

# ***Water or Spirit? The Baptism of Romans Six and 1 Cor. 12:13***

***By Steve Combs***

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- 1 What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound?*
  - 2 God forbid. How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein?*
  - 3 Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death? (Romans 6:1-3)*

*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. (1 Cor. 2:13)*

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John, the Baptist, said, "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" (Matthew 3:11). I recently read through a paper by a brother named Sadler on the subject of the "Baptism in the Holy Spirit."<sup>1</sup> He lists (according to him) all the places where the baptism of the Holy Spirit is mentioned, but he does not list Romans six or 1 Corinthians 2:13 (or several other verses). Many teachers and preachers believe that the baptism mentioned in these two places is water baptism, not the baptism in the Holy Spirit. On the other hand, many preachers and teachers think it is about the Holy Spirit, *not* water baptism. Which is it?

Those who believe it to be water baptism tend to also believe that the only "church" in the New Testament is a local church. Those who believe in a so-called "universal" church as well as the "local" church often believe Romans 6 and 1 Cor. 12:13 refer to the baptism in the Holy Spirit.

If we divorce Romans 6 and 1 Corinthians 12:13 from the baptism in the Spirit, we are left with very little in the New Testament about the benefits of the baptism in the Spirit. What is the purpose of Holy Spirit baptism?

Brother Sadler mentions empowerment as a purpose for the baptism in the Spirit from Acts 2. There is no denial that Acts 2 depicts an example of Christians being baptized in the Spirit. Jesus told the Apostles in Acts one, "For John truly baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost not many days hence" (Acts 1:5). Jesus also said they would receive "power" (Acts 1:8), which they did. However, the Holy Spirit did two things on the Day of Pentecost. The first was the baptism. The second was that they were "all filled with the Holy Ghost" (Acts 2:4). The baptism and the filling of the Spirit are not the same. If they were, every time we read that someone was filled with the Spirit, they were also being baptized with the Spirit all over again. As we will see, that is *not* the case. Power comes from being filled with the Spirit, not from being baptized.

How do we know that the power to be witnesses came from the filling of the Spirit, rather than the baptism? That can be seen by what happened in Acts 4. Peter and John were taken before the Sanhedrin. Peter was enabled to give a powerful answer to them by being filled with the Holy Spirit (Acts 4:8). The result of this Spirit filled man's words was that it almost left the Jewish leaders speechless and they let Peter and John go. When Peter and John reported to the brethren, they all went to prayer and asked, "And now, Lord, behold their threatenings: and grant unto thy servants, that with

all boldness they may speak thy word, By stretching forth thine hand to heal; and that signs and wonders may be done by the name of thy holy child Jesus" (Acts 4:29-30). God's answer was this: "they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and they spake the word of God with boldness" (Acts 4:31). When Christians prayed for the ability to speak the word with boldness and for miracle working power, God answered with the filling of the Holy Spirit. The filling is not the same as the baptism.

So what is the purpose of the baptism of the Spirit? I believe that Romans six and 1 Corinthians 12:13 are the key places that answer that question.

## The Background to Roman Six

*1 What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound?*

*2 God forbid. How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein? (Rom. 3:1-2)*

The Book of Romans is all about the gospel. It is the most detailed explanation of the gospel in the New testament. Romans 1-3 is about the condemnation of mankind for sin and rebellion. The gentiles are condemned for failure to keep the moral law written in their hearts (Rom. 1 & 2). The Jews are condemned for failure to keep the written law of Moses (Rom. 2). God sees the whole of the human race as rotten to the core and incapable of righteousness (Rom. 3). He will judge every person impartially without respect of persons. The only answer is Justification in Christ by faith.

Before we were saved, we were in bondage. We were enslaved. Ephesians 2:1-3 puts it this way. "Wherein in time past ye walked **according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air**, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience: Among whom also we all had our conversation in times past in the **lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh** and of the mind; and were **by nature** the children of wrath, even as others" (Eph. 2:2-3). We were in bondage to the world, Satan, and the flesh. The blood of Christ redeemed us and saved us from bondage to Satan. The worst of these three enemies for the Christian is his own flesh. The unsaved person is in bondage to this "old man," the sinful human nature.

Romans 4-5 is God's answer to the sin problem. Abraham and David are the supreme examples of justification based on faith. God promised Abraham a seed when he and Sarah were too old to have children. "Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness" (Rom. 4:3). The Lord Jesus Christ made the provision that enables God to have mercy on the condemned. Sin and death were brought on mankind by the sin of Adam. Forgiveness and righteousness were provided by Jesus Christ, through His death on the cross and resurrection from the dead (Rom. 5). Romans five makes it plain that "God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. Much more then, being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him ... But where sin abounded, grace did much more abound: That as sin hath reigned unto death, even so might grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord" (Rom. 5:8-9, 20-21). So, Romans six opens with the question: "*Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound?*" He answers that with a hearty "God forbid" and another question: "*How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein?*"

Ok, what now? We were condemned, but the Lord Jesus Christ redeemed us by His death and resurrection. We have accepted that redemption by faith and have obtained forgiveness, righteousness, and eternal life. What now? What comes next? The answer is clear from the above question, "How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein?" The next step is walk with God in obedience to His every command. Perhaps, you don't see a problem with that, but I do. I couldn't obey God before I was saved. That's one reason I need a Savior. If I couldn't do it before I was saved, what makes me able to do it now? Before I was saved, I was a slave to the flesh, my Egyptian taskmaster. Now that I am saved, what makes me think I am any less enslaved to the taskmaster? Yet, Romans 3:2 doesn't ask,

“how can we obey?” It asks, “How can we *NOT* obey?” An explanation of that last question is what Romans 6 is all about.

