

Bible Baptism



Discovering God's Word
Bible Study Series

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Learn about six different Bible baptisms and which one is in effect today

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Discovering God's Word Bible Study Series

Study Number: DGW10

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About the author: My name is Eric Krieg. I am a disciple of Jesus, a Bible student, a truth seeker, and an evangelist. My interest is in using the Bible as my only guide in my faith. My desire is to help others understand the message of the Bible and pursue true, New Testament Christianity.

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My plea: It is my hope and prayer that you are searching for the truth that is contained in God's word, the Bible. My desire is to help you understand and obey these truths God has revealed in the pages of His word. It is to that end that I write this material. Please observe all of the Scripture references and evaluate whether the conclusions I have drawn are in harmony with God's word. If they are, I ask that you make honest application of those truths to your life and obey God's instructions.

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Bible Baptisms

Thayer as: “to dip repeatedly, to immerse, to submerge...to overwhelm” (*Thayer’s Greek Definitions*, Strong’s number G907).

The purpose of this study is simply to help us gain an understanding of the Bible baptisms that are identified in the pages of God’s word – and to draw the proper conclusions about the “one baptism” that is in full effect today.

The Baptism Of Moses

Background

In 1 Corinthians 10:1-2, Paul makes reference to the baptism of Moses: “Moreover, brethren, I do not want you to be unaware that all our fathers were under the cloud, all passed through the sea, all were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea.”

Exodus 14:13-31 gives the Biblical record of what this passage is referring to – the exodus of the children of Israel from Egypt. You recall how that the Israelites had become slaves in Egypt and how that God, through Moses, brought a series of 10 plagues upon the Egyptians to demonstrate who He was. However, the Pharaoh (king of Egypt) refused to let the Israelites go from their captivity – until the final plague (the death of the firstborn) was brought on Egypt. Then, Pharaoh told the Israelites to leave the land of Egypt – only for his heart to be hardened and to pursue them later. When the Israelites approached the Red Sea, Pharaoh’s army was closing in – and God caused Moses to part the Sea so that His people could cross over on dry land and destroy the Egyptians. The waters of the Red Sea were parted and became as walls of water on both sides, while a pillar of cloud went before them and stood behind them.

It is this event of the Red Sea crossing Paul refers to as the baptism of Moses. Now, remember the definition of this Greek word: “to dip repeatedly, to immerse, to submerge...to overwhelm” (Thayer, G907). Yet, in what sense were these Israelites baptized with the baptism of Moses? Notice, again, what was said in 1 Corinthians 10:1. They passed

There are six different baptisms identified in the Bible: The baptism of Moses, the baptism of suffering, the baptism of John, the baptism of the Holy Spirit, the baptism of the Great Commission, and the baptism of fire.

We need to study these different baptisms so that we can come to the proper conclusions about each one and not become confused or be led into error about them. For instance, we might question, “Is Holy Spirit baptism still performed today?” “Is there a difference between the baptism practiced during Jesus’ lifetime and baptism today?” These sorts of questions are full of implications for the things that we do and believe in our faiths.

During the time Paul wrote the book of Ephesians, he said that there was only “one baptism” (Ephesians 4:5). So, we need to investigate these six different Bible baptisms and discover which of these was the “one baptism” of Ephesians 4:5 – and discover whether this is the baptism that we live under today.

As we consider these six different Bible baptisms, there are three categories for us to consider: Past, present, and future. Remember that in the present, Paul said that there was only “one baptism” that was in existence (Ephesians 4:5). Each one of these Bible baptisms will fit into *only* one of these three categories. And, by investigating which of these baptisms belong in each of the categories, we’ll be able to know which baptism we are living under today – and, which baptisms we do not live under today.

Now, it is important to consider the meaning of the word “baptism” as we think of these six different Bible baptisms. Our English word “baptism” comes from the Greek word “*baptizo*.” This word is defined by the notable Greek scholar

“under the cloud” and “through the sea.” What is contained in a cloud? Water, moisture. Therefore, along with the walls of water from the sea on both sides of them, they were surrounded by water – and this is an accurate depiction of a “baptism.”

As you consider the events of Exodus 14, consider the significance of this Bible baptism for the Israelites. They had been slaves in Egypt. The first six chapters of the book of Exodus demonstrate the severity of the slavery the Israelites endured while they were dwelling in Egypt – including that they were afflicted with burdens (1:11), their lives were made “bitter with hard bondage” (1:14), and the Pharaoh commanded that all sons born to the Israelites be put to death (1:15-22).

