**What About Your Baptism?**

**Introduction:**

The Word of God places a great deal of emphasis on baptism. Therefore, we should also. The Bible stresses that baptism is not to be a mere ritual, but an act done with forethought and an understanding of what it signifies. Baptism, apart from this purpose and meaning, brings with it no spiritual results or blessings at all.

**Text:** Acts 19:1-7

**Goal:**

The goal is for each of us to examine our own baptism to see if it was acceptable in God’s sight.

**Body:**

1. **Exegesis of Text** Acts 19:1 “And it happened, while Apollos was at Corinth, that Paul, having passed through the upper regions, came to Ephesus. And finding some disciples” NKJV Verse 1 – While Apollos is laboring in Corinth, Paul leaves Antioch and returns to Ephesus where he finds certain disciples. Were these Christians? Usually when we see the word “disciple” we would assume they were. But what happens next shows us that these “disciples” were not New Testament Christians. Acts 19:2 “he said to them, ‘Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?’ So they said to him, ‘We have not so much as heard whether there is a Holy Spirit.’ ” NKJV Verse 2 – Paul asks these disciples a question, “Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?” Apparently Paul did not know that they were not Christians and was ready to impart spiritual gifts to them if they had not already received some. Paul, being an apostle, had the power to do this and often did. Note their answer, “We have not so much as heard whether there is a Holy Spirit.” Context: They knew there was a Holy Spirit, for John the Baptist preached about the Holy Spirit. [They were baptized with his baptism.] Also, the Old Testament speaks of the Holy Spirit as well. Their response seems to imply that they didn’t even know if the Holy Spirit had come, or had been given. This answer, no doubt, caused alarms to go off in Paul’s head. He now knew for sure something was wrong with their baptism. Christian baptism has many connections with the Holy Spirit. “born of water and the Spirit” (John 3:5) “Jesus answered, ‘Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God.” “Receive the gift of the Holy Spirit” (Acts 2:38) “Then Peter said to them, ‘Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.” Acts 19:3 “And he said to them, ‘Into what then were you baptized?’ So they said, ‘Into John’s baptism.” NKJV Verse 3 – Paul asks then “if you have not heard that the Holy Spirit has come, into what were you immersed?” He automatically assumes they had been baptized. If it had been a scriptural, God-approved baptism, they would have known about the Holy Spirit. (Matthew 28:19) “Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.” NKJV A proper baptism requires adequate and accurate information. Their answer was “Into John’s baptism.” Acts 19:4 “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.’ ” NKJV Verse 4 – These men did not know that John’s baptism was no longer valid; it was outdated. They needed more up-to-date knowledge. One writer used this example. “If you used an outdated map and got lost, the fault was not in the map. It was fine for its day. The problem was that the map now was obsolete, no longer accurate. These disciples were using an outdated, inaccurate spiritual map. They needed an updated one.” So that is what Paul does; he fills in what is lacking in their knowledge. Luke gives an abbreviated account of all that Paul tells them.

Paul first explains the purpose of John’s baptism.

1. John’s baptism was to prepare the way of the Lord; prepare the people for the Lord. (Luke 1:16-17) “And he will turn many of the children of Israel to the Lord their God. He will also go before Him in the spirit and power of Elijah, to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just, to make ready a people prepared for the Lord.” NKJV
2. There was immersion for the forgiveness of sins. (Luke 3:3) “And he went into all the region around the Jordan, preaching a baptism of repentance for the remission of sins,” NKJV
3. John’s baptism stressed repentance. He wanted the Jews to become more serious about observing the Old Law. [Recall that the New Law was not yet in force.] This would help prepare them for the coming kingdom.
4. John’s baptism involved confessing one’s sins. (Mark 1:5) “Then all the land of Judea, and those from Jerusalem, went out to him and were all baptized by him in the Jordan River, confessing their sins.” NKJV
5. They were to believe on Him who was coming – on Christ Jesus. The faith of John’s disciples pointed forward to the Messiah.

Acts 19:5 “When they heard this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus.” NKJV Verse 5 – After hearing what Paul had to say, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. [Christian baptism] They could have become angry at Paul for saying that their baptism was not accepted by God. They could have insisted that any baptism was OK. But they didn’t. They had good, receptive hearts. When they learned both their understanding and obedience were inadequate. They “were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus.”

A natural question is: Why was John’s baptism no longer acceptable? Several reasons come to mind: Paul wrote the Ephesian Christians that there was now only one baptism – Christian baptism. (Ephesians 4:5) “one Lord, one faith, one baptism;” NKJV So by the early 60’s, Christian baptism was the only valid one. But Christian baptism is based upon Jesus’ death, burial and resurrection. (Romans 6:1-5) “What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound? Certainly not! How shall we who died to sin live any longer in it? Or do you not know that as many of us as were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death? Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. For if we have been united together in the likeness of His death, certainly we also shall be in the likeness of His resurrection,” NKJV Therefore, since Christian baptism was instituted on the Day of Pentecost, John’s baptism was no longer acceptable after that day. These men in Acts 19 had been baptized with John’s baptism after the Day of Pentecost and they had to be baptized with Christian baptism. Notice they were not “rebaptized.” They had not been properly baptized at all. They had been immersed, but not scripturally immersed.

After this, they would have been accepted into the church at Ephesus as members of the family of God.

1. **Applications**  What applications, if any, can be made from this account? One very obvious one is that sometimes baptism is not baptism. Occasions may arise when someone may have undergone an “immersion in water”, even for the purpose of obtaining forgiveness of sins, yet it may not have been Christian baptism – the baptism that saves.

So how can I know if my baptism was acceptable to God? I must compare it to what the “Word” says. (Hebrews 4:12) “For the word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.” NKJV

1. Baptism must be preceded by faith – faith in Jesus as Lord and that He was raised from the dead. One must also believe that His blood has the power to wash away sins. (Romans 10:9) “that if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved.” NKJV
2. Baptism must be preceded by repentance – a determined resolve to begin a new life and to turn away from the old life of sin and submit to Christ as Lord and Master. One must no longer submit to religious bodies, but to Christ alone. (Acts 17:30) “Truly, these times of ignorance God overlooked, but now commands all men everywhere to repent,” NKJV
3. Baptism must be preceded by confession – a confession of faith in Jesus as Lord; a verbal commitment to Jesus – a pledge of allegiance to Him. (Romans 10:10) “For with the heart one believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.” NKJV
4. One must have a basic understanding of Christian baptism – that it is authorized by Jesus [in His name]. One must know that he is not saved by acts; he must be baptized properly. Baptism must not be done to just please others; because others are doing it; to join a denomination; as an outward sign of an inward cleansing, or because it was expected. The point of baptism is that we contact the blood of Christ and have our sins washed away.

**Invitation:**

This lesson was not given to hurt anyone’s feelings, but to urge all of us to honestly examine our baptism and see if it was truly Christian baptism. If your baptism was not Christian baptism, I pray that you will respond as those did in Acts 19.

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