## Freedom from Sin

So we come to the conclusion that Romans 6-8 tells us *how to live an obedient Christian life*. Romans 6 presents the key foundational principles for that and they are all *based on baptism*. “**Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death?**” (Rom. 3:3) That’s how it starts and it unfolds from there. What follows is how being baptized into Jesus Christ enables you *NOT* to continue in sin.

Why did God inspire Paul to use the word “baptized?” Paul does not say. He doesn’t explain it. Nevertheless, there are some initial clues and we need to understand them right from the start.

**The first thing is that water baptism is not a real spiritual transaction.** It is a *figure* only. “The like figure whereunto even baptism doth also now save us (not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God,)” (1 Pet. 3:21). A “figure” is an outward picture or representation of something else. Water baptism has nothing to do with the reality of putting away the filth of the flesh. It is not the *reality* of our salvation. It is merely a *picture* of our salvation.

**Second, Romans 6 is dealing with realities not figures or pictures.** Romans 6 tells us that we are dead to sin in reality and why that is true. Romans 6 tells why he asked, “How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein?” The chapter tells us why it is a reality that we no longer *must* live in sin. This is entirely about realities, not pictures like water baptism.

**Third, Romans 6 is not a presentation on the mode and meaning of water baptism.** It is an explanation of the reasons why you are able to live a righteous Christian life now that you are saved, when you could not do so before you were saved. It teaches how God has freed you from your former bondage and made it possible to live righteously. “Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord. Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof. Neither yield ye your members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin: but yield yourselves unto God” (Rom. 6:11-13).

**Water baptism is only an illustration and a picture.** Water baptism illustrates some profound and far reaching truths that not only encompass the Lord’s own experience of *physical* death and resurrection, but our own experience of *spiritual* death and resurrection. Romans six is an explanation of the real truth behind the illustration.

## Death and Resurrection in Christ

*1 Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death?*

*4 Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.*

*5 For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection:*

*6 Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin.*

*7 For he that is dead is freed from sin. (Romans 6:3-7)*

This passage begins by telling us that baptism is that which puts us *into Christ* and *into His death*. The mention of the words “like as” and “likeness” in verses 4 and 5 have led many to conclude that what we have here is no more than a statement that water baptism, as a figure, puts us only into the likeness of His death and resurrection. Therefore, the passage is teaching us the meaning of water baptism.

To the contrary, it is a real fact that we have entered into his death and resurrection on a spiritual level. It is a “likeness” to His death and resurrection only in the fact that His experience was physical, but ours is spiritual. He died and was raised physically. We have died and been raised spiritually. Our experience is as real as His and our death and resurrection is because of His death and resurrection. However, since His death and resurrection was physical and ours is spiritual, our experience is only in the “likeness” of His. Let me explain.

***The passage says that Baptism puts us INTO Christ and INTO His death.*** If this means what it says, it *CANNOT* be water baptism. It is true that we are put into Christ when we receive Him as Savior. However, no water in the world can put us into Christ. It is the Holy Spirit who does it. The reality that Christians are in Christ is spoken of all over Paul’s epistle’s. In Christ’s high priestly prayer of John 17, He prayed, “That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, ***that they also may be one in us***: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me” (John 17:21). Paul said to the Galatians, “For as many of you as have been ***baptized into Christ*** have put on Christ” (Gal. 3:27).

It is also true that believers have been made partakers of His death to the extent that we are said to *BE* dead. Romans 6:6 tells us that “our old man is crucified with him.” This fact is emphasized in Galatians 2:20, “I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live.” It is confirmed in Colossians 3:1-3, “If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above ... ***For ye are dead***, and your life is hid with Christ in God.” Once again, this is a reality, and water cannot give it to us. It is imparted by the Spirit of God. “***Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death***” (Rom. 6:4).

These are real spiritual transactions that have taken place in every believer. They are transactions that cannot be accomplished with water. They require the blood of Christ and the Spirit of God. The Holy Spirit did these things for us by an action that is repeatedly called “baptism!”