So, there was slavery on one side of this baptism – but, there was freedom on the other side. After they passed through the Red Sea, God had delivered them out of this Egyptian slavery and they were to be led to the promised land of Canaan!

Past, present, or future?

In which of these three categories does the baptism of Moses belong? Does it belong in the past, the present, or the future? Clearly, we have observed that the baptism of Moses belongs in the *past* – as it occurred in Exodus 14:13-31 and will not happen again!

Is the baptism of Moses the “one baptism” in Ephesians 4:5?

Clearly, this is *not* the baptism Paul was speaking of when he wrote that there was only “one baptism” in Ephesians 4:5! This baptism was only applicable to the historical deliverance of the Israelites from Egypt – and is not the baptism that is instructed of us today.

The Baptism Of Suffering

Background

Jesus speaks of a baptism of suffering in Matthew 20:20-23 (also in Mark 10:38-39): “Then

the mother of Zebedee's sons came to Him with her sons, kneeling down and asking something from Him. And He said to her, ‘What do you wish?’ She said to Him, ‘Grant that these two sons of mine may sit, one on Your right hand and the other on the left, in Your kingdom.’ But Jesus answered and said, ‘You do not know what you ask. Are you able to drink the cup that I am about to drink, and be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with?’ They said to Him, ‘We are able.’ So He said to them, ‘You will indeed drink My cup, and be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with; but to sit on My right hand and on My left is not Mine to give, but it is for those for whom it is prepared by My Father.’” Also notice what Jesus said in Luke 12:50: “But I have a baptism to be baptized with, and how distressed I am till it is accomplished!”

Jesus clearly predicted that He had a baptism that had to be accomplished. This is what is referred to as the baptism of suffering. Though the scriptures do not directly identify this baptism by this name, these passages are clearly pointing to all of the suffering Jesus was going to endure at the end of His life on earth.

Remember the definition of the Greek word for “baptism.” It means: “to dip repeatedly, to immerse, to submerge...to overwhelm” (Thayer, G907). Now, as you consider this definition and consider how Jesus’ suffering can properly be designated as a “baptism,” consider 1 Peter 2:21-24: “For to this you were called, because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that you should follow His steps: ‘Who committed no sin, Nor was deceit found in His mouth’; who, when He was reviled, did not revile in return; when He suffered, He did not threaten, but committed Himself to Him who judges righteously; who Himself bore our sins in His own body on the tree, that we, having died to sins, might live for righteousness — by whose stripes you were healed.” So, Jesus was truly *overwhelmed* or *immersed* in suffering – and His suffering can accurately be designated as a baptism!

Also notice that Jesus predicted James and John would be baptized with the baptism of suffering (Matthew 20:23). The scriptures also bear out that these things did take place – as they would suffer many times for the sake of Jesus Christ. James was

killed by Herod, according to Acts 12:2. John also was persecuted – eventually being exiled to the island of Patmos for the sake of the word of God (Revelation 1:9).

Past, present, or future?

In which of these three categories does the baptism of suffering belong? Does it belong in the past, the present, or the future? While Christians will endure suffering for the sake of the gospel (see 2 Timothy 2:3; 2 Timothy 3:12; 1 Peter 4:16), Jesus endured this baptism once in the past and was only used in reference to James and John besides Him. So, this baptism clearly is a reference to some things that happened in the past.

Is the baptism of suffering the “one baptism” in Ephesians 4:5?

Clearly, this is not the baptism Paul was speaking of when he wrote that there was only “one baptism” in Ephesians 4:5! This baptism was only applicable to the sufferings experienced by Christ and two of His apostles – and is not the baptism that is instructed of us today.

The Baptism Of John

Background

Matthew chapter 3 details the work of John, the baptist – as he was given the work of baptizing. Notice Matthew 3:5-6: “Then Jerusalem, all Judea, and all the region around the Jordan went out to him and were baptized by him in the Jordan, confessing their sins.” Later, in Matthew 3:16-17, Jesus’ baptism (of John) is described: “When He had been baptized, Jesus came up immediately from the water; and behold, the heavens were opened to Him, and He saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and alighting upon Him. And suddenly a voice came from heaven, saying, ‘This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.’”

