

WHICH BAPTISM IS ACCEPTABLE TO GOD?

Today there is so much religious teaching around us, things can get confusing. One can easily find their minds tossed here and there by every wind of doctrine. Some teach that babies are born with inherited sins or the original sin. It leads to a belief that babies have need of "baptism" (sprinkling). Others teach the need for "baptism by fire" while still others appeal for "baptism of the Holy Spirit." There are those who point to water baptism as acceptable. How many baptisms are acceptable by God?

"There is one body and one Spirit, just as also you were called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all who is over all and through all and in all."
[Ephesians 4:4-6]

By the time that Ephesians was written, about 62 A.D., there was only one baptism! Which baptism was acceptable to God?

I. IS THE "ONE BAPTISM" INFANT BAPTISM?

A. Are babies born in a sinful state?

"At that time the disciples came to Jesus and said, 'Who then is greatest in the kingdom of heaven?' (2) And He called a child to Himself and set him before them, (3) and said, 'Truly I say to you, unless you are converted and become like children, you will not enter the kingdom of heaven. (4) Whoever then humbles himself as this child, he is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven. (5) And whoever receives one such child in my name receives Me; (6) but whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in Me to stumble, it would be better for him to have a heavy millstone hung around his neck, and to be drowned in the depth of the sea.'
[Matthew 18:1-6]

1. What is the topic of discussion between Jesus and His disciples (v.1)?
2. Which person needs to be converted? The child or the adult (v.2-3)?
3. Is the child equal to "the greatest in the kingdom of heaven" (v.4)?
4. Does Jesus accept a child as one with Himself (v.5)?
5. How much closer to Jesus can one be than a child?
6. If a child is compared as being the greatest in the kingdom of heaven, how serious is it for the one who leads him astray (v.6)?

"See that you do not despise one of these little ones, for I say to you that their angels in

heaven continually see the face of My Father who is in heaven." [Matthew 18:10]
7. Are God and His angels for little children?

B. Nowhere in the Bible is infant baptism taught. To claim that babies are born in sin or with original sin, and teach those who are not baptized stay in a sinful state, is totally contrary to the views of Jesus and God. So, if Jesus says that children are the greatest, and man says they have need to be baptized (sprinkled), who do we need to listen to?

The conclusion is infant baptism is not the "one baptism."

II. IS THE "ONE BAPTISM" A BAPTISM OF FIRE?

A. Do we really want the "baptism by fire?"

(7) "So he began saying to the crowds who were going out to be baptized by him, 'You brood of vipers, who warned you to flee from the wrath to come? (8) Therefore bear fruits in keeping with repentance, and do not begin to say to yourselves, 'We have Abraham for our father,' for I say to you that from these stones God is able to raise up children to Abraham. (9) Indeed the axe is already laid at the root of the trees; so every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire.'"
[Luke 3:7-9]

1. What was the spiritual state of the people coming to be baptized by John (v.7)?
2. What was coming upon the nation of Israel (v.7)?
3. Could these Jews escape the wrath of God by being physical descendants of Abraham only (v.8)?
4. What is involved in true repentance (v.8)?
5. What picture does John use to describe the destruction of unrepentant and unfruitful Jews (v.9)?
6. If the axe is at the root of the trees, how many of the trees (Israel) will be destroyed (v.9)?
7. Where does every tree (Israelite) that does not bear fruit end up (v.9)?

(15) "Now while the people were in a state of expectation and all were wondering in their hearts about John, as to whether he was the Christ, (16) John answered and said to them all, 'As for me, I baptize you with water, but One is coming who is mightier than I, and I am not fit to untie the thong of His sandals; He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire. (17) His winnowing fork is in His hand to thoroughly clear His threshing floor, and

to gather the wheat into His barn; but He will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire."
[Luke 3:15-17]

8. What two things would Christ baptize Israel in? (1) (2)
9. Where does the good wheat end up (v.17)?
10. Where does the useless chaff end up (v.17)?
11. Is Jesus talking about real wheat and chaff or is the wrath of God coming upon the nation of Israel whom John is addressing?

B. Is "baptism by fire" a good thing or a bad thing?

1. Is the unquenchable fire the equivalent to hell? (See Mark 9:43-48)
2. The Holy Spirit is the one doing the gathering of the good wheat in the barn.
3. Is it important to understand the context of the verses in the Bible?
4. Do we just blindly accept what someone teaches or look closely to see who is being spoken to and what is being spoken about?
5. Baptism by fire is "the burning up the chaff with unquenchable fire"!
6. The conclusion is baptism by fire is not the "one baptism."

III. IS THE "ONE BAPTISM" THE BAPTISM OF THE HOLY SPIRIT?

A. What is Holy Spirit baptism?

(12) "The Spirit told me to go with them without misgivings. These six brethren also went with me and we entered the man's house. (13) And he reported to us how he had seen the angel standing in his house, and saying, 'Send to Joppa and have Simon, who is also called Peter, brought here; (14) and he will speak words to you by which you will be saved, you and all your household.' (15) And as I began to speak, the Holy Spirit fell upon them just as He did upon us at the beginning. (16) And I remembered the word of the Lord, how He used to say, 'John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit.' (17) Therefore if God gave to them the same gift as He gave to us after believing in the Lord Jesus Christ, who was I that I could stand in God's way?' When they heard this, they quieted down and glorified God, saying, 'Well then, God has granted to the Gentiles also the repentance that leads to life.'"

[Acts 11:12-18]

*NOTE: This is where Peter recalls the events surrounding the conversion of Cornelius in Caesarea. Peter is giving an account to those who were circumcised that took issue with him in Jerusalem (11:2). For a complete account of the conversion of Cornelius, read Acts 10.

