

# “One Baptism” (1)

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“There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all” (Eph. 4:4-6).<sup>1</sup>

Where many today are obsessed with pluralistic views and mirages of truth, Paul by inspiration speaks narrowly of “one.” Unity is based on what is *real*, not what is *pretended* to be. There are as many faiths and baptisms as there are Lords. But there is only one Lord, Jesus Christ (Acts 2:36; 10:36; 1 Cor. 8:6). There is likewise only *one faith* and *one baptism*.

What is the “one baptism” of which Paul speaks? Is it Holy Spirit baptism? Is it the baptism of John? Is it a baptism of suffering? Is it a metaphorical baptism in the word?

The correct identification of this baptism is what the Ephesians themselves did in response to Paul’s teaching. Simply look at the original recipients of the letter to the “Ephesians” and observe their historical conversion to Christ in the book of Acts.

They had previously been baptized into John’s baptism Acts 19:1-3:

<sup>1</sup> “And it happened, while Apollos was at Corinth, that Paul, having passed through the upper regions, came to Ephesus. And finding some disciples

<sup>2</sup> he said to them, “Did you receive the Holy Spirit when

you believed?” So they said to him, “We have not so much as heard whether there is a Holy Spirit.”

<sup>3</sup> And he said to them, “Into what then were you baptized?” So they said, “Into John’s baptism.”

After Paul had explained to them the purpose of John’s baptism, they were baptized “in the name of the Lord Jesus” (Acts 19:5). Although John’s baptism was by *immersion in water* and *for the remission of sins*, it had become an invalid baptism and was done away. It looked *forward* to the Christ and His cross where baptism in the name of the Lord looks *back* to the Christ and the cross.

John’s baptism was preceded by the confession of sins (Mk. 1:5). The *one baptism* is preceded by a confession of Christ (Acts 8:36-38; Rom. 10:9, 10). They are different baptisms of different times and purposes. It necessarily proves: “one cannot be taught wrong and baptized right.”

When these Ephesians found out they were baptized wrong, they didn’t argue with Paul about whether baptism is necessary for salvation or not. They didn’t contend that “one baptism is as good as another.” Rather, with humility like that of small children, they took the good step of obedience in being baptized in the name of the Lord. Why is this so important? Because baptism is a command of Christ for salvation (Mk. 16:16; Acts 2:38; 1 Pet. 3:20, 21).

*Baptism in the name of the Lord* is also by immersion in water (Acts 8:38, 39). The Ephesians understood this and would have understood Paul’s statement in Ephesians

5:26 as such, "that He might sanctify and cleanse her with the washing of water by the word."

Baptism in the name of the Lord is distinguished from Holy Spirit baptism which occurred infrequently on two different occasions. We find it upon the apostles in Acts 2:1-4. The only other place we find it is upon the household of Cornelius in Acts 10:44. Holy Spirit baptism was never a baptism for men to administer. It was never a baptism for men to obey. It was a promise where only Christ could administer it (Mk. 1:8; Acts 1:4, 5). You can read the clear distinction between the two baptisms in Acts 10:47, 48.

*Baptism in the name of the Lord* is the "one baptism" in Ephesians 4:4-6. In the next article, we will see how the "one baptism" is tied to the other six "ones" that are mentioned by Paul there.

*Have you been baptized in the name of the Lord?*

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