism symbolizes “dying with Christ”, and then being “**raised** with Christ”:

**Romans 6:3-4,8 (ESV):**

<sup>3</sup> Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? <sup>4</sup> We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life.

<sup>8</sup> Now if we have died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with him.

There are many figurative references to **fire** in Scripture as well. In some cases, fire symbolically refers to “destruction”. However, in many other cases, fire refers to spiritual refinement. That is, many passages state that fire “refines our character”, so that we will want to follow God.

In a number of cases, Scripture refers to the process of using **fire** to refine silver and gold. Basically, silver and gold are heated by fire, to **remove** the impurities from them. Scripture then compares that process to “removing the impurities” from our character – as well as to “testing” our faith. Here are two such passages:

**Isaiah 48:10 (ESV):**

<sup>10</sup> Behold, I have refined you, but not as silver;  
I have tried you in the furnace of affliction.



**1 Peter 1:6-7 (NIV):**

<sup>6</sup> In all this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while you may have had to suffer grief in all kinds of trials. <sup>7</sup> These have come so that the proven genuineness of your faith—of greater worth than gold, which perishes even though refined by fire—may result in praise, glory and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed.

The “furnace of affliction” listed in Isaiah 48:10, above, brings to mind the “fiery furnace” listed in Daniel chapter 3. In that chapter, three Israelites – Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego – are ordered by the King of Babylon to worship a giant pagan image. They refuse to worship that image, as a result of their faithfulness to God. As a result, the king has them thrown into a burning, **fiery** furnace. God then sends an angel to rescue them – so that Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego emerge from the fire unharmed.

So, Daniel chapter 3 provides another example of fire being used as a “test”, or “refinement”, of our faith.

This “refinement” reference is also contained in the following passage. That passage contains a very interesting prophesy about the Messiah – specifically, about the actions that the Messiah will take when he appears:

**Malachi 3:1-4 (ESV):**

“Behold, I send my messenger, and he will prepare the way before me. And the Lord whom you seek will suddenly come to his temple; and the messenger of the covenant in whom you delight, behold, he is coming, says the LORD of hosts. <sup>2</sup> But who can endure the day of his coming, and who can stand when he appears? For he is like a refiner's fire and like fullers' soap. <sup>3</sup> He will sit as a refiner and purifier of silver, and he will purify the sons of Levi and refine them like gold and silver, and they will bring offerings in righteousness to the LORD. <sup>4</sup> Then the offering of Judah and Jerusalem will be pleasing to the LORD as in the days of old and as in former years.

As listed above, the passage states that the Messiah will be like a “refiner's fire”. It also compares him to a refiner and purifier of silver; and states that he will refine the sons of Levi like gold.

With that in mind, consider the following passage – which also contains a prophecy about the actions of the Messiah:

**Luke 3:16 (ESV):**

<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.

As shown above, John the Baptist prophesies that Jesus will baptize with "the Holy Spirit and **fire**".

Also note: Scripture explicitly states that John the Baptist, and the disciples of Jesus, baptized people in **water** – but Jesus, himself, did **NOT** baptize anyone in water:

**John 4:1-3 (ESV):**

Now when Jesus learned that the Pharisees had heard that Jesus was making and baptizing more disciples than John <sup>2</sup> (although Jesus himself did not baptize, but only his disciples), <sup>3</sup> he left Judea and departed again for Galilee.

In addition, Jesus himself indicates that his baptism is by fire – not water:

**Luke 12:49-50 (ESV):**

<sup>49</sup> "I came to cast fire on the earth, and would that it were already kindled! <sup>50</sup> I have a baptism to be baptized with, and how great is my distress until it is accomplished!

As a result, Jesus, himself, "baptizes" us in fire – **not** in water. So, it would appear that the baptism we receive from Jesus is symbolic of spiritual refinement – as opposed to water baptism, which is symbolic of life (and of forgiveness).

## **A Deeper Understanding**

The last two sections in this article described the following items:

- Passages that have water and fire playing "prominent roles".
- Passages that figuratively compare **water** to **life**, and **fire** to **spiritual refinement**.

Now, let's try to "tie together" those two items. In other words, let's examine the passages that have water and fire in prominent roles – **with** the figurative representations in mind. That process should provide us with "deeper understanding" of water and fire.

First, consider the Exodus account – with the parting of the Red Sea, and the giving of the 10 commandments. As mentioned, Scripture often uses **water** to symbolize **life**, and **fire** to symbolize **spiritual refinement**. So, do those figurative references "fit" with the Exodus accounts?

