

Baptism

101

A baptism is simply an event, an ordeal, or a process. There are at least 12 baptisms mentioned in the Bible but we will focus on only a few of them.

What's the first thing you think of when you hear the word "baptism:" water, right? Well, that's how the word is used most of the time, even though water baptism is not for us today, in the dispensation of grace.

Paul speaks about the 40 years that Israel was in the desert under the leadership of Moses as a baptism.

1 Corinthians 10:1-4

Moreover, brethren, I would not that ye should be ignorant, how that all our fathers were under the cloud, and all passed through the sea; **And were all baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea;** And did all eat the same spiritual meat; And did all drink the same spiritual drink: for they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them: and that Rock was Christ.

Israel literally saw the Lord's presence, in the form of a cloud, lead them through the wilderness.

Exodus 13:21-22

And **the LORD went before them by day in a pillar of a cloud**, to lead them the way; and by night in a pillar of fire, to give them light; to go by day and night: **He took not away the pillar of the cloud by day**, nor the pillar of fire by night, from before the people.

We know for sure that Paul was not talking about Israel being "baptized" by the water of the Red Sea as they crossed. The miracle was that the people walked through the sea on dry land!

Exodus 14:15-16

And the LORD said unto Moses, Wherefore criest thou unto me? speak unto the children of Israel, that they go forward: But lift thou up thy rod, and stretch out thine hand over the sea, and divide it: and **the children of Israel shall go on dry ground through the midst of the sea.**

Jesus talked about His crucifixion as a baptism. He told His disciples that he had a future baptism and that He had to wait to do certain things (straitened or constrained) until it was over. We know from the scripture how many wonderful things became ours after the Lord endured the crucifixion on our behalf.

Luke 12:50

But I have a baptism to be baptized with; and how am I straitened till it be accomplished!

Jesus chided the brothers James and John when they asked to sit at His right and left hand when He ruled His kingdom. He asked them if they were able to be baptized (endure the crucifixion) with the baptism that He was going to have to endure. Of course they said they could, even without knowing what it was.

Matthew 20:22-23

But Jesus answered and said, Ye know not what ye ask. **Are ye able to drink of the cup that I shall drink of, and to be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with?** They say unto him, We are able. And he saith unto them, Ye shall drink

indeed of 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 shall be given to them for whom it is prepared of my Father.

Another baptism, “baptism by fire,” is judgement—the eternal kind. Those who are not Christ’s will be separated from His followers and burned in hell’s fire. This is not a baptism that believers will experience.

Matthew 3:11-12

I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance: but he that cometh after me is mightier than I, whose shoes I am not worthy to bear: **he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost, and with fire:** Whose fan is in his hand, and he will thoroughly purge his floor, and gather his wheat into the garner; **but he will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire.**

The water baptism we usually think of is known as the “baptism of repentance” and it was done using water. It started with John the Baptist.

Water baptism was never meant to be a permanent means of remission of sins.

Mark 1:4-5

John did baptize in the wilderness, and preach **the baptism of repentance** for the remission of sins. And there went out unto him all the land of Judaea, and they of Jerusalem, and were all **baptized of him in the river of Jordan, confessing their sins.**

John told the people that this baptism by water was to prepare people for the coming baptism by Jesus Christ with the Holy Ghost.

John 1:29-34

The next day John seeth Jesus coming unto him, and saith, **Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world.** This is he of whom I said, After me cometh a man which is preferred before me: for he was before me. And I knew him not: but that he should be made manifest to Israel, therefore **am I come baptizing with water.** And John bare record, saying, I saw the Spirit descending from heaven like a dove, and it abode upon him. And I knew him not: **but he that sent**

me to baptize with water, the same said unto me, Upon whom thou shalt see the Spirit descending, and remaining on him, the same is he which baptizeth with the Holy Ghost. And I saw, and bare record that this is the Son of God.

Before He ascended into heaven, Jesus told His disciples that they would receive a different baptism, with the Holy Ghost (not water.)

Acts 1:5

For John truly **baptized with water**; but ye shall be **baptized with the Holy Ghost** not many days hence.

Jesus had told His disciples about the Holy Ghost many times during His earthly ministry.

John 14:16

And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever;

John 14:26

But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall

teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you.

The disciples' promised baptism with the Holy Ghost occurred on Pentecost.

