

# Baptisms of the Bible

## INTRODUCTION:

- I. For centuries there has never been a religious subject that has sparked more controversy, and resulted in more division, than the subject of baptism.
  - A. And yet, the scriptures are remarkably clear about this subject.
    - 1. However, if we are real honest with ourselves, we would have to admit that the widespread controversy over the subject of baptism is not due to a lack of teaching on the subject, but more of a failure to understand and properly apply this teaching.
    - 2. And it could be that much of the confusion over the subject of baptism is because people have failed to properly distinguish between the various kinds of baptisms mentioned in the New Testament.
    - 3. Therefore, to help clear up some of the confusion, let's focus our attention on what the Bible teaches about the subject of baptism and look closely at the various kinds or types of baptism mentioned in the scripture.
  - B. However, before we go too far, let's spend a moment defining the term baptism.

1. The English word "baptism" comes from the Greek word "baptizo," which is translated "to dip, plunge, immerse, submerge, bury or overwhelm."
2. The word baptism simply describes an action (such as to immerse or submerge), but it doesn't describe the element into which one is baptized. That can only be determined by a study of the context in which the word appears.
  - a. For example, we might read where people were baptized in water.
    - (1). Baptism (immersion or submersion) is the action.
    - (2). Water is the element into which one is immersed or submerged.
  - b. We might also read of certain people being baptized with the Holy Spirit.
    - (1). Baptism (being overwhelmed) is the action.
    - (2). The Holy Spirit is the element in which, or by which, one is overwhelmed.
3. So, as we go through this study, keep in mind the difference between the action of dipping, plunging, immersing, submerging, burying or overwhelming, and the element, such as water, the Holy Spirit, etc.

4. The word "baptism" simply defines the action, not the element.
- II. Since baptism is exclusively a New Testament word, we read of SIX different KINDS or TYPES of baptisms in the New Testament.
- A. Now, this doesn't contradict the statement of the apostle Paul when he said there is "*one baptism.*" (**Ephesians 4:5**)
1. Out of the SIX baptisms we're going to examine:
    - a. FOUR have already served their purpose and are in the PAST.
    - b. ONE is in the FUTURE.
    - c. That leaves only ONE BAPTISM that all people everywhere must submit to and observe.
  2. When Jesus commanded His apostles to, "*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,*" (**Matthew 28:19**), what KIND or TYPE of baptism was He commanding?
  3. And when Peter told those believing Jews on Pentecost to, "*Repent, and let everyone one of you be BAPTIZED in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins...*" (**Acts 2:38**), what KIND or TYPE of baptism was HE commanding?

4. Well, let's turn our attention to the SIX BAPTISMS found in the New Testament and see what we can learn about them.

## **BODY:**

- I. The first TYPE or KIND of baptism we read about is what we might call being "*baptized into Moses.*"
  - A. **1 Cor 10:1-2** – *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...*
    1. The apostle Paul was speaking about the event recorded in Exodus chapter 14, when the children of Israel miraculously passed through the Red Sea to escape the approaching army of Pharaoh.
    2. This historical event happened only one time in the history of the world, and has no relation to us except to serve as an example.
      - a. In fact, the apostle Paul goes on to say, **1 Cor 10:11** – *Now all these things happened to them as examples, and they were written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the ages have come.*
    3. But what did Paul mean when he spoke of the children of Israel being "*baptized into Moses?*"

- a. When the children of Israel were under the guidance of the cloud (the pillar of cloud that guided them by day) and passed through the Red Sea, they were symbolically delivered from bondage into freedom – they were delivered from death in Egypt and were born into a new covenant, or agreement, between God and the Israelites of which Moses was the mediator and lawgiver (more commonly called "The Law of Moses").
- 4. But being "*baptized into Moses*" is NOT the kind or type of baptism Jesus or the apostles commanded.
  - a. It may be SYMBOLIC of that baptism, but it's NOT the baptism Jesus or the apostles commanded.
  - b. Being "*baptized into Moses*" happened only once in history and happened ONLY to the children of Israel.
  - c. Therefore, it's NOT for us today.
- II. Another TYPE or KIND of baptism found in the scriptures is what the apostle Paul called the "*baptism for the dead*."
  - A. **1 Cor 15:29** – *Otherwise, what will they do who are baptized for the dead, if the dead do not rise at all? Why then are they baptized for the dead?*

1. Was Paul saying we can be baptized on behalf of those who have already died? Is this passage saying there was such a practice among first century Christians?
  2. The most simple answer to those questions is NO! 1 Corinthians 15:29 is NOT speaking of baptism on behalf of those who have already died, nor is there ANY scriptural reference in the entire New Testament that would even SUGGEST such practices were engaged in by early Christians.
    - a. It was clearly understood that, *"it is appointed for men to die once, but after this the judgment."* (**Heb 9:27**)
    - b. And it was also understood that those who died in sin cannot change their condition – as evidenced by the story of the rich man and Lazarus. (**Luke 16:19-31**)
- B. So, what did Paul mean when he spoke about being baptized for the dead? Actually, there are two interpretations of 1 Corinthians 15:29 that are worth considering.
1. The first possible interpretation recognizes that, according to some historians, baptismal practices were performed on behalf of the dead among certain pagan societies during New Testament times, but NEVER by New Testament Christians.