Then, consider what is said about John’s baptism in John 3:22-23: “After these things Jesus and His disciples came into the land of Judea, and

there He remained with them and baptized. Now John also was baptizing in Aenon near Salim, because there was much water there. And they came and were baptized.”

Remember the definition of the Greek word for “baptism.” It means: “to dip repeatedly, to immerse, to submerge...to overwhelm” (Thayer, G907). Now, as you consider this definition and the Biblical record of John’s baptism, it is easy to see why the Bible refers to this as a “baptism.” Clearly, John was immersing in water. Notice the evidence of this in the passages we have just considered. Matthew 3:5-6 said that all the people were being baptized by John “in the Jordan.” Next, the description of Jesus’ baptism in Matthew 3:16-17 clearly infers that He was immersed in water – notice that Jesus “came up immediately from the water.” The inference is that He had previously been *down in* the water. Then, John 3:22-23 says that John baptized in a place where there was “much water.” So, John’s baptism was an immersion in water!

Now, what was John’s baptism for (what was its purpose?)? Luke 1:16-17 and Matthew 3:3 identify that the work of John (generally) was to prepare the way of the Lord and to “make ready a people prepared for the Lord” (Luke 1:17). So, his work in baptizing fits into this overall work of preparing the people for the Lord Jesus Christ.

Consider the fact that John even spoke of future baptisms in Matthew 3:11: “I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance, but He who is coming after me is mightier than I, whose sandals I am not worthy to carry. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire.” So, John recognized that there would be other baptisms that would be practiced at a later time.

Then, notice that John’s baptism is referred to as a baptism “for the remission of sins.” In Matthew 3:11, John said that he baptized “with water unto repentance.” Mark 1:4 says, “John came baptizing in the wilderness and preaching a baptism of repentance for the remission of sins.” But, how was John’s baptism “for the remission of sins” if Christ had not yet died? Perhaps it was in the same way that Old Testament sacrifices were for the forgiveness of sins. Leviticus 4:20, 26, 31, and 35 all

describe how that after the animal sacrifices God had commanded would be offered, the people would be forgiven of their sin. Yet, we know for certain that the blood of bulls and goats could not take away sins (Hebrews 10:4). Instead, they simply served as a reminder of sins every year (Hebrews 10:3). Those who lived under these animal sacrifices were still in need of the perfect Sacrifice, just as those who were baptized under John's baptism were in need of Christ's sacrifice!

Consider Hebrews 9:15: "And for this reason He is the Mediator of the new covenant, by means of death, for the redemption of the transgressions under the first covenant, that those who are called may receive the promise of the eternal inheritance." God knew that Jesus would die and provide the ransom sacrifice that was needful for those who lived under the Law of Moses. Therefore, since Jesus' sacrifice served to cleanse those who were under the Old Covenant, God could say that their sins would be forgiven when they offered the sacrifices – and when they were baptized with John's baptism.

But, another question that is raised regarding John's baptism is: "What about those who had been baptized with the baptism of John and were living under the New Covenant." Certainly there would be those who were living when Jesus died who had previously been baptized with John's baptism. What about them?

It is certainly clear that the teaching of John's baptism needed to be stopped after Pentecost and that continuing to teach such was error. Acts 18:24-28 records an example regarding a man (by the name of Apollos) who had been preaching the baptism of John – and how he needed to learn the way of God more accurately and stop preaching John's baptism. Furthermore, there were some in the city of Ephesus who had been baptized with John's baptism in Acts 19:1-7. Yet, whenever Paul discovered that they had not been baptized in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, they were instructed to do so, pointing out the error of continuing to be baptized with John's baptism.

Now, there is some question regarding those who had been baptized with John's baptism *prior* to the Day of Pentecost in Acts chapter 2 – and the

Scriptures do not directly address this question. Some suggest that they all had to be re-baptized in Jesus' name. Others suggest that only those who were baptized with John's baptism *after* Pentecost had to be re-baptized in Jesus' name.

We simply have not been given an answer to this question – though I would *suppose* they would have needed to be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ (just as the Jews had to give up the Old Law and comply with the new law). Regardless, we certainly *do* know that anyone baptized with John's baptism *after* Pentecost had to be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ (i.e. Acts 19:1-7). Other questions that we are left with (that we have not received a definitive answer to) must simply be left to the Lord – as the secret things belong to Him and those things that have been revealed belong to us (Deuteronomy 29:29)!

