

SPIRITUAL UNITY: GOD'S PLAN—PLANK SIX, ONE BAPTISM

“Only one baptism? Are you sure about that?” Well, to make sure, let's read what the Scriptures say about it. “There is **one body and one Spirit**, just as you were called in **one hope** of your calling; **one Lord, one faith, one baptism...**” (Ephesians 4:4-5, emphasis supplied). So, there it is for sure and with certainty. This sixth plank in God's platform for unity is **one baptism**.

“But doesn't the Bible mention several baptisms?” Yes, it does. Just to scratch the surface, John the Baptizer was sent to preach a baptism of repentance to Jews to prepare them for the coming of Jesus, the Messiah (Isaiah 40:3; Matthew 3:1-3). Of Jesus John himself said he was not worthy to carry his sandals and promised that “He,” Jesus, the Messiah, “will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire” (Matthew 3:11). Then, just prior to ascending back to heaven, Jesus commanded his apostles to go and make disciples of all nations, “...baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit” (Matthew 28:19).

Yet, Paul declared the fact of there being only one baptism. So, how about the others mentioned in the Bible? The obvious answer is that by A.D. 61 or 62, when Paul wrote his letter to the Ephesian Christians, all the various baptisms mentioned in the Scriptures had either served God's purpose and ceased or else were yet future—all except one.

Fortunately, there is a simple way to determine which of these baptisms was valid when Paul's Ephesian letter was written. The key is found in Matthew's account of the Great Commission given by Jesus to his apostles. Following his death and resurrection Jesus came to them saying that all authority had been given to him and commanding them to, “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, teaching them to observe all things I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age” (Matthew 28:18-20).

The obvious point is that the baptism Jesus enjoined his apostles to preach and administer was authorized as part of a commission in which he promised to be with them “...always, even to the end of the age.” Thus, logically, the baptism of this commission has to be the one yet in force in the A.D. 60s when Paul wrote to the Ephesians, “There is...one baptism...” (Next, we will further identify and detail this baptism through the work of Jesus' apostles.) --Jerry F. Bassett