***“For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection” (Rom. 6:5).*** Our death and planting are real. So is our spiritual resurrection. “But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, *even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us* (made us alive) ***together with Christ***, (by grace ye are saved;) and ***hath raised us up together***, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus” (Eph. 2:4-6). Paul confirmed that this new life is connected with baptism when he told the Colossians, “In whom ... ***buried with him in baptism, wherein also ye are risen*** with him through the faith of the operation of God, who hath raised him from the dead” (Col.2:27). It is said to be “in the likeness of his resurrection” because His resurrection was physical and ours is spiritual. It is a real spiritual resurrection, because it results in real new life: “*that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life*” (Rom. 6:4). Just like Christ was raised physically from the dead and now lives eternally in a glorified body, we have been raised to spiritual life, eternal life (Rom. 6:23), and we can walk in this world in newness of life. Water cannot give us life. The Spirit of God can. He does it by “baptism.”

***“Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin” (Rom. 6:6).*** Since the death involved is not physical death like the Lord Jesus Christ suffered, what is it? It is the “old man” who is crucified in a spiritual and legal sense so that “the body of sin might be destroyed.” This “body of sin” is spoken of in Romans 7:18, “For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing.” We call this the human sin nature. The Bible calls it the “old man” or “the flesh.”

Our old man is crucified that it might be destroyed. However, a problem arises when we realize that the old man still affects us. "For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other: so that ye cannot do the things that ye would" (Gal. 5:17). So if the old man is crucified and destroyed, how does it still move us to sin? The word "destroyed" doesn't always mean "completely removed from existence." It also means, "to ruin; to bring to naught; ... to destroy influence" <sup>2</sup> and one meaning of the Greek word is "render inactive, idle, useless, ineffective." <sup>3</sup> So, the power of the old man over me **has been broken**. I no longer *must* follow him. He may influence me, but so does the Holy Spirit in me. Now I can choose to follow the Spirit with His help (Gal. 5:16-18). Why? Because, "**he that is dead is freed from sin**" (Rom. 6:7). However, the old man is still there and still tries to get our attention and submission.

"...**even so we also should walk in newness of life**" (Rom. 6:4): the gift of God is eternal life (Rom. 6:3) and a person who is in Christ is a new creature (2 Cor. 5:17). The old man has been crucified and a new man has risen to walk in newness of life. "**Lie not one to another, seeing that ye have put off the old man with his deeds; And have put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him**" (Col. 3:9-10). Now that the old man is crucified and the new man is risen, we have been freed from the bondage to sin. Therefore, we are now free to live an obedient Christian life.

Do you see how important these principles are? Do you see that Romans 6 deals with some of the most important realities in your Christian life? In fact, Romans 6 helps define who and what you are as a Christian. The issues here are real. This is not figurative language. It is not talking about water baptism, which is only a figure. Water baptism doesn't do anything for you that is real. It is only an outward testimony, a picture of what is real. Some say water baptism pictures the death burial and resurrection of Christ. True, but it also pictures the believer's death, burial, and resurrection in Christ.

Water doesn't do any of this. The *Spirit of God* does it by an act that is called *baptism*. Therefore, this passage describes the effects of the baptism of the Spirit. This is why God did not have Paul identify which baptism he was talking about in verse 3, water or the Spirit. They are associated. The baptism in the Holy Ghost is the reality. Baptism in water is the outward picture of that reality.

## God's plan for the Christian's Body

*8 Now if we be dead with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with him:*

*9 Knowing that Christ being raised from the dead dieth no more; death hath no more dominion over him.*

*10 For in that he died, he died unto sin once: but in that he liveth, he liveth unto God.*  
(Rom. 6:8-10)

"**Now ... we shall also live with him**" (Rom. 6:8). We are dead with Christ spiritually *now*. We have also been raised spiritually *now* (Eph. 2:4-6). Nevertheless, there is also a future aspect to this transformation. "But if the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, he that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by his Spirit that dwelleth in you. Therefore, brethren, we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live after the flesh" (Rom. 8:11-12).

"**Knowing that Christ being raised from the dead dieth no more; death hath no more dominion over him**" (Rom. 6:9). The Lord has already risen physically and will never die again. The implication is that when our mortal bodies are risen, we will never die again. The "old man" is also called the flesh, as I mentioned. The fact that the old man of a believer is now crucified makes it possible for that believer's body to participate in Christ's physical resurrection. That event is guaranteed to us by God's promise. This is called "the redemption of the body" in Romans 8:23. It is guaranteed by

the seal of the Spirit. "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" (Eph. 1:13-14).

**"For in that he died, he died unto sin once: but in that he liveth, he liveth unto God"** (Rom. 6:10). Christ is our example. Now that He has died and risen, He has no life but His life with God. He lives to God. The implication is that now that we are dead to sin, now that we are freed from sin, we have a responsibility to live to God. How are we to do that?

## Recon and Yield

11 Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord.

12 Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof.

13 Neither yield ye your members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin: but yield yourselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God.

14 For sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under the law, but under grace. (Rom. 6:11-14)

**"Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord"** (Rom 6:11). "Recon" means to consider something to be true. It is a fact that we are dead to sin. That was a result of "baptism." It is a reality. Romans 6 reveals it to us, so we know it to be true. Now, each of us has to believe it and count it to be true to ourselves. The problem we might have is that it is hard to believe. Sometimes we have so much trouble with sin and lose so many battles with sin, we can't see how it is possible for us to be dead to sin and alive to God. We have to realize that *it is true whether we believe it or not*. God knew you and me before Christ died on the cross. He knew what sinners we have been. Yet, He says that all believers, including you and me, are dead to sin and alive to God. Believe Him and consider it to be true to you.