In the case of the parting of the Red Sea, the Israelites were being pursued by the Egyptians – and the Red Sea was preventing the Israelites from escaping. So, the fact that the **waters** of the Red Sea parted saved the lives of the Israelites – i.e., it preserved **life**.

In the case of the 10 Commandments, God provided the Israelites with His "moral direction". That, in turn, gave the Israelites the ability to follow God more closely - and in so doing, to become more spiritually mature. So, the fact that God spoke the 10 Commandments – from **fire** – gave the Israelites the opportunity for **spiritual refinement**.

Next, consider the "two destructions" account, in 2 Peter chapter 3. As listed in that chapter, the first "destruction" of the world was by water, and the second "destruction" will be by fire. How does that passage compare, with the figurative representations of water and fire listed above?

At first glance, it appears that that passage does not "match up" very well with the figurative meanings – because after all, the passage describes two "destructions" of the world! In other words, in that passage, it appears that both water and fire are being used as "agents of destruction". However, let's take a closer look at that passage, to see if any *other* meanings for water and fire become apparent.

First, consider the flood. Certainly, the flood waters did end all human life on the earth – with the exception of Noah and his family. Of course, the reason why God needed to send the flood is because all of humanity had become *completely consumed* with wickedness; for example:

**Genesis 6:5-6 (ESV):**

<sup>5</sup> The LORD saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every intention of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually. <sup>6</sup> And the LORD regretted that he had made man on the earth, and it grieved him to his heart.

This all-pervasive wickedness undoubtedly included innumerable acts of **violence**. So, picture the scenario: Noah is the *one and only* righteous man on the earth – and he is surrounded by irredeemably evil people. It certainly stands to reason that in *that* situation, sooner or later Noah will end up getting **murdered**.

As a result, there is *another* way of looking at the flood. Basically, God could foresee that Noah and his family would eventually be killed by the people around them – and therefore, He sent the flood waters in order to save their lives. In other words, the flood waters preserved the lives of Noah and his family – and that, in turn, allowed the *entire human race* to survive. So, from this perspective, the **waters** of the flood allowed human **life** to continue.

Now, consider the second “destruction” – the destruction by fire. That passage states that the heavens and the earth are “stored up for fire, being kept until the Day of Judgment and destruction of the ungodly”. That seems to imply that on the Day of Judgment, all unbelievers will be completely “annihilated” – so that they do not exist at all any longer. That, in turn, implies that the **only** people who will exist at that time will be faithful followers of God.

However, consider the following passage. That passage describes the conditions that will exist in the “New Jerusalem” – which will exist on the earth, after the Day of Judgment:

**Revelation 22:1-2 (ESV):**

Then the angel showed me the river of the water of life, bright as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb <sup>2</sup> through the middle of the street of the city; also, on either side of the river, the tree of life with its twelve kinds of fruit, yielding its fruit each month. The leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations.

The above passage states that the leaves of the tree of life will be used for the “healing of the nations”. That, in turn, implies that “the nations” are still in need of healing at that time. (The phrase “the nations” refers to the people who are living outside of the New Jerusalem.)

Also note: in the Hebraic culture, “healing” **primarily** refers to repairing our relationship with God. In other words, it refers to a person repenting from sin, and following God instead – which then allows the person to build a relationship with God.

As mentioned, the above passage describes events after the Day of Judgment. So, if all unbelievers get “annihilated” during the Day of Judgment, then why will the nations still be in need of healing at that time? In other words, if the only people who exist after the Day of Judgment are faithful followers of God, then there would **not** be any need for healing at that time.

As a result, the above passage indicates that even **after** the Day of Judgment, there will still be some people living, who need to “heal” their relationship with God. That is, even *after* that day, there will be some people living on the earth who are not (yet) faithful followers of God. Those people will **not** be living within the New Jerusalem – but they **will** still be living on the earth (among “the nations”).

There is another item to note as well. The Greek word that is translated as “destruction” in 2 Peter 3:7 is **apōleias - ἀπωλείας**. That word is almost always translated as destruction, perdition, ruin, etc. However, consider the following information, from the HELPS Word-studies lexicon:

684 /*apōleia* ("perdition") does *not* imply "annihilation" (see the meaning of the root-verb, 622/*apólymi*, "cut off") but instead "loss of *well-being*" rather than *being* (*Vine's Expository Dictionary*, 165; cf. Jn 11:50; Ac 5:37; 1 Cor 10:9-10; Jude 11).

