

Question: Please explain the "one baptism" mentioned in Ephesians 4:5?

The apostle Paul pleaded for unity in the church at Ephesus (Ep 4:1-3). "I, therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you to walk worthy of the calling with which you were called, with all lowliness and gentleness, with longsuffering, bearing with one another in love, endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace." Then Paul, by inspiration, built the platform of Christian unity in the next three verses. "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." Our querist wants us to address the "one baptism" referred to in this text.

Notice the New Testament use of the word "**baptism**":

Baptism of John (Mt 21: 25) –
In effect for a limited time (Jn 3:30).

Baptism of Christ's suffering (Mt 20:22) –
The unique trials of the apostles as His messengers

Baptism of fire (Mt 3:11) –
Eternal punishment (Mk 9:42-48)

Baptism of the Holy Spirit (Acts 1: 5) –
A promise to the apostles who revealed all truth (Jn 16:13)

Baptism in water –
A command of Christ for salvation (Mk 16:16 Acts 2: 38)

Which of the baptisms stated above is the "one baptism" of which Paul speaks in Ephesians? This is an important issue because Paul said there is only **one** baptism in effect today. Of all the baptisms mentioned above, only **one** is a part of the unity platform of Christians. Which baptism must all true believers observe and agree upon to maintain unity?

In short, Jesus commissioned **water baptism** to accompany the preaching of His gospel (Mt 28:19; Mk 16:16). This baptism is the act of immersing or burying a person in water (Co 2:12; Ro 6:4). The candidate is one who believes the gospel, repents of sin and confesses his faith in Jesus Christ, who is the object of the gospel (Ac 2: 36-38; 8: 35-40). Peter wrote of a baptism "which now saves us." (I Pe 3: 21). He used that phrase in the context of Noah and his family being "saved through water" (3:20). Thus, Peter is referring to water baptism.

On Paul's second trip to Ephesus, he asked the disciples of John a question that even today is a relevant question. He asked them, "Into what then were you baptized?" When he learned they were baptized "Into John's baptism," Paul commanded them to be "baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus" (Ac 19:3, 5). Paul's instruction on that occasion is in keeping with his written statement to the churches of Galatia. He said to them, "For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ" (Ga 3:27).

Now there are many forms and types of water baptism in practice today that have no New Testament precedent. There is a sprinkling of infants and adults called baptism. There is a baptism for those who "claim" they are already saved. There is even a baptism for the dead. Nevertheless, in contrast to these forms and types, the baptism that Jesus Christ commanded is for all who seek the forgiveness of their sins and the salvation of their souls. Have you, for these reasons, obeyed His command to be baptized? Please, even if it requires that you be immersed again, will you not do the right thing for the right reason? Allow us to help you if you will.

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