- a. If this is true, then Paul could have been simply pointing to this pagan practice as proof that even the PAGANS believe in a resurrection of the dead, *"otherwise, what will they do who are baptized for the dead, if the dead do not rise at all? Why then are they baptized for the dead?" (1 Cor 15:29)*
  - b. However, Paul would not have encouraged or approved this pagan practice, but would have merely used it as evidence that even PAGAN societies believe in a resurrection of the dead.
2. Another interpretation of this passage suggests that Paul may not have been speaking about immersion in water at all, but rather speaking of a "baptism of suffering."
- a. Jesus spoke about this kind of baptism – a baptism that both He and His disciples would undergo.
    - (1). **Matt 20:20-23** – *Then the mother of Zebedee's sons came to Him with her sons, kneeling down and asking something from Him. 21 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." 22 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." 23 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."*

- b. Jesus dreaded this baptism. He said, *"But I have a baptism to be baptized with, and how distressed I am till it is accomplished!" (Mark 12:50)*
- c. It's certainly true that Paul and other apostles and first century Christians were being severely persecuted for their faith in Jesus Christ, and were undergoing this very "baptism of suffering" themselves.
  - (1). If this is what Paul was speaking about in 1 Corinthians 15:29, then Paul was essentially saying, "why do we undergo a baptism of suffering (persecution) by going out into the world to preach the gospel to those who are dead in their sins, unless there will eventually be a resurrection of the dead in the physical sense – why then are we



subjecting ourselves to a baptism of suffering on behalf of those who are dead in their sins?"

- d. This position seems to fit with the context of the next three verses (**vs. 30-32**). Paul asks, *"and why do we stand in jeopardy every hour?" (v. 30)* Jeopardy of what? Jeopardy for preaching a resurrected Christ.

(1). Then he concludes that *"if the dead do not rise, 'Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die.'" (v. 32)*

- 3. This *"baptism for the dead,"* or "baptism of suffering," is certainly NOT the kind of baptism Jesus and His apostles commanded men and women everywhere to observe.
  - a. This baptism is in the PAST. It was fulfilled in the suffering of Jesus Christ, and in the suffering and persecutions of first century Christians.
  - b. It's certainly possible to undergo a "baptism of suffering" today if WE'RE persecuted like the first century Christians, but that doesn't change the fact that this is NOT the kind of baptism Jesus and His apostles COMMANDED.

III. A third TYPE or KNID of baptism mentioned in the New Testament is what we might call "the baptism of John the Baptist (Baptizer)."

A. **Matt 3:1-6** – *In those days John the Baptist came preaching in the wilderness of Judea, 2 and saying, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand!" 3 For this is he who was spoken of by the prophet Isaiah, saying: "The voice of one crying in the wilderness: 'Prepare the way of the LORD; Make His paths straight.'" 4 Now John himself was clothed in camel's hair, with a leather belt around his waist; and his food was locusts and wild honey. 5 Then Jerusalem, all Judea, and all the region around the Jordan went out to him 6 and were baptized by him in the Jordan, confessing their sins.*

1. To understand something about John's baptism, we need to understand something about John's purpose. His mission was to prepare the way for the coming of the Messiah – Jesus Christ.
2. There was perhaps never a time in the history of Israel when the people had gone so far into wickedness and sin.
  - a. So God, in His wisdom, sent John to persuade the people to repent, to confess their sins, and to be baptized for the remission of their sins.
  - b. Baptism, or immersion in water, had long been observed by certain Jews as an act of ceremonially cleansing themselves of their sins (or ceremonially and symbolically washing away sins.)

- B. Is John's baptism the one Jesus and the apostles commanded people to observe? No! Why?
1. First, John's message of repentance and his baptism (immersing people in the River Jordan) were for Jews only – not Gentiles (non-Jews).
  2. Second, those who were baptized by John were later baptized *"in the name of the Lord Jesus."*
    - a. **Acts 19:1-5** – *And it happened, while Apollos was at Corinth, that Paul, having passed through the upper regions, came to Ephesus. And finding some disciples 2 he said to them, "Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?" So they said to him, "We have not so much as heard whether there is a Holy Spirit." 3 And he said to them, "Into what then were you baptized?" So they said, "Into John's baptism." 4 Then Paul said, "John indeed baptized with a baptism of repentance, saying to the people that they should believe on Him who would come after him, that is, on Christ Jesus." 5 When they heard this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus.*
    - b. This means John's baptism of repentance was not only limited to the Jewish people, it was TEMPORARY.