Acts 2:2-4

And suddenly there came **a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind**, and it filled all the house where they were sitting. And there appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them. **And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost**, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance.

There were 120 people who were first baptized with the Holy Ghost on Pentecost.

Acts 1:15

And in those days Peter stood up in the midst of the disciples, and said, (the number of names together were about **an hundred and twenty**,) There was no water involved at Pentecost. In fact, it tells us they were sitting in a house.

Acts 2:2

And suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled **all the house where they were sitting.**

There is another reason to believe that there was no water baptism on that Pentecost. It was a Sabbath, a holy convocation, and the Jews were prohibited from doing any work that day!

Leviticus 23:15-16, 23

And ye shall count unto you from the morrow after the sabbath, from the day that ye brought the sheaf of the wave offering; seven sabbaths shall be complete: Even unto the morrow after the seventh sabbath shall ye number fifty days; and ye shall offer a new meat offering unto the LORD.

²³And ye shall proclaim on the selfsame day, that it may be an holy convocation unto you: **ye shall do no servile work therein:** it shall be a statute for ever in all your dwellings throughout your generations.

Peter told the people who witnessed Pentecost that they should repent and be baptized for the remission of sins. It sounds like John's baptism. But there was a difference from John's baptism. Now, it was being baptized in the name of Jesus Christ, by receiving the word (no water.) Then the Holy Ghost would come upon them.

Acts 2:38

Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of **you in the name of Jesus Christ** for the remission of sins, and **ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.**

There was no more need to be baptized by water for remission of sins. Christ's death, burial and resurrection took away everyone's sins! Baptism by water was no longer necessary. It was now "baptism by belief."

Simply by believing the word of God, people in Israel were baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins. Then they received the Holy Ghost as Jesus promised.

Besides the initial 120, three thousand additional people were baptized into Jesus Christ by receiving the word, and then received the Holy Ghost.

Acts 2:41

Then **they that gladly received his word were baptized:** and the same day there **were added unto them about three thousand souls.**

Baptism became belief. Those believing the word about the Lord Jesus Christ were baptized. Period. Without water.

Acts 8:12,14-15

But **when they believed Philip preaching the things concerning the kingdom of God, and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized,** both men and women.

Notice that when they believed the word, the people in the previous verse were baptized into Jesus Christ. They did not immediately receive the Holy Ghost. After Pentecost, they still needed the “laying on of hands” to receive the Holy Ghost.

At first, it was one of Jesus' apostles (someone who had already received the Holy Ghost) who would lay his hands on a baptized (believing) person so they could receive the Holy Ghost.

Acts 8:14-15

¹⁴Now when the apostles which were at Jerusalem heard that **Samaria had received the word of God**, they sent unto them Peter and John: Who, when they were come down, **prayed for them, that they might receive the Holy Ghost:**

Peter and John knew that Samaria had received the word of God (in other words, been baptized) and these disciples went to lay their hands on the Samaritans, so they would receive the Holy Ghost.

The 2 steps to receiving the Holy Ghost are shown in the following verses. Step 1, the Samaritans had only been baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus (by believing the word of God.) Step 2, was when Peter and John laid their hands on the Samaritans, and they received the Holy Ghost.

Acts 8:16-17

(For as yet he was fallen upon none of them: only they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus.) Then laid they their hands on them, and they received the Holy Ghost.

The next verses show the difference in baptisms. Paul found water-baptized believers in Ephesus who had not yet heard of the Holy Ghost!

Acts 19:1-2

And it came to pass, that, while Apollos was at Corinth, Paul having passed through the upper coasts came to Ephesus: and finding certain disciples, He said unto them, **Have ye received the Holy Ghost since ye believed?** And they said unto him, We have not so much as heard whether there be any Holy Ghost.

Paul asked them which baptism they had received. They said it was John's baptism (water.) Paul told them that John's baptism of repentance was to prepare people to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ Who would take away their sins, "Him which should come after him."

Acts 19:3-4

And he said unto them, **Unto what then were ye baptized? And they said, Unto John's baptism.** Then said Paul, **John verily baptized with the baptism of repentance,** saying unto the people, **that they should believe on him which should come after him, that is, on Christ Jesus.**

Look what happens next. Their water baptism by John did not baptize them in the name of Jesus Christ. When the people heard the word about the Lord Jesus Christ and *believed*, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. Then, part 2, Paul laid his hands on them and they received the Holy Ghost.

