

The Baptism of the Twelve Ephesians

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At the end of [Acts 18](#) and the beginning of [Acts 19](#), we have a very interesting account of salvation. The account is one in which those who were candidates of salvation submitted to two different baptisms, the baptism of John, and then, the baptism of Jesus. This account is an interesting one, because it teaches us some things about baptism that are not found anywhere else in the Bible. Let's study this passage together and see if we can learn some things from God's word.

First, we see that one can teach that Jesus is Lord, yet teach baptism wrong. We read in [Acts 18:24, 25](#) the following: "And a certain Jew named Apollos, born at Alexandria, an eloquent man, and mighty in the scriptures, came to Ephesus. This man was instructed in the way of the Lord; and being fervent in the spirit, he spake and taught diligently the things of the Lord, knowing only the baptism of John." Notice the facts that we find here regarding Apollos. First, he was a Jew. Second, he was born at Alexandria. Third, he was an eloquent man. Fourth, he was mighty in the scriptures. Fifth, he came to Ephesus. Sixth, he was instructed in the way of the Lord. Seventh, he was fervent in spirit. Eighth, he spake and taught diligently the things of the Lord. Ninth, he knew only the baptism of John. Apollos was both instructed in the way of the Lord, and taught the things of the Lord, yet, he did not know the Lord's baptism? How can this be? Evidently, Apollos had been around Jerusalem sometime during the earthly ministry of both John the baptizer, and Jesus, but Apollos had missed the Lord's critical teaching about baptism during the period of the Great Commission. Therefore, he did not know that baptism was now being administered by the authority of Jesus. Those who submitted to the baptism that Apollos knew, were not submitting to the authority of the Lord. Did Apollos teach that Jesus was the Lord? Yes. Did he teach others to believe in the Lord Jesus? Yes. It should be obvious that just because one believes in Jesus doesn't mean that one's baptism is correct.

Second, we see that if your baptism isn't right, you've got to get it right! It is interesting that Paul came after Apollos to the same city, Ephesus, and inquired about the baptism of these disciples. We read in [Acts 19:1-3](#) "And it came to pass, that, while Apollos was at Corinth, Paul having passed through the upper coasts came to Ephesus: and finding certain disciples, He said unto them, Have ye received the Holy Ghost since ye believed? And they said unto him, we have not so much as heard whether there be any Holy Ghost. And he said unto them, unto what then were ye baptized? And they said, Unto John's baptism." Paul used a process of discovery to determine if their baptism was valid or not. He first asked if they had received the Holy Spirit since they believed. (Again, we note that the text says that they had believed. They believed that Jesus was the Christ, but their baptism was not right.) Their response was that they had not heard of the Holy Spirit. This response was indicative of their baptism, because Paul then asked, "Unto what then were ye baptized?" They should have heard of the Holy Spirit at their baptism because the baptism that Christ commanded in [Matthew 28:18-20](#) was "in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit." The fact that they did not

hear about the Holy Spirit, indicated to Paul that they were not baptized correctly. Their baptism wasn't right and they had to get it right!

Third, we see that to get their baptism right, it had to be by the authority of Jesus. Paul explains in [Acts 19:4, 5](#), "Then said Paul, John verily baptized with the baptism of repentance, saying unto the people, that they should believe on him which should come after him, that is, on Christ Jesus. When they heard this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus." The phrase "in the name of the Lord Jesus" means by the Lord's authority. John's baptism was not based upon the authority of the Lord Jesus. Was it based upon the belief that the Messiah was coming? Yes it was ([Luke 2:4](#)). Was it based upon repentance unto remission of sins? Yes it was ([Luke 3:3](#)). Was it water baptism? Yes it was ([Luke 3:16](#)). Was it immersion? Yes it was ([John 3:23](#)). What was different about the baptism of John from the baptism of Jesus? The baptism of Jesus was based upon the authority of Jesus as given in the Great Commission. Jesus said, "All authority hath been given unto me in heaven and on earth." This meant that after this time, John's baptism had no more authority. Only the baptism commanded by Jesus, in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit had the authority of Christ. This authority was powerfully demonstrated in the resurrection of Christ of which baptism is a likeness ([Romans 6:1-10](#)). If our baptism is not based upon the authority of Christ, then all we did was get wet like these men at Ephesus. What is baptism based upon the authority of Christ? It is baptism for salvation ([Mark 16:16](#)); it is baptism for the remission of sins ([Acts 2:38](#)); it is baptism for discipleship ([Matthew 28:18-20](#)); it is baptism for washing away sins ([Acts 22:16](#)); it is the point at which we believe God forgives us of sins ([Colossians 2:11-13](#)); it is baptism that saves ([1 Peter 3:21](#)). John's baptism did not have THIS authority-the authority to grant salvation! We must understand that to be baptized right, we must acknowledge what Christ has authorized baptism to do-forgive sin and grant salvation! The beautiful results of the reception of the Holy Spirit by these disciples indicated this very fact. Verse 6 states, "And when Paul had laid his hands upon them, the Holy Spirit came on them; and they spake with tongues, and prophesied." The prophecy made by Joel and quoted by Peter in [Acts 2:17-21](#) proved the relationship of the miraculous measure of the Holy Spirit with individual salvation. These men were now saved.

Let us always respect the authority of Christ in baptism and understand that one may teach that Jesus is Lord, yet teach baptism wrong. Let us understand that if your baptism is not right, you've got to get it right! And let us understand that correct baptism only comes as authorized by Jesus today and that His authority has placed baptism and salvation together ([Mark 16:16](#)).