So, when the passage uses the word **apōleias**, it is not referring to unbelievers getting annihilated. Instead, it is referring to unbelievers experiencing a “loss of well-being”. In other words, the passage is apparently stating that after the Day of Judgment, unbelievers will still be living on the earth – but they will encounter “difficult circumstances”.

Of course, another way of saying “difficult circumstances” is **trials**. So, unbelievers will apparently encounter trials after the Day of Judgment. The reason why this is important is because *over and over again*, Scripture tells us that trials allow us to **grow spiritually**. Here are two famous examples:

**James 1:2-4 (ESV):**

<sup>2</sup> Count it all joy, my brothers, when you meet trials of various kinds,<sup>3</sup> for you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness.<sup>4</sup> And let steadfastness have its full effect, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing.

### **Romans 5:3-5 (ESV):**

<sup>3</sup> Not only that, but we rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, <sup>4</sup> and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, <sup>5</sup> and hope does not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us.

From all of the above information, it appears that 2 Peter 3:7 does **not** refer to unbelievers being “destroyed” during the Day of Judgment. Instead, it appears that unbelievers will face trials after that day – and those trials, in turn, will permit the unbelievers to grow spiritually. So, the **fire** on the Day of Judgment will give unbelievers the opportunity for **spiritual refinement** – just like the fire on Mt. Sinai gave the Israelites the opportunity for spiritual refinement. In other words, God will give *everyone* the **opportunity** to become “refined” – the only difference is the **time** in which different people have their opportunity.

### **Conclusion**

The New Jerusalem mentioned in Revelation, and the Garden of Eden, both reside on the **earth**, of course. However, both of those places can be called “heavenly” places – because God’s presence directly resides in both places, and because there is no sin in those places.

Since there is no sin in “heavenly” places, that means that sinful *people* **cannot** reside there. This explains why the “ungodly” people mentioned in Revelation cannot reside in the New Jerusalem – and it also explains why Adam and Eve could not continue living in the Garden of Eden, after they sinned.

As mentioned above, Scripture often uses **water** to refer to our **lives**; and it often uses **fire** to refer to **spiritual refinement**. Now, consider this: What happens when fire is used to heat up water? Well, the water evaporates, of course – i.e., the water becomes dispersed into the **atmosphere**. As mentioned earlier, the Hebrew word for “heaven” has at least three separate meanings – and one of those meanings is: the **atmosphere** around the earth! In other words, “fire + water = heaven (atmosphere)” – just like Rashi’s interpretation mentioned at the beginning of this article!

So, what is the practical significance of the above information? Well, it appears to indicate that our **lives** need to become **refined**, before we will be able to live in a “heavenly” place – just like **water**, when heated with **fire**, can enter a “heavenly” place. In other words, if our lives have not become refined, then we will not be able to enter the Kingdom of God (in the New Jerusalem).

Another example of this “water and fire” usage can be seen in the **baptism** accounts mentioned above. Scripture explicitly tells us that John the Baptist, and the disciples, baptized people in water. However, Jesus himself did **not** baptize anyone in water – instead, Jesus baptizes us with the Holy Spirit and fire.

So, what is the significance of these two different baptisms? Well, we receive our baptism in **water** from another believer – and that baptism symbolizes our new **life** with Christ. After that, we receive our baptism in **fire** from Jesus – and that baptism gives us the opportunity to become spiritually **refined**. So, our baptism in water is definitely **not** the “end of the story”, so to speak. On the contrary – our baptism in water is the very beginning of our walk with Jesus!

In other words, after we get baptized in water, we then need to begin a life-long process of **spiritual refinement** – through the “baptism in fire” from Jesus. This process of refinement is *absolutely necessary* – because as mentioned above, our lives must become refined, before we will be able to live in a “heavenly” place.

There is one final item to note. As mentioned in the beginning of this article, Rashi interpreted the Biblical creation account to mean that water and fire were “pre-existing elements” – i.e., that water and fire **already existed**, even *before* God created the universe. Also, as mentioned above, water is often figuratively compared to life, and fire is figuratively compared to spiritual refinement.

It appears that the above two ideas – the “pre-existing elements” idea, and the “figurative references” idea – can be “tied together”. Basically, water (life) and fire (refinement) were always part of God’s plan, even **before** He created the universe. That is, even before God started the creation process, His plan *already* included giving us **life** (symbolized by **water**) – and it *already* included giving us the opportunity for **refinement** (symbolized by **fire**). So, in that respect, water and fire definitely were “pre-existing elements”!

I hope that this article was useful to you!