Acts 19:5-6

When they heard this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. And when Paul had laid his hands upon them, the Holy Ghost came on them; and they spake with tongues, and prophesied.

Paul, himself, if you remember, did not believe that Jesus was the Messiah. He was one of the

Pharisees that consented to stoning Stephen. He imprisoned believers in the Lord Jesus.

Acts 8:1-3

And Saul was consenting unto his death. And at that time there was a great persecution against the church which was at Jerusalem; and they were all scattered abroad throughout the regions of Judaea and Samaria, except the apostles. And devout men carried Stephen to his burial, and made great lamentation over him. **As for Saul, he made havock of the church, entering into every house, and haling men and women committed them to prison.**

So we know that when the Lord called Saul (who became Paul) on the road to Damascus, Saul would not have received the water baptism of John. He was still trying to imprison all people who followed Jesus.

After the Lord Jesus met and saved Saul, He sent Ananias to tell Saul about the Lord and how He was going to use him. Notice that Ananias put his hands on Saul. That was so Saul would receive the Holy Ghost—Saul's baptism.

Acts 9:13-18

Then Ananias answered, Lord, I have heard by many of this man, how much evil he hath done to thy saints at Jerusalem: And here he hath authority from the chief priests to bind all that call on thy name. **But the Lord said unto him, Go thy way: for he is a chosen vessel unto me, to bear my name before the Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel: For I will shew him how great things he must suffer for my name's sake.** And Ananias went his way, and entered into the house; and **putting his hands on him** said, Brother Saul, the Lord, even Jesus, that appeared unto thee in the way as thou camest, hath sent me, that thou mightest receive thy sight, **and be filled with the Holy Ghost.** And immediately there fell from his eyes as it had been scales: and he received sight forthwith, and arose, **and was baptized.**

There was no water baptism for Saul (who became Paul.) This is fitting because as members of the Church, the Body of Christ, Paul is our pattern, the one we should follow.

1 Corinthians 11:1

Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ.

We get to read Paul's own version of the events of his conversion later in the book of Acts. There are many times that an event is described in more than one chapter, or even more than one book in the Bible. When you study the Bible, you find that you need to read all of the accounts for a complete picture. Each account presents new information, so there are some things which may not be mentioned in every account.

It gets confusing to those of us who have always thought only about water for baptism, but baptism by the Holy Ghost, although there is no water, is also described using the term "washing." Paul writes of his meeting with Ananias and his baptism.

Acts 22:12-16

And one Ananias, a devout man according to the law, having a good report of all the Jews which dwelt there, Came unto me, and stood, and said unto me, Brother Saul, receive thy sight. And the same hour I looked up upon him. And he said,

The God of our fathers hath chosen thee, that thou shouldest know his will, and see that Just One, and shouldest hear the voice of his mouth. For thou shalt be his witness unto all men of what thou hast seen and heard. And now why tarriest thou? arise, and **be baptized, and wash away thy sins**, calling on the name of the Lord.

In this new baptism for Gentiles, everything happens at once. The Holy Ghost immediately falls on all who hear the word and believe. There is no need for anyone to lay their hands on the newly baptized believers to receive the Holy Ghost. Gentiles simply believe the word and the Holy Ghost falls on them.

The following verse also describes the gift of the Holy Ghost like water. Here, the gift of the Holy Ghost “fell” and also was “poured out” on the Gentiles. This verse is also extremely important because it shows the transition that God was making by taking His word to the Gentiles.

Acts 10:44-45

While Peter yet spake these words, **the Holy Ghost fell on all them which heard the word.**

And they of the circumcision which believed were astonished, as many as came with Peter, because that **on the Gentiles also was poured out the gift of the Holy Ghost.**

These Gentiles in the next verse had obviously been baptized by the Holy Ghost, because they were speaking in tongues, but Peter mentioned baptism with water! (Peter was always a man of action but not always a man of understanding.)

Acts 10:46-48

For **they heard them speak with tongues**, and magnify God. Then answered Peter, Can any man forbid water, that these should not be baptized, **which have received the Holy Ghost as well as we? And he commanded them to be baptized in the name of the Lord.** Then prayed they him to tarry certain days.

This incident serves to show that baptism by water was no longer necessary. Baptism was now simply believing the word (baptism by belief) about the saving work of the Lord Jesus Christ and instantly receiving the Holy Ghost. (It is still that for us, today.)