Past, present, or future?

In which of these three categories does the baptism of John belong? Does it belong in the past, the present, or the future? Clearly, we have observed that the baptism of John belongs in the *past* – as it was practiced during the time of John, the baptist, and preceded the Day of Pentecost in Acts 2. Any teaching and practice of the baptism of John after the day of Pentecost needed to be corrected (as was demonstrated in Acts 18 and 19).

Is the baptism of John the "one baptism" in Ephesians 4:5?

Clearly, this is *not* the baptism Paul was speaking of when he wrote that there was only "one baptism" in Ephesians 4:5! This baptism was in effect during a very specific period of time – but is not the baptism that is instructed of us today. The baptism of John (in keeping with John's work of preparing the way for Christ) required that people believe on the one (Jesus Christ) who *would* come. However, Jesus has now come – and He requires that we believe on Him and the things that He has accomplished (see John 8:24).

The Baptism Of The Holy Spirit

Background

The baptism of the Holy Spirit is only recorded in the Bible in two places: Acts 2 and Acts 10-11 (I think there is also necessary implication that Saul also received the baptism of the Holy Spirit, being an apostle of the Lord). Both of these occasions of Holy Spirit baptism were for very specific purposes (which we'll observe in a few moments).

First, notice the instance of Holy Spirit baptism involving the apostles in Acts 2:1-4: "When the Day of Pentecost had fully come, they were all with one accord in one place. And suddenly there came a sound from heaven, as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting. Then there appeared to them divided tongues, as of fire, and one sat upon each of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance."

Next, notice the instance of Holy Spirit baptism involving Cornelius and his household in Acts 10:44-45: "While Peter was still speaking these words, the Holy Spirit fell upon all those who heard the word. And those of the circumcision who believed were astonished, as many as came with Peter, because the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out on the Gentiles also."

Remember the definition of the word "baptism" as you consider the baptism of the Holy Spirit: "to dip repeatedly, to immerse, to submerge...to overwhelm" (Thayer, G907). As you consider these two instances of Holy Spirit baptism, truly those who received it were overwhelmed/immersed in the Holy Spirit!

Now, consider each one of these examples in more detail – as we need to evaluate who received the baptism of the Holy Spirit and why they received it.

(1) The apostles. Again, consider the example of Holy Spirit baptism in Acts 2:1-4. In

order to properly understand the events that are transpiring in this passage, we need to consider some other passages and notice that Jesus had promised *His apostles* that He would give them the Holy Spirit. Consider the following passages.

John 14:16-17: "And I will pray the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may abide with you forever — the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees Him nor knows Him; but you know Him, for He dwells with you and will be in you."

John 14:26: "But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all things that I said to you."

John 15:26-27: "But when the Helper comes, whom I shall send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth who proceeds from the Father, He will testify of Me. And you also will bear witness, because you have been with Me from the beginning."

John 16:7-8: "Nevertheless I tell you the truth. It is to your advantage that I go away; for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you; but if I depart, I will send Him to you. And when He has come, He will convict the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment."

John 16:12-15: "I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now. However, when He, the Spirit of truth, has come, He will guide you into all truth; for He will not speak on His own authority, but whatever He hears He will speak; and He will tell you things to come. He will glorify Me, for He will take of what is Mine and declare it to you. All things that the Father has are Mine. Therefore I said that He will take of Mine and declare it to you."

Now, consider where Jesus said these individuals would be whenever they would receive the Holy Spirit, from Luke 24:49: "Behold, I send the Promise of My Father upon you; but tarry in the city of Jerusalem until you are endued with power from on high." Then, as you look in the first chapter of the book of Acts, this same promise is referenced again in Acts 1:4-5 – and the apostles are clearly identified to be in the city of Jerusalem after Jesus' ascension to Heaven!

As you consider this example of Holy Spirit baptism, it is also important to evaluate whether it was only Jesus' 12 apostles who received the Holy Spirit or whether it was all 120 disciples who were present on that occasion. Acts 1:11 identifies the subject of the passage as "Men of Galilee" and Acts 2:7 refers to those who were speaking in tongues (as a result of being baptized by the Holy Spirit) as being "Galileans." Now, consider: Were all 120 *men* from *Galilee*? Or, do you suppose there were some disciples who were women or from other regions among the 120?

