

- ***READ Ephesians 4:1-6*** Unity was certainly on the mind of the Holy Spirit as He inspired the Apostle Paul to pen this letter to the brethren who were in Ephesus. The first three verses of this chapter emphasize the need for unity among the people of God, and then verses 4-6 teach us what foundational principles that unity can be built upon. While there are many aspects of our belief system as Christians that might be disputed, it should be these seven on which all Christians take a stand as being true and accurate no matter which way the religious winds might be blowing.
 - However, we recognize quite sadly that these seven foundations aspects of Christian beliefs are actually some of the most hotly disputed. Individuals claiming Christ argue over just how many bodies of Christ actually exist. They argue over the personage and work of the Holy Spirit. They differ on the hope that they possess and what it ought to mean to them. They argue over Jesus, His deity, and His purpose. They argue and fuss over faith and what exactly that entails. And certainly not least in respect, do they bicker and fight over baptism and its purpose within the Christian faith.
 - As we continue our study on these foundation principles of Christians beliefs, we are going to consider the one baptism that is mentioned here in this text. If you were to google any number of questions concerning baptism, you would instantly have at your finger tips millions of hits giving you any and every answer possible concerning baptism. As you can guess, the vast majority of these answers disagree with one another, and we would quickly realize that the Christian world is deeply divided over the issue of baptism. This is quite unfortunately seeing as how Paul writes that it is foundational in our understanding and knowledge of what God wants from us.
 - This disagreement and misunderstanding simply ought not be the case, so we will use our time this morning giving Biblical consideration to the one baptism of Ephesians 4:5. It is my desire that we depart this assembly feeling more confident in our knowledge of this one baptism and how we can show exactly what the baptism is that is being referenced here in this text. Let's begin by getting more specific in regards to many of the disagreements that are found within the Christian world on this subject of baptism.
- I. There are many different baptisms that are found within the current religious world.**
- A. There are differing ideas over who can and should be baptized.**
- Looking across the Christian landscape, we can find examples of different churches being willing to baptize people of nearly any and every age. While the predominant recipients of baptism are more mature individuals who can have a stronger grasp on Biblical concepts, there are some groups who baptize not just young children, but even babies. There are a handful of Christian churches, most of them orthodox in their origins, that still practice the tradition of infant baptism.
- B. There are differing ideas as to why they should be baptized.**
1. If one were to ask why they should be baptized, the most common answer that would be given to them from the mainstream protestant world would be so they can outwardly express the inward change that has happened within them by accepting Jesus as their savior. Most websites that speak about the purpose for being baptized with articulate this idea in some shape or form, and then will almost always follow it up by stating that baptism in no way saves, but it is simply a good thing to do.
 - *"Remember: getting baptized is important, but not because it saves you. The grace of God through faith in Jesus is what saves you. Getting baptized is all about telling the world about the change that's already happened inside of you."* (Life Church)
 2. Others would say that we should be baptized simply because Jesus was baptized. Some church require baptism in order to be added into the membership of that particular local

church or denomination. Then some would say that baptism is necessary for infants so that they would be forgiven of the original sin that plagues them because of Adam's sin in the beginning in the Garden of Eden. Then others would teach that a person needs to be baptized so that their sins might be washed away. The reasons and results of baptism are varied depending on where you go and who you talk to.

C. There are differing ideas as to how they should be baptized.

1. Throughout the Christian world the word baptism is used to many different things. What I mean by this is that though the word baptism literally means immersion that doesn't always mean that a person is "baptized" by being fully immersed in water. What immersion is the predominate mode of baptism, there are some who believe baptism can take place in a different way.
2. There are some Christian bodies that practice baptism through sprinkling or pouring. These methods of baptism are predominately practiced by the Catholic church, but there are some Protestant denominations that will also pour water over a person's head or even just sprinkle water over the head of a person who has come for baptism. The official terminology for such baptisms are baptism by aspersion (sprinkling) and by affusion (pouring). What we understand by these practices is that even the mode in which someone is baptized is also debated and practiced different depending on where you are and what type of church you might be in.

II. There are even multiple baptisms that can be found within the New Testament.

A. Water Baptism

1. Water baptism is first greatly emphasized by John (appropriately named the Baptist) in the beginning portions of each of the Gospels accounts in **Matthew 3, Mark 1, Luke 3, & John 1**. These text all tell us that John set up shop around the Jordan because the multitudes were coming to him order to be baptized.
2. We also see baptism being practiced in large numbers upon the founding of the church in **Acts 2**. In that chapter we find 3,000 people being baptized in water. Throughout the book of Acts we see numerous individuals and groups be baptized.

B. Holy Spirit Baptism

1. Also found within the book of the Acts of the Apostles is the baptism of the Holy Spirit. This is mentioned by Jesus in **Acts 1:5**. Jesus speaks of John's baptism being one that was done in water, but that they would soon be baptized with the Holy Spirit. We see this taking place before Peter's great sermon in **Acts 2:1-4**. The Holy Spirit came down upon them and this was evidenced by their ability to speak in tongues.
2. We see this same kind of thing once more in **Acts 10:44ff**. In this text we find Peter being sent to the household of Cornelius by the Lord. This was interesting because Cornelius and all of his household were Gentiles, and the Gentiles had not yet received the preaching of the Gospel so as to be saved through Jesus. Yet, as Peter was beginning to share the good news with this household, the Holy Spirit fell upon them all. The Jewish believers who were with Peter were amazed and recognized with Peter that the same thing that had happened to the Apostles was now happening to Cornelius and his household. Peter's conclusion was that these, too, were now candidates for baptism in water in the name of Jesus.