**"Let not sin reign ... but yield yourselves unto God"** (Rom. 6:12-13). Temptation will occur and failure is possible. We must choose to exercise our freedom. We do not have to yield to temptation and sin. When Abraham Lincoln issued the Emancipation Proclamation and made it good by winning the Civil War, the slaves in the south were free. However, they had to assert their freedom. They could have chosen to continue obeying an intimidating "master" or they could embrace their freedom and turn away from him who was no longer their true master.

Temptation to sin has its source in our own desires. "But every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed. Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin: and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death. Do not err, my beloved brethren" (James 1:14-16). This is why the Lord exhorted us to deny ourselves (Lk. 9:23). The counterbalance to the lust of the flesh is love for God. It is this heart of love for God that moves us to deny ourselves. We love the Lord so much and want to please Him so much more than we want to please ourselves. "And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength: this is the first commandment" (Mk. 12:30). This is one of the reasons we need to spend time in prayer and reading the Word of God. It is necessary that we cultivate a heart of worship toward the Lord.

We can view these things as *steps* to take. The first step is to know that we are dead to sin and alive to God. The second step is to believe it and to reckon it to be true. The third step is to refuse to yield to sin. The fourth step is to choose to yield to God.

The Scripture says to not yield “your members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin.” It is a command to keep ourselves from participating in sinful activities of any kind. It requires keeping control of the impulses of the body. It is also a decision. We must choose to not give in to sin. In his book *The Pursuit of Holiness*, pages 54 and 55, Jerry Bridges said:

The first thing we should notice in this passage is that the pursuit of holiness – this not allowing sin to reign in our mortal bodies – is something we have to do. Paul’s statement is one of exhortation. He addressed himself to our wills. He said, “Do not let sin reign.” Implying that this is something for which we ourselves are responsible. The experience of holiness is not a gift we receive like justification, but something we are clearly exhorted to work at.<sup>4</sup>

Refusing to yield to sin and choosing to yield to God is something we must do, but, on the other hand, we are not left to own strength and wisdom to do it. We have the Holy Spirit’s help (Gal. 5:16).

***“For sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under the law, but under grace”*** (Rom. 6:14). Being dead to sin has a legal aspect as well. The plain statement here is that we are no longer under the law. Some deny that, because they fear it will make us think any sinful action is alright. Not so. They fail to understand and believe the Scriptures.

The law is good, but it has some negative effects. The law condemns sin and makes the entire world guilty before God (Rom. 3:19). The law makes me see and recognize sin in myself (Rom. 7:7-9). The law makes me see that sin is working death in me (Rom. 7:10-13). In these ways, the law becomes a schoolmaster that drives me to Christ for forgiveness and salvation (Gal. 3:24). Before I came to Christ, I was under the law and condemned. Now that I have come to Christ, I am dead. Therefore, as far as the law is concerned, the penalty for sin (death-Rom. 6:23) has been fulfilled and the law is no longer looking for me. I am free from the law, clean, and no longer condemned. Now, I know “his great love wherewith he loved” me (Eph. 2:4). His love leads me to love Him and to keep His commandments (1 John 4:19; John 14:21).

## **The Baptism of the Spirit and One Body**

*4 There is **one body**, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling;*

*5 One Lord, one faith, one baptism,*

*6 One God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all.*

*(Eph. 4:4-6)*

There are seven doctrines listed in verses four through six above. They all follow the statement “Endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace” (v. 3). The admonitions of Ephesians 4:1-3 are the fundamental principles of maintaining the unity of peace and love in the church and the - doctrines of verses 4-6 are the foundations of doctrinal unity.

These doctrinal truths are universal. Each of these doctrines is characterized by the word “one.” They are not pointed at the church in Ephesus in particular. They are equally valid for all churches and all Christians. Every Christian, whether a member of a local church or not, has only ONE God and only ONE Lord and only ONE Spirit and only ONE faith. No others exist. The same is true for all the other doctrines listed. Christians have only ONE hope, only ONE body, and only ONE baptism. The first doctrine on the list is “one body.”

*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. (1 Cor. 12:13)*

What is this baptism? Is this body the local Corinthian church or a body that includes all believers? How can we tell?

***There are some who see a significant difference with the prepositions used in 1 Corinthians 12:13 and Matthew 3:11 about the Baptism in the Holy Spirit.*** Matthew 3:11 says, “He shall baptize you **with** the Holy Ghost.” There are two things that are pointed out about this verse in comparison to 1 Corinthians 12:13. The first is about who is doing the baptizing. In Matthew, Jesus is doing the baptizing and His instrument is the Holy Spirit. In Corinthians, the baptism is being done by the Spirit. Therefore, they are not the same. Second there is a difference in the prepositions used. Matthew said it is done “with” the Spirit. The Holy Spirit is the object of the preposition. In 1 Corinthians, the baptism is done “by” the Spirit. Two different prepositions.