Ephesians 1:12-14

That we should be to the praise of his glory, who first trusted in Christ. In whom ye also trusted, **after that ye heard the word of truth**, the gospel of your salvation: **in whom also after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise**, Which is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of his glory.

It happened again to Peter in Acts 11. He was speaking about Jesus Christ. We know that the listeners believed the word because the Holy Ghost immediately fell upon them. This time, Peter did not recommend a water baptism afterward. He acknowledged, “what was I, that I could withstand God?” Peter now understood what God was doing, baptism by the Holy Ghost—without water—was happening to the Gentiles, too, even without the laying-on of hands.

Acts 11:15-17

And as I began to speak, the Holy Ghost fell on them, as on us at the beginning. Then **remembered I the word of the Lord, how that he**

said, John indeed baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost.

Forasmuch then as God gave them the like gift as he did unto us, who believed on the Lord Jesus Christ; what was I, that I could withstand God?

God was taking His message of salvation to the Gentiles.

Acts 11:18

When they heard these things, they held their peace, and glorified God, saying, **Then hath God also to the Gentiles granted repentance unto life.**

How do we know that water baptism is not for us? Paul lists a handful of people he water baptized.

1 Corinthians 1:13-16

Is Christ divided? was Paul crucified for you? or were ye baptized in the name of Paul? I thank God that I baptized none of you, but Crispus and Gaius; Lest any should say that I had baptized in mine own name. And I baptized also the

household of Stephanas: besides, I know not whether I baptized any other.

Paul says that Christ sent him not to baptize, but to preach the gospel. He explains further: if you preach the (water) baptism of John for the forgiveness of sins, you have no need for the death of Christ for the forgiveness of sins! That really misses the entire point! Our salvation is totally dependent on Jesus' death, burial and resurrection, not any water baptism we might receive.

1 Corinthians 1:17

For Christ sent me not to baptize, but to preach the gospel: not with wisdom of words, lest the cross of Christ should be made of none effect.

Paul tells us that there is one baptism.

Ephesians 4:3-6

Endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are 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.

The one baptism is the baptism by the Holy Ghost into the body of Christ the moment we believe the gospel. There is no water involved.

1 Corinthians 12:12-13

For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body: so also is Christ. For **by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body**, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit.

This can cause some confusion, but Paul again compares the baptism by the Holy Ghost to being washed by water.

1 Corinthians 6:11

And such were some of you: but ye are **washed**, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified **in the name of the Lord Jesus**, and **by the Spirit of our God**.

We know that He is not talking about being baptized by water because we know that the Spirit does not use water. He enters our hearts and seals us.

2 Corinthians 1:21-22

Now he which stablisheth us with you in Christ, and hath anointed us, is God; **Who hath also sealed us, and given the earnest of the Spirit in our hearts.**

Romans 5:5

And hope maketh not ashamed; because **the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us.**

Ephesians 4:30

And grieve not the **holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption.**

Our baptism is by the Holy Ghost, into the Church, the Body of Christ, as soon as we believe in the death, burial, and resurrection of the Lord Jesus to pay for our sins.

You can see why water baptism is so popular, even today. You can see, and feel, water baptism.

Today, we do not have the outward show of the in-dwelling of the Holy Ghost--speaking in tongues. Without it, how do we know that we have been baptized by the Holy Ghost? Faith.

Hebrews 11:1

Now **faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.**

We “receive the promise of the Spirit through faith.” And God never breaks His promises.

Galatians 3:13-14

Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us: for it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree: That the blessing of Abraham might come on the Gentiles through Jesus Christ; that **we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith.**

Romans 15:13

Now the **God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that ye may abound in hope, through the power of the Holy Ghost.**

The Holy Ghost gives us faith by which to wait for the hope of righteousness

Galatians 5:5

For we through the Spirit wait for the hope of righteousness by faith.

Hope is also something that we cannot see. Paul very practically asks why we would continue to hope for something we can see.

Romans 8:24-25

For **we are saved by hope**: but hope that is seen is not hope: **for what a man seeth, why doth he yet hope for? But if we hope for that we see not, then do we with patience wait for it.**

Finally, Paul gives us a sure way to know when someone has the Holy Ghost in his heart.

1 Corinthians 12:3

Wherefore I give you to understand, that no man speaking by the Spirit of God calleth Jesus accursed: and that **no man can say that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Ghost.**

