

## FOUR BAPTISMS—NOW JUST ONE (1)

BY KEITH GREER

The mere mention of the word Baptism stirs up quite a discussion. Many hold different opinions regarding the baptisms discussed in the Scriptures. Most of the time, these discussions are unprofitable because those involved have not studied what the Bible teaches about different baptisms. Paul's statement, "*One Lord, one faith, one baptism.*" {*Ephesians 4:5*}—to the church in Ephesus can clear up some of the confusion. Although the sacred text includes teaching on other baptisms, there remains only **ONE** that is important today.

We cannot deny the undeniable. How can anyone conclude that there are many baptisms, when the text clearly states there is only **ONE**? The Bible mentions **SIX** baptisms, but our discussion centers on four that are mentioned in the New Testament. These four are: **(1) Baptism of John; (2) Baptism of Fire; (3) Baptism of the Holy Spirit; (4) Baptism into Christ.**

**John's Baptism. Administrator:** "*Then Jerusalem, all Judea, and all the region around the Jordan went out to him and were baptized by him in the Jordan, confessing their sins.*" {*Matthew 3:5,6*} This was part of John's work as the forerunner who prepared the way for Christ.

**Element:** "*Now John also was baptizing in Aenon near Salim, because there was much water there. And they came and were baptized.*" {*John 3:23*} John's baptism required much water. Why? Baptism is defined as "immersing, submerging, burying, or covering." This rules out sprinkling and pouring.

**Nature:** John's teaching and baptism was directed to the nation of Israel—and not to the Gentiles. The Gentiles were brought into the kingdom later, "*when John had first preached before His coming the baptism of repentance to all the people of Israel.*" {*Acts 13:24*}

**Subjects:** "*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.'*" {*Acts 19:4*} Believing Jews were the subjects; this baptism was part of their preparation for the kingdom, which was "*at hand.*" {*Matthew 3:2*}

**Duration:** John did not delegate his authority; his baptism ceased when he died. John's baptism was ineffective when Apollos was teaching and baptizing in Ephesus {Acts 18:24–19:4}.

**Purpose and Design:** *"For this is he who was spoken of by the prophet Isaiah, saying: 'The voice of one crying in the wilderness: Prepare the way of the LORD; Make His paths straight.'" {Matthew 3:3}* Isaiah prophesied concerning John's preparatory work {Isaiah 40:3}. Jesus said there was none greater than John {Luke 7:28}. We do not demean John's work, but we need to be aware that another was coming.

**Baptism of Fire. Administrator:** **"I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance, but He who is coming after me is mightier than I, whose sandals I am not worthy to carry. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire."** {Matthew 3:11} Some today pray for this baptism, believing it's Holy Spirit baptism. They need more study. The baptism of fire will be administered by Christ and His angels {Matthew 25:41; 2 Thessalonians 1:7-9}. Does this sound like a baptism you would desire?

**Element:** *"He himself shall also drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out full strength into the cup of His indignation. He shall be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels and in the presence of the Lamb."* {Revelation 14:10} The element associated with this baptism is fire. This baptism will be rendered at judgment against those who failed to obey God's word in this life. The baptism of fire is yet to come, and we should be seeking to avoid it at all cost. Why ask God for it in prayer? \*\*\*