- c. John's baptism was never intended to permanently remove the sins of those who were baptized – that could only be accomplished with a baptism that had behind it the power of the cleansing blood of Jesus Christ – and Jesus' blood had not YET been shed on the cross when John was baptizing.
3. So, while John's baptism served the purpose of cleansing the Jewish people of his day of their sins and preparing them for the coming of the Messiah, it was NOT the baptism Jesus and the apostles commanded for men and women everywhere to observe.
4. John's baptism was in the past – it has already been fulfilled.

IV. A fourth KIND or TYPE of baptism mentioned in the scriptures is called the *"baptism of the Holy Spirit."*

A. **Matt 3:11** – part of the message John the Baptizer preached was this:

*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.*

1. There is a lot of confusion in the religious world about the *"baptism of the Holy Spirit."* Many believe that this form of baptism still exists today. Does it? Well, let's examine a few passages together to find the answer.

2. Shortly before Jesus was to be taken and crucified, He met privately with His disciples (the apostles) and promised them He would not leave them helpless.
  - a. **John 14:16-17** – Jesus told His apostles, *And I will pray the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may abide with you forever — 17 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.*
  - b. **John 16:13** – Jesus also told His apostles, *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.*
  - c. It's very important to notice that these promises were NOT made to ALL of Jesus' disciples – ONLY to the APOSTLES – and CERTAINLY NOT TO US TODAY.
3. However, when the apostle Peter preached on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2) following the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus Christ, he quoted from a prophecy of Joel.
  - a. **Acts 2:16-18** – *But this is what was spoken by the prophet Joel: 17'And it shall come to pass in the last days, says God, That I will pour out of My Spirit on all flesh; Your sons and*

*your daughters shall prophesy, Your young men shall see visions, Your old men shall dream dreams. 18 And on My menservants and on My maidservants I will pour out My Spirit in those days; And they shall prophesy.*

- b. In these verses Peter said that God promised, "*I will pour out OF My Spirit on all flesh...*" (v. 17). God did not promise that He would pour out the SPIRIT HIMSELF, but rather pour out OF the Spirit.
- c. The word "OF" used by Peter in this verse is the Greek word "apo" which means "the point from which something originates." Therefore, the Spirit would be the point from which this pouring out originated.
- d. Notice also, while the Spirit would be poured out "*on all flesh,*" not EVERY believer received miraculous power to prophesy or perform other spiritual gifts. This power could only be conveyed by the laying on of the apostles hands.

(1). **Acts 8:14-17** – *Now when the apostles who were at Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the word of God, they sent Peter and John to them, 15 who, when they had come down, prayed for them that they might receive the Holy Spirit. 16 For as yet He had fallen upon*

*none of them. They had only been baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. 17 Then they laid hands on them, and they received the Holy Spirit.*

- e. Therefore, the phrase in Acts 2 – that God would "*pour out of My Spirit upon all flesh*" – doesn't mean that the SPIRIT is literally poured out, nor does it mean that every believer received something from the Holy Spirit.
- f. Therefore, the phrase "*all flesh*" means the Spirit would be given to both Jews and Gentiles alike – Jewish flesh and Gentile flesh.
  - (1). The Spirit was poured out on Jewish flesh on the day of Pentecost when the twelve Jewish apostles were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in tongues as the Spirit gave them utterance. **(Acts 2)**
  - (2). The Spirit was poured out on Gentile flesh during the conversion of Cornelius and his household. **(See: Acts 10:44-48)**
- 4. This outpouring of the Holy Spirit was fulfilled during New Testament times, and is therefore past.
  - a. In Acts chapter 2, on the Day of Pentecost (AD 33), all those who were present witnessed two baptisms – the baptism of

the Holy Spirit as He poured out His power on the twelve apostles, and a baptism in water for the remission of sins (Acts 2:38) when 3,000 were baptized into Christ.

b. In Acts chapter 10, during the account of the conversion of Cornelius and his household (AD 44), all those who were present also witnessed two baptisms – the baptism of the Holy Spirit as He poured out His power on Cornelius and his household, and a baptism in water for the remission of sins (Acts 10:47-48).

c. However, in Ephesians chapter 4 (AD 64), the apostle Paul said there is now only "*one baptism.*" (**Eph 4:5**) The baptism of the Holy Spirit had already been fulfilled – the Spirit had been poured out on "*all flesh*" – Jew and Gentile alike.