1. As Peter began to speak, what happened (v.15)?
2. Was the Holy Spirit "falling upon" them the same as what happened to the apostles in Acts 2? (Take a few minutes and go back and read Acts 2)
3. What statement of Jesus did this situation bring to Peter's mind (v.16)?
4. Read Acts 10:44-46.
5. What was God's intended purpose of "baptizing" these people in the Holy Spirit (v.17-18)?

"So then tongues are for a sign, not to those who believe but to unbelievers; but prophecy is for a sign, not to unbelievers but to those who believe."
[I Corinthians 14:22]

6. What was God's purpose for tongues?

B. Who were the unbelievers in this case?

(44) "While Peter was still speaking these words, the Holy Spirit fell upon all those who were listening to the message. (45) All the circumcised believers who came with Peter were amazed, because the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out on the Gentiles also. (46) For they were hearing them speaking with tongues and exalting God. Then Peter answered, (47) 'Surely no one can refuse the water for these to be baptized who have received the Holy Spirit as we did, can he?' (48) And he ordered them to be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ. Then they asked him to stay on for a few days more."

1. Who did the Holy Spirit "fall upon" (v.44)?
2. Who were amazed at this happening (v.45)?
3. What were Peter and the circumcised believers witnessing (v.45-46)?
4. What was Peter's conclusion to this outpouring of the Holy Spirit (v.47)?
5. Is Peter now convinced that God will accept the Gentiles?

6. Peter's conclusion leads him to order them to do what (v.48)?

7. The pouring forth of the Holy Spirit is one and the same as "baptism of the Holy Spirit." This "baptism" enabled the apostles to speak in tongues (foreign languages) on the day of Pentecost. In the house of Cornelius the same identical thing happened. These two events are the only recorded accounts of "Holy Spirit baptism." In Acts 2 the purpose was to convince the Jewish mind that they had killed the Messiah. They had completely rejected Jesus as the Messiah. In Acts 10, the purpose of the "baptism of the Holy Spirit" was to show the Jewish believers, (Peter was one of them along with the other circumcised who came with him), that the Gentile could be saved on the same basis as the Jews. It was with great difficulty that the Jews could accept the Gentile as part of this salvation plan. The baptism of the Holy Spirit was never intended to be a baptism for all believers.

"All do not have gift of healings, do they? All do not speak with tongues, do they? All do not interpret, do they? [I Corinthians 12:30]

8. This verse is proof that all in the church in the first century did not have the gift of speaking in tongues. To teach Holy Spirit baptism is for all is contrary to Scripture. The conclusion is Holy Spirit baptism is not the "one baptism."

IV. IS THE "ONE BAPTISM" WATER BAPTISM?

A. What is the purpose of water baptism?

1. It was the only way out for the guilty on the day of Pentecost to be forgiven of their sins.

(36) "Therefore let all the house of Israel know for certain that God has made Him both Lord and Christ - this Jesus whom you crucified." (37) Now when they heard this, they were pierced to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, 'Brethren, what shall we do?' (38) Peter said to them, 'Repent, and let each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.' [Acts 2:36-38]

2. It was the Eunuch's response to the preaching of Jesus.

(34) "The eunuch answered Philip and said, 'Please, tell me, of whom does the prophet say this? Of himself or of someone else?' (35) Then Philip opened his mouth, and beginning from this Scripture he preached Jesus to him. (36) As they went along the road they came to some water; and the eunuch said, 'Look! Water! What prevents me from being baptized?' (37) And Philip said, 'If you believe with all your heart, you may.' And he answered and said, 'I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God.' (38) And he ordered

the chariot to stop; and they both went down into the water, Philip as well as the eunuch, and he baptized him." [Acts 8:34-38]

3. It was what Cornelius was ordered to do.

(46) "For they were hearing them speak with tongues and exalting God. The Peter answered, (47) 'Surely no one can refuse the water for these to be baptized who have received the Holy Spirit just as we did, can he?' (48) And he ordered them to be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ. Then they asked him to stay on for a few days."
[Acts 10:46-48]

4. The apostle Paul taught that it is how one enters into Christ Jesus and raise to newness of life.

(3) "Or do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus have been baptized into His death? (4) Therefore we have been buried with Him through baptism into death, so that as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life. (5) For if we have become united with Him in the likeness of His death, certainly we shall also be in the likeness of His resurrection, (6) knowing this, that our old self was crucified with Him, in order that our body of sin might be done away with, so that we would no longer be slaves to sin; (7) for he who has died is freed from sin."
[Romans 6:3-7]

5. It is faith responding to God.

(26) "For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus. (27) For all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ."
[Galatians 3:26-27]

"Having been buried with Him in baptism, in which you were also raised up with Him through faith in the working of God, who raised Him from the dead."
[Colossians 2:12]

6. It is what saves a person by appealing through the resurrection of Jesus.

(20) "Who were once disobedient, when the patience of God kept waiting in the days of Noah, during the construction of the ark, in which a few, that is, eight persons, were brought safely through the water. (21) Corresponding to that, baptism now saves you - not the removal of dirt from the flesh, but an appeal to God for a good conscience - through the resurrection of Jesus Christ."
[I Peter 3:20-21]

CONCLUSION: When Paul speaks in Ephesians 4:5 about "one baptism", the one spoken of is water baptism. Man teaches many different things concerning baptism

and many believe what is taught without ever looking closely at what the Bible teaches. When we read the Bible, we need to approach it looking for the truth. God makes it very clear as to what pleases Him and the purpose of baptism. Paul warned the preacher Timothy:

"Be diligent to present yourself approved to God as a workman who does not need to be ashamed, accurately handling the word of truth."

[II Timothy 2:15]

We encourage you to study the verses again and see if these things are according to the truth. Handling accurately the word of truth is of highest importance and should be at the forefront in our hearts.