Then, as you read Acts 1:12-2:4, it becomes quite evident throughout the passage that only the **apostles** received the baptism of the Holy Spirit. I encourage you to read this passage and trace the subject throughout – and see that it always points to the apostles! Acts 1:26-2:4 makes this very clear. Read the passage for yourself and notice that Matthias was numbered with the eleven **apostles** (1:26). Then, when the Day of Pentecost had arrived, **they** (the apostles) were gathered together in one place (2:1) – and the sound of a rushing, mighty wind filled the whole house where **they** (the apostles) were sitting (2:2). Then, divided tongues as of fire appeared to **them** (the apostles) and sat upon each one of **them** (the apostles) (2:3) – and **they** (the apostles) were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in tongues according to the Holy Spirit (2:4).

So, the evidence is conclusive that only the 12 apostles of Jesus Christ received the baptism of the Holy Spirit in Acts 2. Furthermore, you also need to consider that Jesus had only promised **them** that they would receive the Holy Spirit (go back and review the passages we considered regarding Jesus' promise for the Holy Spirit).

(2) Cornelius and his household. Again, consider the example of Holy Spirit baptism in Acts 10:44-45. This is the only other time the Scriptures record an example of Holy Spirit baptism.

As you read Acts chapters 10 and 11, you will discover that these chapters record the example of the first Gentile converts (i.e. the first time that Gentiles hear and obey the gospel of Jesus Christ – and join His church). Consider that the baptism of the Holy Spirit demonstrated that God had now accepted the

Gentiles into His kingdom (church). Peter makes this very clear as he tells about the events in Acts 11:15-18: "And as I began to speak, the Holy Spirit fell upon them, as upon us at the beginning. Then I remembered the word of the Lord, how He said, "John indeed baptized with water, but you shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit." If therefore God gave them the same gift as He gave us when we believed on the Lord Jesus Christ, who was I that I could withstand God?" When they heard these things they became silent; and they glorified God, saying, "Then God has also granted to the Gentiles repentance to life."

Notice that individuals could conclude that God had accepted the Gentiles into His kingdom because of the evidence that Cornelius and his household received the baptism of the Holy Spirit – just as the apostles had received it previously (in Acts 2). You could also read Acts 15:7-9 to consider that Peter also used this event to help others understand that God had welcomed the Gentiles into His kingdom!

Now, as you consider these two examples of Holy Spirit baptism, consider whether there was a God-given time frame for it to occur. Notice that in Acts 1:5, Jesus said that the apostles would be baptized with the Holy Spirit "not many days from now." So, Jesus, Himself, put a time period on Holy Spirit baptism. Around 2,000 years have passed since that day! Then, Cornelius' example served a special purpose that also was fulfilled within the first century A.D.

So, what was the purpose of Holy Spirit baptism? Consider these two examples very carefully and you will be able to see that a very special purpose was fulfilled in each one of these circumstances. John 14:26 said that the Holy Spirit would bring the apostles into remembrance of all things that had been said to them. John 16:13 said the Holy Spirit would guide them into all truth. Acts chapter 2 records this event as part of the fulfillment of prophecy to usher in the "Gospel Age." Furthermore, Acts 11:18 shows that Holy Spirit baptism in Cornelius' example demonstrated that God had opened the doors of His kingdom (church) to the Gentiles (who had previously not been His people). So, there were very specific circumstances

involved in both of these examples of Holy Spirit baptism.

Past, present, or future?

In which of these three categories does the baptism of the Holy Spirit belong? Does it belong in the past, the present, or the future? Clearly, we have observed that the baptism of the Holy Spirit belongs in the *past* – as it only occurred on two specific occasions (according to the Bible record), for two very specific purposes (to usher in the “Gospel Age” and to demonstrate that God had opened His kingdom to the Gentiles). Today, there is no longer a need for Holy Spirit baptism since we have the completed revelation from God (the word of God) that tells us all things that we need to know.

Is the baptism of the Holy Spirit the “one baptism” in Ephesians 4:5?

Clearly, this is *not* the baptism Paul was speaking of when he wrote that there was only “one baptism” in Ephesians 4:5! This baptism was used to accomplish very specific purposes. In addition, this baptism was *never* commanded (it was only promised) – and was never said to be necessary for salvation! Also, this baptism can only be administered by Jesus Christ. Notice that Matthew 3:11 says that Jesus would baptize with the Holy Spirit!

