

“ONE BAPTISM”

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Ephesians 4:4-6: “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.”

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). 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 that 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 the humility like that of small children, they took the good action in obedience in being baptized right. Why? 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.” It is distinguished from Holy Spirit baptism which occurred infrequently to the apostles in Acts 2:1-4 and to the household of Cornelius in Acts 10. Such a baptism was never a baptism for men to administer or obey but a promise that only Christ could administer. You can read the clear distinction between the two in Acts 10:47, 48.

Baptism in the name of the Lord is the “one baptism” that is connected to the other six “ones” that Paul writes of in Ephesians 4:4-6. The supplied chart illustrates.

- The “one baptism” places us into the “one body” or church (1 Cor. 12:13; Acts 2:47). Note: The Corinthians were not baptized by the Holy Spirit but when they heard and believed, they were baptized to have their sins washed away (Acts 18:8; 1 Cor. 6:11).
- The “one baptism” is of the “one Spirit” because the Holy Spirit glorifies Christ and reveals to men what Christ would have them do to be saved. “He will glorify Me, for He will take of what is

Mine and declare it to you” (Jn. 16:14). “Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God” (Jn. 3:5; cf. 1 Cor. 6:11).

- The “one baptism” is tied to the “one hope.” Paul wrote: “Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life” (Rom. 6:4) and then, “Now if we died with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with Him” (Rom. 6:8). Hope is forward-looking faith; it is earnest expectation and anticipation of something. Well, if we died with Christ, we certainly believe we shall live with Him!
- The “one baptism” is tied to the “one Lord.” We are baptized “into Christ” and into His death. We are buried with our Lord (see Col. 2:12; Rom. 6:3, 4). We are justified by Christ’s blood and reconciled to God through His death Rom. 5:9, 10). However, *when* that happens is *when* we are baptized (Rom. 6:3, 4).
- The “one baptism” is tied to the “one faith.” It is an act of faith that meets God’s grace (Col. 2:12; Rom. 6:3, 4). In fact, Paul wrote to the churches of Christ in Galatia, “For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ” (Gal. 3:26, 27). The “for” leads on with the previously established truth. Sons of God through faith is further explained as being baptized into Christ and being clothed Him.
- Finally, the “one baptism” is tied to the “One God and Father” for He has legislated for all to be baptized in His name to be saved (Matt. 28:19).

Have you obeyed the Father by being baptized into Christ?