5. Therefore, this could not have been the baptism Jesus and His apostles commanded either.

V. What about the other baptism John spoke about in Matthew chapter 3 – the "baptism of fire?"

A. **Matt 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.*



1. This "baptism of fire" is a reference to the tormenting fires of hell, and certainly nothing we want to have any part with.
2. John was speaking to a mixed multitude of people – some would later become disciples of Christ and receive the *"baptism of the Holy Spirit,"* while others, like the corrupt Jewish Pharisees and Sadducees, would reject Jesus Christ and receive this *"baptism of fire."*
  - a. This is why John called these corrupt religious leaders a *"brood of vipers!"* and why he went on to say, *"Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come?"* (**Matt 3:7**)
  - b. The "baptism of fire" has to do with *"the wrath to come."*
3. This "baptism of fire" is the final punishment of the wicked
  - a. It is called *"hell fire"* (**Matt 5:22**).
  - b. It is called *"everlasting fire"* (**Matt 25:41**).
  - c. And it is called *"the lake of fire and brimstone"* (**Rev. 20:10; 21:8**).
4. This is certainly NOT the kind of baptism Jesus and His apostles commanded everyone to observe.
  - a. Furthermore, this baptism is in the FUTURE of those who reject Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior.

VI. That leaves only one baptism – *"baptism in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins."* **(Acts 2:38)**

A. There are several things we need to understand about this baptism.

1. First, this baptism is only for those who have come to FULLY and COMPLETELY accept Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior.
  - a. Those devout Jews on Pentecost who were baptized with this baptism heard all the evidence that proved beyond doubt that Jesus was the Christ, and that He had been resurrected from the dead, and was sitting at the right hand of God.
  - b. They heard the word, they believed it, and they were moved to repentance – therefore, they had come to fully and completely accept that Jesus was the Christ, the Son of the Living God.
  - c. Now all that remained was for them to be baptized for the remission of their past sins.
2. Second, this baptism was not only for those who had come to fully and completely accept Jesus as the Christ, it was *"for the remission [forgiveness] of sins."*
  - a. Some religious people say the phrase *"for the remission of sins"* means "because of the remission of sins" – or, baptism is for people whose sins have ALREADY been forgiven by faith in Jesus Christ.

- b. But Jesus also used this same phrase – *"for the remission of sins"* – when He instituted the Lord's Supper.
  - (1). **Matt 26:27-28** – *Then He took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, "Drink from it, all of you. 28 For this is My blood of the new covenant, which is shed for many for the remission of sins.*
  - (2). Jesus said His blood was going to be shed *"for the remission of sins"* – meaning His blood was going to be shed SO THAT people COULD HAVE the remission of sins, NOT because their sins had ALREADY been remitted [forgiven].
  - (3). Besides, *"without the shedding of blood there is no remission."* (**Heb 9:22**)
- c. Therefore, this baptism saves (1 Pet 3:21), and it washes away sins (Acts 22:16).
- 3. Third, this baptism *"for the remission of sins"* was a baptism in WATER.
  - a. How do we know? Because the people on the day of Pentecost were baptized *"in the name of Jesus Christ."*

- b. And, according to **Acts 10:47-48**, baptism *"in the name of the Lord"* – which is the same as saying *"baptism in the name of Jesus Christ"* – is WATER baptism.
- 4. Fourth, this baptism is a BURIAL in water.
  - a. **Col 2:12** – *"buried with Him in baptism..."*
  - b. **Rom 6:4** – *"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."*
  - c. We are BURIED in water just as Jesus was buried in the tomb – we are completely surrounded by water – and then we are RESURRECTED from our symbolic grave, just as Jesus was resurrected from His literal grave.
- 5. Finally, this baptism is commanded for all men and women everywhere to obey.
  - a. This is the same baptism Jesus commanded (Matt 28:19-20; Mark 16:16).
  - b. This is the same baptism the apostles commanded (Acts 2:38; 10:48)
  - c. And, this is the ONE BAPTISM Paul spoke about (Eph 4:5).

## **CONCLUSION:**

- I. Have you been "baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins?"
  - A. Those who did this in New Testament times were:
    1. Saved from their past sins.
    2. Added by the Lord to the church.
  - B. You certainly can't expect to go to heaven if you haven't been saved from your past sins, and been added by the Lord to the church.
    1. So why not be baptized into Christ for the remission of your sins today?
    2. And if you've done that, but have drifted away as an unfaithful Christian, come back, confessing your sins, and be restored once again today.