



A Closer Look at Baptism (1)

For Christ also died for sins once for all, *the* just for *the* unjust, so that He might bring us to God, having been put to death in the flesh, but made alive in the spirit; in which also He went and made proclamation to the spirits *now* in prison, who once were disobedient, when the

patience of God kept waiting in the days of Noah, during the construction of the ark, in which a few, that is, eight persons, were brought safely through *the* water. Corresponding to that, baptism now saves you—not the removal of dirt from the flesh, but an appeal to God for a good conscience—through the resurrection of Jesus Christ, who is at the right hand of God, having gone into heaven, after angels and authorities and powers had been subjected to Him. (1Peter 3:18-22)

Peter gives an explanation of baptism by using a familiar story—familiar to Jews, gentiles, first-century Christians, and modern man alike. He recounts the flood and those saved and lost. Only eight were saved and the rest were lost. The reason the eight were saved was that they heard and obeyed the warning given by the spirit of Christ as Noah preached (2Peter 2:5; Hebrews 11:7). Others did not listen or obey, and as a result, were imprisoned in chains of darkness reserved for everlasting punishment.

This brings to mind that like Noah's family, who were saved, people who now are lost can be saved by hearing and obeying the message of salvation, which involves being baptized for the remission of sins (1Peter 3:21). Furthermore, only a few are saved (Matthew 7:13-14). This salvation from sins corresponds to that salvation in Noah's day. Of course, water is not the cleansing agent. The blood of Christ is the cleansing agent—Peter establishes that (1Peter 1:18-19). However, baptism is to be done for the remission of sins. Baptism accomplishes salvation through the resurrection of Christ (1Peter 1:21; Romans 6:3-4). Thus the coming up out of baptism is the symbol of the resurrection of Jesus. Many get this baptism confused with other types of baptism. There are other baptisms mentioned in Scripture, but they are not this baptism that saves through the blood of Christ.

There is something called the baptism of suffering (Matthew 10:35-40). This had to do with a description of the intensity of the suffering which was to come. It was not commanded for anyone, and it was promised to James and John. Salvation was not the result of it. It was not indicated that water had anything to do with it. Hence, the baptism of suffering was not what our text is speaking about.

There is something which is baptism pertaining to the children of Israel (1Corinthians 10:1-2). This refers to the Israelites crossing the Red Sea in deliverance from Egypt. It is called baptism in that these people were immersed or covered with a cloud above and with water on the sides. No

one was ever commanded to be baptized with this baptism. Salvation was connected with it but not a salvation from sins—it was deliverance from the Egyptians. Water was involved, but this could not have been the baptism to which Peter made reference in our text.

There is another baptism called the baptism of John (Matthew 3:1-12). This was a baptism of repentance and for the remission of sins (Mark 1:4). Preaching preceded it (Matthew 3:1). People confessed their sins in connection with it (Matthew 3:6). This took place in Jordan (Matthew 3:5) This act justified those who did it. Those who were not baptized with this baptism were condemned (Luke 7:23-30). This baptism has not been in effect since Christ commanded people to be baptized (Acts 19:1-5). While this baptism had many features similar to the baptism of our text, it cannot be the baptism of 1Peter 3:21 as this baptism did not pertain to the blood, the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus.

There is the baptism of the Holy Spirit (Matthew 3:11). This was promised to the apostles (Acts 1:8; 2:1-4). This baptism was **never commanded** at any time or at any place. This was **not for the purpose of saving** the one baptized with it (Acts 10:44-48). This was **not to make them followers** of Christ, as they were already his followers. They would be taught as a result of it (John 16:7-13). A similar event happened with Gentiles (Acts 10:44-48). This was **not to purify their hearts** (Acts 15:9). This was not to produce faith (Acts 15:7). This was **not to save** them (Acts 11:14). So, it is apparent that this is not the baptism of our text.

There is also what is called a baptism of fire (Matthew 3:11-12). Certainly, the Lord sent the Spirit for the apostles as He promised them—flames of fire were one of the manifestations. God also uses fire for purifying as in the sufferings that His people endure. However, the fire of which John speaks is clear. It is the fire that is unquenchable and continually burns the chaff as opposed to the wheat. It could not be the baptism of our text. It has to be something other than this.

There is no need for confusion. Peter is clear about the baptism which saves. It is the baptism that Christ commanded based on His blood and stemming from His authority (Matthew 28:18-19; Mark 16:15-16). This fits every characteristic of the baptism of our text. It is the one baptism of Ephesians 4:4—it is the only one which exists at this time and was the only one in effect and commanded at the time of the writing of the book of Ephesians as well as at the time of Peter's letters. This baptism lasts throughout the age—our age. It is a command of God, not an option. If we truly love Him, we will keep His commandments (1John). Do you love Him?