

Biblical Baptism – No. 1

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Baptism has long been a subject of controversy, especially in respect to its purpose and its action. Uninspired men have written perhaps hundreds of books and millions of words about baptism. Many of these things we can read to our profit, but the only book on this subject that matters is the Word of God. Let us examine what the Bible teaches about baptism.

Before we can study baptism, we must narrow the field of study. Those who are familiar with the Bible know that it identifies several “baptisms.” Of these, which baptism is relevant to moderns?

1. “Baptism” of suffering on the cross (Mark 10:38–39).
2. Water baptism by John the Baptizer (Mat. 3:1–5, 11; Mark 1:3).
3. Water baptism by Jesus and His apostles (John 4:1–2).
4. “Baptism” in the Holy Spirit (Mat. 3:12).
5. “Baptism” in fire (Mat.3:12).
6. “Baptism” in the cloud and the sea(1Cor.10:1–2).
7. “Great Commission” baptism (Mat.28:18–20, Mark16: 15–16).

The baptism with which we are concerned is the one described in Acts 8:36, in which a man from Ethiopia said to Philip, “Behold, here is water; what doth hinder me to be baptized?” The baptism relevant to us is the one Peter commanded at Cornelius’s house: “Can any man forbid the water, that these should not be baptized...? And he commanded them to be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ” (10:47–48). This baptism is the one that same Apostle wrote about in 1 Peter 3:20–21. He referred to the eight souls that were “saved through water” in Noah’s ark, and then stated:

Which also after a true likeness doth now save you, even baptism, not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the interrogation of a good conscience toward God, through the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

In about A.D. 62, the Apostle Paul wrote to the Ephesians: “There is...one baptism” (4:5). Thus, at the time of this writing only one baptism was in force. All other baptisms had fulfilled their function and were obsolete, or they were not yet in effect. Which baptism was/is the “one baptism”? It was the one of which we have already read in Acts 8, Acts 10, and 1 Peter 3 – “Great Commission” baptism, as follows:

Go ye therefore, and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them into the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit: teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and **lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world** (emph. added).

Obviously, this baptism will be in force until the end.

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