In the first instance, it is true that Matthew says Christ baptizes with the Holy Ghost and 1 Corinthians says we are baptized by the Spirit. The idea is to make the baptism of 1 Corinthians something different than that in Matthew. This concept actually does violence to the doctrine of the Trinity. The Father, the Word, and the Holy Spirit are ONE (1 John 5:7). We like to say they are one God in three persons. However, this is a highly inadequate way to express it. It is better to view the Trinity as one God in three parts. The significance of this can be illustrated in human beings, who are made in the image of God (Gen. 1:27). You are one person in three parts, body, soul, and spirit (1 Thess. 5:23). Each part of a person has different functions. Your body relates to the world through the five senses. Your Spirit communicates with the Spirit world and is born again by the Holy Spirit (John 3:6). Your soul has the capacity of **mind** (Josh. 22:5; Ps. 119:20; 139:14; Prov. 16:24; 19:2; 24:14), **emotions** (Gen. 42:21; Deut. 13:3; Josh. 22:5; Jud. 16:16; 1 Sam. 1:10; Job 10:1; Ps. 11:5; Ps. 35:9; Ps. 42:2; 138:3; Song 3:3; Jer. 31:25), and **will** (Josh. 22:5; 1 Kings 2:4; Job 6:7; 7:15; Ps. 57:1; 63:8; 77:2). Have you ever noticed that sometimes your body has one opinion and your mind (your soul) has a different opinion. Oh, to eat that cake or not! Yet, if you eat the cake, it will be your whole person who does it. You are three parts and sometimes your parts disagree, but you are still one person. Whenever you do an action, your whole person is involved. In God’s case, He never disagrees with Himself, but, when Christ does something, GOD has done it. All of God did it, although He may say it to us in a way we are able to understand.

Genesis 1 describes creation. God made the universe. Which part of God? John 1 says it was the Word (that is the Son) who made all things (John 1:3). Oh! Wait a minute! The Holy Spirit made the heaven and earth (Gen. 1:2; Ps. 33:6; Job 26:13). Hang on a minute! It was really God the Father, who did it (James 1:17; John 5:17; Eph. 3:9). Who created the universe? It created by the God who, when he wanted to create man, said, “Let **US** make man ...” (Gen. 1:26). WE are not dealing with three different people in the Trinity. We are dealing with one person. Who do you suppose saved you? Was it just the Holy Spirit? Or, did Jesus or the Father do it? Or, maybe they all did it? When you say Jesus saved me, you are actually including the entire Trinity in the statement.

As far as the argument on prepositions is concerned, it is a flimsy argument at best in light of the above truths. In English, the translators chose to use the prepositions with and by, and those prepositions are appropriate and correct in their contexts. However, in the Greek New Testament, every word of which was the original word inspired by God, the English prepositions are translations of the same Greek word. There is no difference.

***Three truths contained in this verse point out that the body referred to is not simply a Corinthian body.*** It is one body that transcends location. First, we get into the Body of Christ by an operation called *baptism*. Second, it is the Holy Spirit that performs the operation that puts us into the



body of Christ. It is not a preacher, priest, or church. Third, the little word “we” reveals the extent of this body, because it includes Paul.

**God puts us into the Body of Christ by Baptism.** We may disagree about what the body is in this verse, and we may disagree as to what the Spirit is doing. However, the plain clear statement of the verse is that *someone is being put into some body by an act of the Holy Spirit and that act is called a baptism* by the Spirit. However, one person has raised an objection to this. He point to the statements of John, the Baptist, about spirit baptism, along with references such as that concerning Cornelius in Acts 10 and Peter’s statement that their experience was like that of the Jews in Acts 2 (Acts 11:16) to say that spirit baptism is something that happens after salvation. He further says that John paralleled water baptism with spirit baptism. Therefore, since John baptized in water after salvation. Jesus baptizes in the Spirit after salvation. <sup>5</sup>

The baptism of the Spirit is not connected with water baptism in this fashion. They are separate operations and have different effects. **The truth is that the Baptism by the Spirit puts us into Christ.** The effects of Spirit baptism can only happen at the time of salvation. Water baptism is merely an outward figure of Spirit baptism (1 Pet. 3:21; see Eph. 4). Note the verses below, especially Galatians 3:27.

**Romans 6:3-4 Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death? 4 Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.**

**Galatians 3:27 For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ.**

**Colossians 2:12 Buried with him in baptism, wherein also ye are risen with him through the faith of the operation of God, who hath raised him from the dead.**

The baptism spoken of in these verses *cannot* be water baptism. This baptism puts us into Christ Himself, into Christ’s death, gives us newness of life, causes us to put on Christ, and raises us spiritually to new life. It is impossible that water baptism could do any of this for us. The baptism mentioned in these verses cannot be other than the baptism in the Spirit. Are we to believe that all these changes happen *after* salvation? There is not a chance of that. Salvation, regeneration, and being put into Christ are never depicted in Scripture as things you get in stages. Jesus prayed for every believer in John 17 that they would be in Him based on nothing but their faith. It is the baptism by the Spirit of God that places us into Christ. We get in Christ when we believe. Therefore, Spirit baptism happens when we believe. Furthermore, that same Spirit Baptism places us into the body of Christ at the same time that it accomplishes all the rest. It happens when we believe.