The Baptism Of The Great Commission

Background

In Matthew 28:19-20, Jesus commanded His disciples: “Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.” Amen.” The same command is also recorded in Mark 16:15-16. So, because Jesus commanded this

baptism in His “Great Commission,” I reference this baptism as the “Baptism of the Great Commission.”

There are many times that the Scriptures record this baptism being practiced. Read Acts 2, 8, 9, 10-11, 16, 18, and 19 to see several examples of this baptism. Particularly, notice Acts 8:38-39 to see how this baptism was practiced: “So he commanded the chariot to stand still. And both Philip and the eunuch went down into the water, and he baptized him. Now when they came up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord caught Philip away, so that the eunuch saw him no more; and he went on his way rejoicing.”

Then, consider what is said about this baptism in Romans 6:3-4: “Or do you not know that as many of us as were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death? 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.”

Remember the definition of the Greek word for “baptism” that we have seen consistently applied in the other examples. Thayer says it means: “to dip repeatedly, to immerse, to submerge...to overwhelm” (G907). The baptism of the Great Commission is the same – as we have seen that it is an immersion (complete covering) in water. Notice again that the man from Ethiopia went down into the water for the baptism and came up from the water afterward (Acts 8:38-39). And, consider that God says this baptism is a “burial” in Romans 6:3-4.

Now, who were the proper subjects of this baptism? Again, consider what Jesus said in the Great Commission (in Matthew 28:19-20 and Mark 16:15-16). Jesus said that those who were taught must be baptized. Furthermore, Acts 8:12 says that those who believed the teaching of Philip (an evangelist) were baptized. In addition, Saul was told that he needed to be baptized in order to have his sins washed away (Acts 22:16). So, we must conclude that only those who are capable of hearing and believing the message of the gospel and those who have sins to be washed away are subject to this baptism! Therefore, those who are infants, young

children, or without the proper mental ability do **not** need to be baptized!

Then, consider when this baptism began to be practiced. Again, we have seen that Jesus commanded this baptism after His death, burial, and resurrection – and just prior to His ascension into Heaven, when He gave the Great Commission (Matthew 28; Mark 16). However, the first time that we read of this baptism being practiced is in Acts 2 on the Day of Pentecost that saw the establishment of the church and the beginning of the “Gospel Age.” Consider Peter’s command in Acts 2:38: “Then Peter said to them, ‘Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.’” Then, verse 41 records that there were about 3,000 who were baptized on that day. Throughout the rest of the book of Acts and the epistles, this baptism continues to be practiced and discussed.

Yet, what was the purpose of this baptism? The Scriptures are clear about its purpose. Acts 2:38 says that this baptism was “for the remission of sins.” Acts 22:16 identifies that this baptism was necessary to wash away sins. Galatians 3:27 says that this baptism is necessary in order to be “in Christ.” And, Mark 16:16 and 1 Peter 3:20-21 identifies this baptism as being necessary for salvation! Please take the time to carefully read and evaluate each one of these passages about this baptism!

Past, present, or future?

In which of these three categories does the baptism of the Great Commission belong? Does it belong in the past, the present, or the future? Clearly, we have observed that the baptism of the Great Commission was the baptism that was practiced throughout the “Gospel Age” in the New Testament. This is because its purpose was relevant for everyone who was living at that time. And, consequently, this continues to be the baptism that we are commanded to be baptized with – as it is the only baptism whose purpose is relevant to us today (i.e. the forgiveness of sins, to be in Christ, and for salvation)! So, this baptism belongs in the **present!** This is the “one baptism” that was in effect when Paul wrote

Ephesians 4:5 – and the one that continues to be in effect today!

Is the baptism of the Great Commission the “one baptism” in Ephesians 4:5?

Clearly, this **is** the baptism Paul was speaking of when he wrote that there was only “one baptism” in Ephesians 4:5! Consider that the Ephesians (who had been baptized previously with John’s baptism) were instructed to be baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus (Acts 19:5), which is the baptism of the Great Commission! This “one baptism” is still essential to each one of us today!

