

There are nine baptisms mentioned in the New Testament. How many are for us today?

1. Water Baptism – John the Baptist.

This verse from Mark summarises the nature and content of John's baptism.....

Mark 1: 4,5 John came baptizing in the wilderness and preaching a baptism of repentance for the remission of sins. Then all the land of Judea, and those from Jerusalem, went out to him and were all baptized by him in the Jordan River, confessing their sins.

2. Water Baptism – Jesus & the Disciples.

These verses in John tell us about Jesus and the disciples baptizing. This is essentially the same baptism as John's, but is different in the sense of Jesus being present, Jesus giving authority to his own disciples to baptize, and the little known fact of Jesus making and baptizing more people than John.

John 3: 22 After these things Jesus and His disciples came into the land of Judea, and there He remained with them and baptized.

John 3: 26 And they came to John and said to him, “Rabbi, He who was with you beyond the Jordan, to whom you have testified – behold, He is baptizing, and all are coming to Him!”

John 4: 1-3 Therefore, when the Lord knew that the Pharisees had heard that Jesus made and baptized more disciples than John (though Jesus Himself did not baptize, but His disciples), He left Judea and departed again to Galilee.

3. Baptism of Suffering – Jesus (and the disciples).

Although this baptism is not described, we can get the general picture from these verses....

Luke 12: 49,50 I came to send fire on the earth, and how I wish it were already kindled! But I have a baptism to be baptized with, and how distressed I am till it is accomplished!

(“submerged in a sea” of opposition, suffering and hatred)

Matthew 20: 22,23 (also Mark 10: 38-40) 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.”

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.”

4. Water Baptism in the Name of Jesus – The Disciples in the Book of Acts.

Jesus had commanded the disciples after He rose from the dead.....

Matthew 28:19 Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

Mark 16: 15,16 And He said to them, “Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. He who believes and is baptized will be saved: but he who does not believe will be condemned.”

There are many examples in Acts of the disciples now baptizing in Jesus name. They were obeying Jesus' command – and baptizing from a Jewish perspective and mostly to fellow Jews.....

Acts 2: 38 Then Peter said to them, “Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.”

Acts 8: 12 But when they believed Philip as he preached the things concerning the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, both men and women were baptized.

Acts 8: 35-38 And the eunuch said, “ See, here is water. What hinders me from being baptized?” Then Philip said, “If you believe with all your heart you may.” And he answered and said, “I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God.” both Philip and the eunuch went down into the water, and he baptized him.

The difference between water baptism in the Gospels and water baptism in Acts:

The two baptisms are similar in many ways but their differences are quite striking. Both are in water and both have a call to repent and be baptized for the remission of sins – but that's where the similarities end.

John's baptism is pre-cross – so it didn't actually produce any inward change in the people, but was a cleansing to prepare them for a complete removal, or remission (Gk = release, pardon, freedom) of sin in the future. John's repentance required confession of sins, and John was always pointing to the Messiah who was coming after him, was greater than him, and would baptize with the Holy Spirit and fire.

By contrast, baptism in Jesus name (or into Jesus Christ) was a result of repenting (change your mind) and believing into Christ, (and often confessing Him as the Son of God) - and was a response after hearing the good news of Jesus being the Christ, and who He now was. Unlike John's baptism, there was no confession of sins. This was because the remission (or removal) of sin that John's people were looking towards, had already been achieved by Jesus Christ – so the disciples in Acts were baptizing people into that truth. (or because of that truth) So there was no need to confess their sins, because Jesus had already bore their sin on the cross and taken it out of the way. They were getting baptized into the freedom of removed or pardoned sin by Jesus Christ!

5. Baptism in (or with) the Holy Spirit.

Whenever John was asked about his baptism, he always mentioned the one who was coming after him, (the Messiah), who would baptize with the Holy Spirit and fire.....

Matthew 3: 11 / Luke 3:16 I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance, but He who is coming after me is mightier than I.....He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire.

Mark 1: 8 I indeed baptize you with water, but He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit.

Jesus himself told the disciples just before he ascended.....

Acts 1: 5,8 For John truly baptized with water, but you shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now.....But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.

The description of the coming of the Holy Spirit on the Day of Pentecost.....

Acts 2: 1-4 When the day of Pentecost had fully come, they were all with one accord in one place. And suddenly there came a sound from heaven, as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting. Then there appeared to them divided tongues, as of fire, and one sat upon each of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance.

Many different manifestations of the Holy Spirit occurred in the book of Acts.....

Acts 4: 31 And when they had prayed, the place where they were assembled together was shaken; and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and they spoke the word of God with boldness.

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, who, when they had come down, prayed for them that they might receive the Holy Spirit. For as yet He had fallen upon none of them. They had only been baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. Then they laid hands on them, and they received the Holy Spirit.

Acts 9: 17,18 And Ananias went his way and entered the house; and laying his hands on him he said, "Brother Saul, the Lord Jesus, who appeared to you on the road as you came, has sent me that you may receive your sight and be filled with the Holy Spirit." Immediately there fell from his eyes something like scales, and he received his sight at once; and he arose and was baptized.