**The second truth in 1 Corinthians 12:13 is that the baptism is performed by the Spirit of God.** There is also an objection to that. The idea is that 1 Corinthians 12:13 is not talking about baptism by the Holy Spirit at all. The Greek construction in the verse, *en eni pneumatī*, in or by one spirit, does not refer to the Holy Spirit. In view of the divisions that were in the Corinthian church, it means “in one spirit” in the sense of the spirit of unity. From that, the conclusion is made that the baptism of 1 Corinthians 12:13 is water baptism, which they experienced in a spirit of unity, and which put them into the Corinthian local church. <sup>6</sup> Of course, we should take note that there was no “spirit of unity” in the Corinthian church, so the idea that they were baptized in a spirit of unity is an untrue statement.

One of the problems raised is with the little Greek preposition “en,” which means both “in” and “by” (among other things). One of these (in) has to do with location: such as, “in Christ” (Phil. 1:13) or “in their synagogues” (Mt. 4:23). The other (by) focuses on the means by which something is done. The context is the key to deciding which it is. It is said that it should be translated “in” referring to unity in

their spirits. Bear in mind, this is an arbitrary opinion of one person who thinks he knows better than the forty-seven KJV translators.

Which is it? The answer lies in one very small word: “we.” Paul wrote. “For by one Spirit are **we** all baptized ...” Paul includes himself in this statement. This would mean, according to this theory, that Paul was baptized by water into the Corinthian church along with everyone else mentioned in the verse. It never happened. You can look all day and all night and you will never find where this happened. Paul was water baptized in Acts 9, in Damascus. He was never baptized in water again after that. Therefore, with Paul included, it cannot refer to water Baptism. The correct translation is “by” and the word “spirit” refers to the Holy Spirit. This is confirmed by the final phrase of the verse: “and have been all made to drink into one Spirit.” Paul does not use this kind of terminology to speak of unity. When he want to talk about unity, he uses the word “unity” (Eph. 4:1-3). This phrase clearly refers to the Holy Spirit and the phrase ties back to the experience of baptism, indicating that “by the Spirit” means the Holy Spirit.

***The third truth is also revealed by the little word “we.”*** As I said before, the use of the word “we” reveals that Paul included himself when he wrote this verse. At the time he wrote 1 Corinthians, Paul was *not* a member of the church in Corinth. Paul’s spiritual baptism took place when he was saved in Acts 9. The Corinthian church was started years later in Acts 18. Nevertheless, both Paul and the Corinthian believers were *baptized by the same Spirit* into the **same** body. Paul was baptized into that body many years before the Corinthian believers and at a location far away from Corinth. Paul was baptized into the same body that the Damascus Christians (Acts 9) were in and the body Barnabas was in and the body the other Apostles were in (Paul and Barnabas were apostles). They were all baptized into the same spiritual body as the Corinthian and Ephesian Christians; the “one body” of Christ. Every believer is baptized by the Spirit of God into the same spiritual body. Christ only has ONE body, not many.

What are we saying here? Let me be perfectly clear. I am *not* recommending ecumenicism. I am *not* recommending doctrinal compromise. There is nothing in this that says there should be denominations or that churches should join or combine with one another in any way at any time. There is nothing here that undermines the teaching that the local church is self-governing, self-sustaining, and self-propagating. There is no intent to teach any kind of organizational combination.

There are many churches, denominations, conventions, fellowships, and larger organizations with many names that claim to follow Christ. In these organizations, there may be both saved and unsaved individuals. However, the body of Christ has ONLY SAVED members. Above all these institutions, there is an invisible, purely spiritual body that incorporates the saved people who are a part of those institutions and includes saved people who are not part of any local church. This body is completely spiritual in nature and its only members are saved individuals who are *in Christ*. Biblically, it is manifested in the world in local churches and individual Christians. Nevertheless, it exists in the spiritual world. It is *eternal* and, therefore, *invisible*. “While we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: **for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal**” (2 Cor. 4:18). It is the body of Christ and is called “the Church” (Eph. 1:22-23). Christ is its only head. Since the Greek word for church means “assembly,” it has been asked where this spiritual body assembles. That’s easy. First, it assembles *in Christ*. Second, since Christ is seated in Heaven, the body assembles right now in heavenly places in Him (Eph. 2:4-6).

The local church with its body of believers and the pastor as its head is a *picture* of the invisible spiritual body of Christ. However, every local church is seen; it is visible. Therefore, *local churches are not eternal*. When the rapture takes place and every Christian leaves the world, all local churches on earth will cease to exist. A local church is a fellowship of believers and cannot exist when there are no believers. Then, all believers will re-assemble together in the air (1 Thess. 4:17). Nevertheless, the local church is a God created institution and of vast importance.