The Baptism Of Fire

Background

Matthew 3:11-12 records these words of John, the baptist: “I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance, but He who is coming after me is mightier than I, whose sandals I am not worthy to carry. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire. His winnowing fan is in His hand, and He will thoroughly clean out His threshing floor, and gather His wheat into the barn; but He will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire.” Luke records a similar statement in Luke 3:16-17. This passage is clearly pointing to a future punishment of fire – and is called a baptism of fire.

Remember the definition of the Greek word for baptism once more. It is defined as “to dip repeatedly, to immerse, to submerge...to overwhelm” (Thayer, G907). This punishment that is described as a “baptism” will truly be an immersion/overwhelming in fire!

Consider the language that Jesus used in Matthew 3 and Luke 3 – in connection with the language He used in the parable of the wheat and the tares (in Matthew 13:24-30, 36-43). In this parable, Jesus tells of the punishment of the “tares” as being gathered together and cast into the furnace of fire (see 13:30, 40, 42).

But, who will experience this horrible baptism that was promised by John? Look again at the parable of the wheat and the tares in Matthew 13. Matthew 13:41 says that those who “practice lawlessness” will be the ones cast into this fire. Similarly, 2 Thessalonians 1:7-9 says that those who do not know God and those who do not obey the gospel of Christ will be experience the vengeance of God “in flaming fire.” However, Matthew 13:43 says that the righteous will be spared from this.

Past, present, or future?

In which of these three categories does the baptism of fire belong? Does it belong in the past, the present, or the future? I believe that the things we have discussed indicate that this baptism refers to the future punishment that will be given to those who do not obey God – in Hell! It will be on the Day of Judgment when Christ will separate the righteous from the unrighteous (see Matthew 25). Notice also that 2 Thessalonians 1:7-9 reveals that this separation will occur when the “Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven with His mighty angels” (in reference to His second coming). This punishment (the baptism of fire), then, will be in Hell, the “lake which burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death” (Revelation 21:8).

Is the baptism of fire the “one baptism” in Ephesians 4:5?

Clearly, this is not the baptism Paul was speaking of when he wrote that there was only “one baptism” in Ephesians 4:5! As we have seen, the baptism of fire seems to be referencing the future punishment in Hell that Christ will give to those who have not been faithful to Him during their lives on earth.

Conclusion

Think back over these six Bible baptisms. There are four which belong in the past (the baptisms of Moses, suffering, John, and the Holy Spirit). There is one baptism which belongs in the present (the baptism of the Great Commission). And, there is one

baptism which belongs in the future (the baptism of fire).

It is important for us to recognize and accept the Bible’s teachings on each one of these baptisms – so that we can establish which is the “one baptism” of Ephesians 4:5! If we do not, we will be confused and misled on this subject – and can even result in great religious error being practiced!

There is only “one baptism” which continues to be in existence today: The baptism of the Great Commission. Therefore, we must each desire to have a full understanding of this baptism so that we can be obedient to God’s instructions concerning it and be saved eternally!

Study Questions

How many different baptisms are mentioned in the Bible?

What is the definition of the word “baptism”?

1. Baptism Of Moses

What is the baptism of Moses? Discuss its use in Scripture.

In what category does the baptism of Moses belong: Past, present, or future?

Is the baptism of Moses the “one baptism” in Ephesians 4:5?

2. Baptism Of Suffering

What is the baptism of suffering? Discuss its use in Scripture.

In what category does the baptism of suffering belong: Past, present, or future?

Is the baptism of suffering the “one baptism” in Ephesians 4:5?

3. Baptism Of John

What is the baptism of John? Discuss its use in Scripture.

In what category does the baptism of John belong: Past, present, or future?

Is John’s baptism the “one baptism” in Ephesians 4:5?

4. Baptism Of The Holy Spirit

What is the baptism of the Holy Spirit? Discuss its use in Scripture.

In what category does the baptism of the Holy Spirit belong: Past, present, or future?

Is the baptism of the Holy Spirit the “one baptism” in Ephesians 4:5?

5. Baptism Of The Great Commission

What is the baptism of the Great Commission? Discuss its use in Scripture.

In what category does the baptism of the Great Commission belong: Past, present, or future?

Is the baptism of the Great Commission the “one baptism” in Ephesians 4:5?

6. Baptism Of Fire

What is the baptism of fire? Discuss its use in Scripture.

In what category does the baptism of fire belong: Past, present, or future?

Is the baptism of fire the “one baptism” mentioned in Ephesians 4:5?