

“There Is One Baptism”

“There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling. One Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father who is over all, and through all and in all” (Eph. 4:4f). The sixth of these seven ones of Ephesians is *“one baptism.”* Consider the following truths regarding this statement.

There is one baptism in number and element. In the early days of the first century, this was not true. There was the baptism of John which produced many questions as to why he came baptizing (John 1:25). Was John’s baptism from heaven or men was Jesus’ question to those who questioned Him about His authority (Mt. 21:23-27). But when some of those of the Ephesians had first been baptized *“with John’s baptism”* and later were baptized into the name of the Lord Jesus, it was evident John’s baptism was no longer valid (Acts 19:1-5). Then, of course, Jesus had promised the Comforter to the apostles to stir their remembrance of things He had taught them and to further teach them of things to come, and the reception of that Comforter was called a baptism, for Jesus said, *“John truly baptized in water; but ye shall be baptized in the Holy Spirit not many days hence”* (Jn. 14:16f; 26; Acts 1:5). Some equate John 3:5 (born of the water and Spirit) as a reference to Holy Spirit baptism but the passage does not support that view. Parallel passages identify *“Spirit”* in John 3:5 to be equal to the word (seed) which the Spirit revealed (Eph. 5:26). Holy Spirit baptism was a promise, not a command and only Jesus could baptize in the Holy Spirit (Mt. 3:11). But, the one baptism of Ephesians 4 is something which can be administered by man for the great commission was and is, *“Go therefore and teach all nations, baptizing them ...”* (Mt. 28:18). There is one baptism in number and element. It is not John’s baptism (although both John’s baptism and the baptism of the great commission have the same element: water); nor is it Holy Spirit baptism; it is water baptism as was used by both apostles and disciples (Acts 8:36).

There is one baptism in action. Reference to a modern dictionary would define baptism as something administered by sprinkling, pouring or immersion. Dictionaries define words according to their current usage and such is the way it is defined today. But the Greek word used by Jesus, the apostles and disciples did not carry that meaning. The word *baptidzo* meant *“to dip, to plunge, to submerge.”* The New Testament bears out that meaning. Those who were baptized in the first century went *“down into the water and came up out of the water”* (Acts 8:38f). Such words suggest immersion or a burial which baptism is explicitly said to be: *“we were buried therefore with him through baptism into death ...”* (Rom. 6:4). There is one baptism in subject.

Not all are subjects of baptism. Many of our denominational friends speak of "believer's baptism." There are precisely correct in such a designation. When the Ethiopian Eunuch said, "*See, how is water, what doth hinder me to be baptized;*" Philip's response was, "*If thou believest with all thy heart, thou mayest*" (Acts 8:37). Surely the response of Philip implies "if you do not believe, you cannot." An unbeliever is not a subject of baptism, whether that unbeliever be a mature being or an infant. Baptism is an act of faith which it would not be either for an infant or an atheist (Col. 2:12). It is also true that the believer who may be baptized must be a penitent believer (Acts 2:37f). There is no value to baptize a person who, although he believed in God, neither was sorry for the wrongs he had done nor had the slightest intention of ceasing or correcting them. There is one baptism in purpose. Men are commanded to baptize others and to be baptized themselves (Mt. 28:18; Acts 2:38; 10:48; 22:16). What reason are men to be baptized: because they are already saved or in order that they might be saved? Some teach baptism is "an outward act of an inward cleansing" that one is baptized to show he has already been saved. Such conclusion runs counter to Christ's words; the words of His apostles and disciples. Jesus said, "*He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved*" (Mk. 16:16). Peter said, "*Repent and be baptized everyone of you in the name of Jesus Christ unto the remission of your sins;*" and "*baptism doth also now save us*" (Acts 2:38; 1 Pet. 3:21). Ananias told Saul, "*And now, why tarriest thou? Arise and be baptized, and wash away thy sins ...*" (Acts 22:16). These passages need no comment. One is commanded to be baptized in order to be saved. One who has been baptized "because he has been saved" has not been baptized at all. Such a one needs to go and do as the twelve Ephesians did: they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus (Acts 19:1-5). There is one baptism.

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