There is “one body.” There are not two or three or a hundred or a thousand. There is only one. It is called the church in Ephesians 1:22-23 and is said to be *Christ’s* body. It is composed of only saved people, washed clean by the blood of Christ. There are unsaved members in many local churches. However, there are only saved people in this body. It is a single body that the Spirit of God has made perfectly unified in answer to Christ’s prayer in John 17. It is this unity of the Spirit that is to be worked out practically in the relationships between Christians. John Gill put it this way.

It is called "one" with relation to Jews and Gentiles, who are of the same body, and are reconciled in one body by Christ, and are baptized into it by the Spirit; and with respect to saints above and saints below, who make up one general assembly; and with regard to separate societies; for though there are several particular congregations, yet there is but one church of the firstborn, whose names are written in heaven; and saints of different ages, places, states, and conditions, are all one in Christ Jesus, who is the one, and only head of this body: and this is an argument to excite the saints to unity of Spirit; since they are, as one natural body is, members one of another, and therefore should not bite and devour one another; they are one political body, one kingdom, over which Christ is sole King and lawgiver, and a kingdom divided against itself cannot stand; they are one economical body, one family, they are all brethren, and should not fall out by the way.<sup>7</sup>

God divides all of mankind into three categories. “Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God. Give none offence, neither to the Jews, nor to the Gentiles, nor to the church of God” (1 Cor. 10:31-32). The Lord did not say the Jews, the Gentiles, and the churches (plural). He said the entire world consists of Jews, Gentiles, and one single church. But, you reply, that only refers to the Jews, Gentiles, and church in Corinth. Really? If verse 32 applies only to Corinth, then so does the command to glorify God in verse 31. Are you really willing to go that far?

Just as the doctrinal issues of Ephesians 4 are universal truths that apply everywhere, 1 Corinthians 10:31-32 are also universal truths. They are true in Ephesus. They are true in Athens and Corinth, They are true in between Athens and Corinth if you happen to meet any Jews, Gentiles, or Christians along the way.

## One Baptism

4 *There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling;*

5 *One Lord, one faith, **one baptism,***

6 *One God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all.*

(Eph. 4:4-6)

The sixth doctrine on this list is “*one baptism.*”

Many teachers will answer, “Water Baptism” when asked, “What is the one baptism.” There are actually seven baptisms in Scripture. Some of them involve water, but most don’t. All of them involve some type of immersion. The first is the *baptism to repentance* practiced by John the Baptist (Mt. 3:11; Mk. 1:4). It was a water baptism performed in the Jordan River (Mt. 3:6; Mk. 1:5). It was done in connection with repentance and confession of sins.

When John spoke of Jesus, he said that Jesus would give two other types of baptism: *the Holy Spirit and fire* (Mt.3:11; Mk. 1:8; Lk. 3:16). We have mentioned the baptism of the Holy Spirit before and will bring it up again a bit later. Although the Apostles received the baptism of the Holy Spirit in Acts 2 and it was associated with “cloven tongues of fire” (Acts 1:5; 2:3), it is likely that the Baptism of fire is separate from that of the Spirit. Indeed, there is coming a day in which the unsaved will be baptized

with fire, when they are cast into the lake of fire (Rev. 20:15). The Bible says that it will be Jesus who is judge at that time (John 5:25-30).

The fourth type of baptism is the *baptism of suffering*. After James and John requested a special place in Christ's kingdom, He answered them (Mark 10:38), "Ye know not what ye ask: can ye drink of the cup that I drink of? And be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with?" He had already been baptized in water, so the only baptism He had left involved the scourge and the cross, suffering (Lk. 12:50).

Next, we have *Christian water baptism*. "Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost" (Mt. 28:19). This is the baptism that has caused much confusion and conflict throughout Church history. Some believe it is necessary for salvation and others do not. Some believe children or infants should be baptized to bring them into the Christian Covenant. Others are convinced that only those who have made a conscious decision to trust Christ are fit subjects for baptism. Many confuse Romans 6 and 1 Corinthians 12:13 with Christian water baptism.

A sixth baptism mentioned in the Scriptures is the *baptism to Moses*. "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" (1 Cor. 10:1-3). This experience of the Israelites coming out of Egypt, going through the Red Sea and the cloud, identified them as part of the nation and under the leadership of Moses.

Finally, there is the Baptism of Christ Himself (Mt. 3:13-17). John performed it, but it was not the same as his other baptisms. Jesus had no need for repentance or confession of sin, so His baptism was not for that purpose. His baptism made Him known to the Jews. It was the time of His first showing to Israel. It was also a time when God the Father proclaimed Christ to be His Son (John 1:30-31).

So, we have seven baptisms, but there is only one real baptism for us Christians. Which can it be? It is not John's Baptism, because that's over. The baptism of Jesus was His own personal experience and occurred only once. We will never be baptized with fire, because we will never go to Hell. It is not the baptism of suffering. Although we generally suffer for our faith to one degree or another, it may be that not every Christian suffers. It is not the baptism unto Moses, because that was for the Jews in the Old Testament. That leaves just two candidates for the "one baptism:" Christian water baptism and the baptism of the Holy Spirit.

