BIBLE BAPTISMS DIGEST

The New Testament mentions several baptisms. Failure to understand and distinguish between them leads to confusion and error. Note that baptism always connotes immersion, dipping, an overwhelming, or submersion. Here is a digest of Bible baptisms:

- **Israel’s “baptism”:** Paul described Israel’s passage through the Red Sea (Exo. 13–14) as a baptism “in the cloud and in the sea” (1 Cor. 10:1–2). Walls of water on either side and the cloud above fully immersed them. As that “baptism” freed them from Egyptian slavery, so our baptism frees us from sin’s dominion.

- **Pre-Pentecost baptism:** John “the baptizer” first administered this baptism in water (as the apostles also did later [John 4:1–2]). It involved repentance and confession of sins (Mat. 3:6–9) and was “unto remission of sins” (Mark 1:4). It was preparatory for Jesus’ kingdom/church (Mat. 3:2).

- **Suffering baptism:** Jesus referred to his agony on the cross as a “baptism” he must undergo (Mark 10:35–38; Luke 12:50). His suffering at Calvary was not a mere sprinkling or pouring, but an immersion in it.

- **Holy Spirit baptism:** John stated that Jesus would baptize “in the Holy Spirit” (Mat. 3:11). Jesus later specifically applied this promise to His apostles (John 14:6; 15:26; 16:13). Just before He ascended to the Father, He told them to wait in Jerusalem for its fulfilment (Acts 1:5, 8), which came only upon them on Pentecost (26–2:1–4, 14). Implication demands that Paul was also baptized in the Holy Spirit (2 Cor. 1:5; 12:11–12). Later, the Lord caused “the like gift” to come upon Cornelius and his guests (Acts 10:44–46; 11:15–17). This overwhelming in power was very exclusive, was administered only by Christ, was not a condition of salvation, and is not known apart from these manifestations.

- **Fire baptism:** John also stated that Jesus would baptize “in fire” (Mat. 3:11). He went on to describe this fire as destructive and “unquenchable” (v. 12). Fire baptism refers to the fire of Hell, the eternal abode of sinners after The Judgment (Mark 9:48; 2 The. 1:7–9; Rev. 20:14–15).

- **The “one baptism”:** Only one remains in effect from Pentecost (when first preached) “unto the end of the world” (Mat. 28:19–20; Acts 2:38–47). It is a burial in water (8:36–38; Rom. 6:4), it is preceded by a confessed faith in Christ (Acts 2:37; 8:37) and repentance (Acts 2:38). It is the act in which one is cleansed of sin by the blood of Christ (Acts 22:16; Rom. 6:3; Rev. 1:5) and is saved (Mark 16:16; 1 Pet. 3:21). It clearly is an essential condition to one’s salvation.

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