Acts 10: 44-46 While Peter was still speaking these words, the Holy Spirit fell upon all those who heard the word. And those of the circumcision who believed were astonished, as many as came with Peter, because the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out on the Gentiles also. For they heard them speak with tongues and magnify God.

Acts 19: 1-6 And it happened, while Apollos was at Corinth, that Paul, having passed through the upper regions, came to Ephesus. And finding some disciples 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."

And he said to them, "Into what then were you baptized?"

So they said, "Into John's baptism."

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."

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

6. Baptized into Moses – Israel in the Wilderness.

Paul was teaching on the example of the children of Israel in the Old Covenant.....

1 Corinthians 10: 1-4 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, all ate the same spiritual food, and all drank the same spiritual drink. For they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them, and that Rock was Christ.

7. Baptized for the Dead.

This is a much disputed scripture and seems to be an isolated verse. I believe it's talking about being a martyr – where a person knowingly and gladly makes a decision to live for God knowing that their decision will bring them certain death. (they baptize themselves into death for Christ – looking for a better resurrection) (See: Resources – Baptized for the Dead – Adam Clarke)

1 Corinthians 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?

8. Doctrine of Baptisms – Ceremonial Washing of Articles.

This term is found in Hebrews 6 – but it is not the usual word for baptism.

The verb for baptize(d) (baptizo = 80 times) and the noun for baptism (baptisma = 22 times) – are the common words used. The word "baptisms" in Hebrews 6 is baptisimos and is found only four times. The other three times it is translated "washings" (Mark 7:4,8 Heb 9:10) It refers to the ceremonial washing of articles as prescribed by Mosaic Law.

Hebrews 6: 1,2 Therefore leaving the discussion of the elementary principles of Christ, let us go on to perfection, not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works and of faith toward God, of the doctrine of baptisms, of laying on of hands, of resurrection of the dead, and of eternal judgement.

9. Baptized Into Christ.

The apostle Paul is the only writer in the New Testament to give us the term 'baptized into Christ' (or 'baptized into his death' or baptized into one body')

Roman 6: 3-7 Or do you not know that as many of us as were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death? 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.

For if we have been united together in the likeness of His death, certainly we also shall be in the likeness of His resurrection, knowing this, that our old man was crucified with Him, that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves of sin. For he who has died has been freed from sin.

1 Corinthians 12: 12,13 For as the body is one and has many members, but all the members of that one body, being many, are one body, so also is Christ. For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body – whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free – and have all been made to drink into one Spirit.

Galatians 3: 26-28 For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus.

Colossians 2: 11-13 In Him you were also circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, by putting off the body of the sins of the flesh, by the circumcision of Christ, buried with Him in baptism, in which you also were raised with Him through faith in the working of God.

We have a tendency to see water baptism in these scriptures – but that is a narrow view that most of us have been taught. Paul does not specifically mention water – and we should not automatically assume that he was intending to associate his baptism teaching with water baptism.

After dealing with a division over people following the personalities of different leaders – Paul makes an astounding statement regarding baptism.....

! Corinthians 1: 12-17 Now I say this, that each of you says, “I am of Paul,” or “I am of Apollos,” or “I am of Cephas,” or “I am of Christ.” Is Christ divided? Was Paul crucified for you? Or were you baptized in the name of Paul?

I thank God that I baptized none of you except Crispus and Gaius, lest anyone should say that I had baptized in my own name. Yes, I also baptized the household of Stephanas. Besides, I do not know whether I baptized any other. **For Christ did not send me to baptize**, but to preach the gospel, not with wisdom of words, lest the cross of Christ should be made of no effect.

Surely this is in direct contradiction to Jesus commanding his disciples to baptize?

How could Paul say that he was not sent to baptize? Does he mean that he just delegates other people to baptize for him – or is there a deeper meaning behind his statement?

If we take an overview of the whole Bible, we can see that it's a story – a narrative – a revealing of stages of truth – a development of ideas – all culminating in “Christ.” Jesus Christ is the ultimate answer and fulfilment of every topic in the Bible. Paul was the key individual – revealed near the end of this story – to give us the clearest and most informative understanding of Christ. I believe Paul's understanding of many things, including baptism, grew as his relationship with Christ grew. That is why he came to make this summary statement in Ephesians.....

Eph 4: 4-6 There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were 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 Ephesian letter was written near the end of Paul's life, and I believe by that time, he had come to realize that Christ had done everything for our complete salvation, and nothing was needed to be done by us to help or complete or add to that process – not even baptism!

Conclusion:

I believe that Paul gives us the ultimate revelation of Christ and what he has done for us.

Christ is everything – and Christ has done everything.

One baptism – baptism into Christ by the Holy Spirit – is just another part of what happens to us when we are born of God - new-creation sons and daughters – joined to the Lord and one spirit with him.

Nothing else is required to be added to that.

(Note: If someone came to me saying that baptism in water was very important to them, and they definitely wanted to be water baptised – I would point to the above study, and explain that water baptism was not a requirement for being in Christ in the New Covenant. If they understood the study, and still wanted to be water baptized, out of respect for God, or appreciation of what Christ has done, etc – I would not hesitate to water baptize them in the name of Jesus Christ.)