There have been things on this earth that seem real to us but are described in the Scriptures as merely shadows of the true items. Hebrews 9:1-27 addresses this in detail regarding the first tabernacle, its furniture and sacrifices, which were built and used when Israel came out of Egypt. The Scripture calls these real solid touchable items merely "a figure for the time then present" (Heb. 9: 9). There is "a greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands" (Heb. 9:10). The comparison is between the tabernacle on earth and the tabernacle in Heaven: "It was therefore necessary that the *patterns* of things in the heavens should be purified with these (animal sacrifices); but the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than these" (Heb. 9:23). He calls the earthly tabernacle and its furniture mere patterns purified with animal sacrifices (see Heb. 9:19-22). However, the tabernacle in heaven required a better sacrifice, the blood of Christ (Heb. 9:12-18). The things on earth are nothing more than the *figures* of the true things in Heaven. "For Christ is not entered into the holy places made with hands, **which are the figures of the true**; but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us (Heb. 9:24).

In the same manner, water baptism is not the true baptism, but merely a figure (1 Pet. 3:21). Baptism does not save us in reality, but only in a figure. In other words, it is a picture of our salvation. It does not cleanse away the sinful filth of the flesh. It is only the answer of a conscience already made clean by the blood of Christ. Just as Hebrews 9 says, the blood of sacrificial animals cannot make the

conscience clean, neither can baptism. The blood of Christ and only His blood can make the conscience clean (Heb. 9:9, 14; 10:1-2, 10).

If water baptism is the figure, what is the true? The only baptism left is the baptism of the Holy Spirit. The baptism of the Spirit accomplishes many things that cannot be accomplished by water. We have seen this in Romans 6.

As we have noted before, in Romans 6, baptism causes us to die and gives us new life (Rom. 6:4). The result of this is that we are no longer enslaved to the flesh but are free to live an obedient life in Christ. Spiritual baptism has made us free to live a godly life. Believe it or not, some people think *water did all this*. Baptism did it, but it wasn't water. It was the Spirit of God.

So why did Paul use the word *baptism*, but not define whether it was water or Spirit? It is because there is a connection between water baptism and the baptism of the Spirit. Spiritual baptism puts us into real spiritual death in the likeness of His physical death (Rom. 6:5). Spiritual baptism gives us real new spiritual life in the likeness of His physical resurrection (Rom. 6:5). Water Baptism by immersion clearly pictures a death and burial (immersed in the water) and a resurrection (rising out of the water). The baptism of the Spirit creates the reality. Baptism in water pictures that reality. Water baptism is *the figure*; the baptism of the Spirit is the *reality*. Being baptized by the Spirit of God is the one true baptism.

## Final Conclusion

I have made my conclusion clear throughout this article. I cannot believe the Scriptures as they are written and in good conscience conclude anything other than what I have already stated.

- 1) Romans chapter six describes the benefits of being baptized with the Holy Ghost. It is not water baptism.
- 2) The Baptism in the Spirit puts us spiritually into the body of Christ when we get saved.
- 3) Water baptism is an outward picture, figure, illustration, and testimony to the world and the church of what God has done for us in Christ.

To finally establish this, I will once more summarize the plain simple statements of Scripture about what the Spirit of God and the act of baptism in the Spirit does for us.

- 1) Baptism puts us into Christ (Romans 6:3; Gal. 3:27).
- 2) Baptism puts us into Christ's death (Romans 6:3-5; Col. 2:12).
- 3) Baptism raises us spiritually to new life (Romans 6:4-5; Col. 2:12).
- 4) Baptism kills and destroys the old man (Romans 6:6; Gal. 2:20; Col. 3:1-3).
- 5) Baptism frees us from bondage to sin (Romans 6:7).
- 6) Baptism frees us from the law (Romans 6:14).
- 7) Baptism puts us into the body of Christ (1 Corinthians 12:13).

## NOTES:

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<sup>1</sup> Carl E. Sadler, Th.D. D.D. *The Baptism In the Holy Spirit*. (Boone, Kentucky: Kentucky Mountain Baptist Schools. 1994) Pdf. Nov. 2019.

<sup>2</sup> Webster, Noah. "Webster's Dictionary of American English." 1828 edition. E-Sword. Rick Meyers. Version 10.2.1. Franklin, Tn.: 2013. Downloaded computer software.

<sup>3</sup> The Complete Word Study Dictionary. E-Sword. Rick Meyers. Version 10.2.1. Franklin, Tn.: 2013. Downloaded computer software.

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<sup>4</sup> Bridges, Jerry. *The Pursuit of Holiness*. Colorado Springs: Navpress, 1978. Print. Ppg. 54, 55.

<sup>5</sup> Strouse, Dr. Thomas M. *Ye are the Body of Christ*. Cromwell, Ct.: Baptist Bible Theological Seminary, 2010. Print 9-13.

<sup>6</sup> Strouse. 14.

<sup>7</sup> Gill