
BIBLE TALK

This week the question is: **What kind of baptism is essential for salvation?**

In the New Testament there are five kinds of baptism mentioned:

- (1) The baptism commanded by John the Baptist in water (Matthew 3:6)
- (2) Baptism of the Holy Spirit (Matthew 3:11)
- (3) Baptism of fire (Matthew 3:11)
- (4) Baptism of suffering (Matthew 20:22)
- (5) The baptism commanded by Jesus in water (Matthew 28:19)

Of these five kinds of baptism, only one of them is essential for salvation. Listen carefully to the following passage:

Ephesians 4:4-6

- 4 There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called in one hope of your calling;
- 5 one Lord, one faith, one baptism;
- 6 one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all.

According to this passage, there is not only one Holy Spirit and one Lord and one God, but there is also only one baptism that is essential for salvation. If this one baptism is not essential, then neither would the one Lord be essential and neither would the one God be essential. Obviously this passage is giving a list of items that are essential for salvation and for Christian unity.

Our question, then, is this: Of the five kinds of baptism mentioned in the Bible, which one is the "one baptism" that is essential for salvation?

EXAMINING THE BAPTISMS

Let's examine each baptism briefly and see what the Bible has to say on this subject.

(1) The baptism commanded by John the Baptist in water is first mentioned in Matthew 3:6. This baptism was commanded of all the Jews living during the time of John the Baptist and was for the "remission of sins" (Mark 1:4). Because it was for the "remission of sins" John refused to baptize Jesus when He came for baptism, because Jesus had no sins to wash away (Matthew 3:14). But Jesus insisted that John baptize Him, not to wash away sins, but simply to "fulfill all righteousness" (Matthew 3:15). Thus, Jesus was the only person in the Bible who was baptized in water that did not have sins to "wash away." John's baptism in water was so essential that anyone refusing to receive it was guilty of direct disobedience to God:

Luke 7:29-30

29 And when all the people heard Him, even the tax collectors justified God, having been baptized with the baptism of John.

30 But the Pharisees and lawyers rejected the will of God for themselves, not having been baptized by him.

(2) The baptism of the Holy Spirit was first mentioned in Matthew 3:11. This baptism was not a command, but a promise! This baptism was not for the "remission of sins." It was not essential for salvation. If it had been essential for salvation, then it would have been commanded by the Lord that men be baptized with the Holy Spirit, but as we pointed out already, baptism of the Holy Spirit was not a command, but a promise. It is possible to be saved without having received this baptism:

Acts 8:12-16

12 But when [the Samaritans] believed Philip as he preached the things concerning the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, both men and women were baptized.

14 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.

Here is a Bible example of men and women who had been baptized in water and saved from their sins, but who had not received baptism of the Holy Spirit. So it is possible to be saved without this baptism. Holy Spirit baptism merely gave miraculous power to Christians of the first century so they could confirm the written word of God which was in the process of being revealed. According to 1 Corinthians 13:8-10 this miraculous ability was taken away when the Bible was completely written.

(3) The baptism of fire is first mentioned in Matthew 3:11. Some people mistakenly associate this baptism with the baptism of the Holy Spirit which occurred in Acts 2. But Acts 2:3 plainly says that "divided tongues, as of fire" appeared upon the apostles. It was not fire, but it was like fire. Matthew 3:11 does not say men would be baptized with something "like" fire, but it would be actual fire! The context of Matthew 3:11 clearly reveals that the baptism of fire was an immersion into the "lake of fire" for unbelievers:

Matthew 3:11-12

11 "... [Jesus] will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire.

12 "His winnowing fan is in His hand, and He will thoroughly clean out His threshing floor, and gather His wheat into the barn; but He will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire."

Some people ignorantly pray for baptism of fire, but if they knew that baptism in fire was an immersion into the "lake of fire," they certainly wouldn't be praying for it.

(4) The baptism of suffering is first mentioned in Matthew 20:22. As with Holy Spirit baptism, this baptism is not a command, but was a promise. It refers to the violent death which Jesus was about to suffer on the cross. Jesus revealed that His apostles would experience this baptism of suffering, but it was not promised to all believers. This baptism is certainly not essential for salvation.

(5) The baptism commanded by Jesus in water is first mentioned in Matthew 28:19. According to Acts 19:1-5 this water baptism replaced John's baptism. Acts 2:38 states that the baptism commanded by Jesus in water was for the "remission of sins" and Acts 22:16 says it "washes away sins." 1 Peter 3:21 plainly says that this baptism "saves us." Unlike John's baptism, the baptism commanded by Jesus was to be done "in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit." Acts 8:38 clearly reveals this baptism was immersion in water. Mark 16:16 teaches that it is to be administered only to men and women who first believe in Jesus, thus eliminating infant baptism. This is the "one baptism" which Ephesians 4:5 is speaking of. This is the baptism which is so essential for salvation that Jesus said:

John 3:5

5 Jesus answered, "Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God.

Unless men and women receive this baptism, Jesus said they cannot enter into God's kingdom! This is why Ephesians 4:5 makes water baptism just as essential as the one Holy Spirit, the one Lord Jesus and the one Father.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

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