C. Various Other Baptisms

- Water baptism and the baptism of the Holy Spirit are the most well know baptisms found within the New Testament and Bible as a whole, but there are other baptisms found such as the baptisms of fire (**Matthew 3:11**...reference to judgement), sufferings (**Luke 12:50**...baptism of suffering that Jesus would undergo on this earth), and then even the ritual washings practiced by the Jews for converts to Judaism. (**historical accounts**) So which of these baptisms is the most likely baptism of **Ephesians 4:5**? There are many mentioned, but Paul says there is only one.

III. The most logical baptism of Ephesians 4:5 must be the one that:

A. has been commanded by Jesus.

1. If the baptism of **Ephesians 4:5** is to be a source of unity among believers in Christ then it only makes sense that it would be a baptism that was commanded by Jesus for all believers. In **Matthew 28:18-20**, we read of a baptism that Jesus commands for all believers. His instructions to the Apostles were clear. They were to go into the world and make disciples of all the nations by baptizing them in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.
2. Some might wonder how this baptism differs from John's baptism. They are similar in the respect that they are both to be accompanied by repentance, and we know this because Jesus taught during His ministry that being a disciple of His demands the taking up of the cross and dying to self. (**Matthew 16:24**) Yes, both baptisms focus on repentance, but John's baptism comes up short when compared to this baptism of Jesus because it was only towards repentance and lacked the authority and power that comes through the Father, Son, and Spirit. We can see this the superiority of Jesus's baptism in action in **Acts 19:1-7** when Paul baptized the twelve men in Ephesus who had only know of John's baptism. Based upon this evidence, I believe we can rule out John's baptism as the one baptism of **Ephesians 4:5**.

B. was taught & commanded by the Apostles.

1. Further, we'll notice that this baptism that was commanded by Jesus was further commanded by His Apostles as they went out preaching and teaching in the earliest days of the church. We first see this in **Acts 2:38** when Peter answered the question of the people as to what they needed to do in response to their conviction of being guilty of killing the Son of God. Peter's response was for them to repent and be baptized in the name of Jesus. This is only the first of many times that we see this through this book.
2. We also see baptism being adhered to in **Acts 10:34ff** as Peter is extending the Gospel to those who would be the first Gentile converts. We noted earlier that the Holy Spirit falls upon these Gentiles as Peter is sharing the Gospel message. Let's not that Peter and those with him are surprised and amazed by this taking place. Peter had not commanded that it happen, but he took the occasion and did command something. Notice that in **Acts 10:46-48** Peter commands that these who had received the Holy Spirit just as the Apostles did in the beginning needed to be baptized. The text tells us, "*he ordered them to be baptized in the name of Jesus.*"
3. This occasion is only one of two occasions where Holy Spirit baptism is recorded. Jesus foretold of the first, but this occasion was not commanded by Jesus or Peter. However, we find here and in other places where water baptism in the name of Jesus is commanded. Based upon that evidence, I believe we can conclude that Holy Spirit baptism cannot be the one baptism of **Ephesians 4:5** because it is not something that all people have bene command to undergo.

C. forgives sin.

1. Let's also note from various texts that this baptism in the name of Jesus is what forgives us of our sins when we put our full trust in Jesus and the power of God. It was in **Acts 2:38** where Peter tells the Jews gather together, "*Repent, and each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins...*" Paul himself recounts in **Acts 22:16** of what took place following Jesus appearing to Him on the road to Damascus. In that text He recalls Ananias telling him, "*Now why do you delay? Get up and be baptized and wash away your sins, calling on His name.*"
2. These verses alone should suffice to show the powerful work that is done when baptism in the name of Jesus is done, but perhaps my favorite text that makes this point is found in **Colossians 2:9-13**. In these verses, Paul explains that it is in baptism that that the spiritual circumcision of Christ is performed in which our faith in the power of God results in our being

made alive together with Him and our transgressions being forgiven. The power is not in the water or in our might to earn God's grace and mercy in forgiveness. Instead, the power is in God to work through our faith and obedience to bring about the result of sinners being forgiven of their sins and being made righteous before God against and restoring fellowship with Him. Surely if there is a single baptism that unites us then it is the one baptism that unites us again in fellowship with God.

D. adds to the Body of Christ.

1. Finally, let's note that this baptism in the name of Jesus is the baptism that actually joins us together in Jesus. In **Galatians 3:27-29** we read, *"For all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free man, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus, and if you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's descendants, heirs according to promise."*
2. Notice these verses that it is through being baptized in the name of Jesus putting our faith and trust in Him that we are joined together with the number of the saved who are heirs of the promise of God that His people will be with Him in paradise one day. This promise most certainly is that which unites us together, and it can be had by those who are willing to put their faith in Jesus and be baptized in His name. Let's also notice that this promise is to all people regardless of what differences they might have within their persons. What hope and promises that can unite even those who are so different in many different ways.

Is there any baptism that can be found within the New Testament that can claim superiority to this baptism in Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of sins? It can't be John's baptism for it could not add to a body that had not yet been established. It can't be baptism of the Holy Spirit for it was never commanded by Jesus or the Apostles as being something that each person must do. Therefore, without a doubt, the most logical conclusion as to what the one baptism of Ephesians 4:5 is that of baptism in the name of Jesus for the forgiveness of sins. This baptism was first commanded by Jesus. It was then commanded by the Apostles. It was taught to have been the point when sins are forgiven and the sinner is added to the body of Christ as a now saved individual. It truly unites us all in Jesus!

This one baptism is what binds all believers together in fellowship through the washing of our sins away by the blood of Jesus. May each of us who have been washed remember joyfully that day in which our conscience was cleaned and peace entered our souls. Praise God for His mercy and grace which can be experienced through the one baptism given by our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. May He help each of us to live daily as a saved, forgiven, and united people.