



**Creyentes Bíblicos de la Gracia**  
**Grace Bible Believers**

[www.badnewsgoodnews.net](http://www.badnewsgoodnews.net)  
[info@badnewsgoodnews.net](mailto:info@badnewsgoodnews.net)

Apartado 143  
29631 Arroyo de la Miel (Málaga)  
ESPAÑA / SPAIN  
Tel.: (+34) 636 993 444

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## **NOW NO MORE WATER BAPTISM**

The problem of water baptism is something every believer comes to grips with sooner or later. That the Bible requested, yes, even demanded water baptism of believers is obvious: “Repent, and be baptized every one of you” (Acts 2:38). That water baptism was involved with the forgiveness of sins is also obvious, and this makes the subject very important. This is why so many denominations baptize their constituents: “Repent, and be baptized every one of you ... for the remission of sins,” (Acts 2:38).

However a change started when God began turning from Israel at the stoning of Stephen (Acts 7). No miracles are recorded as being done in Jerusalem after this. Then, with the raising up of Paul, the apostle to the Gentiles, the Kingdom plan of practices began to diminish because of Paul’s new revelation from the risen Christ

for the “one new man” (Ephesians 2:15), the church which is the Body of Christ. Finally, such practices ceased altogether at the completion of Israel being set aside in Acts 28. Although Paul baptized with water in his early ministry, he baptized only a few: “I thank God that I baptized none of you, but Crispus and Gaius; ... also the household of Stephanas.” (1 Corinthians 1:14,16).

Make of water baptism anything you wish. Make baptism necessary to salvation, then Paul the apostle thanked God he saved so few. Make baptism essential to obedience, then the apostle thanked God he made so few believers obedient. It should be apparent Paul did not lay much stress upon baptism during the eighteen months he was at Corinth.

A flood of protest is often heard against this obvious fact. Often expressed something like that the Corinthians were abusing the rite of water baptism by bragging that they were baptized of Paul or Apollos or Cephas. Since they were abusing baptism in this way, Paul refused to baptize or was glad he had baptized so few of the Corinthians.

But if God had commanded Paul to baptize, as He did the Twelve, would the apostle have stopped baptizing under any condition? Would Paul allow the abuses of man to prevent him from carrying out God’s direct command to him? Of course not! They also abused the Lord’s Table (1 Corinthians 11:17-34), but did Paul say: “Because you are abusing and confusing this whole issue I just won’t celebrate the Lord’s Table any more?”

No, he corrected their abuse of this doctrine, he did not cease to obey the direct command of God. If baptism had ever been a command of God to Paul, as it had been to the Twelve, he could never have said: “Christ sent me not to baptize” (1 Corinthians 1:17).

There is one other attempt to circumvent the obvious in this passage. Something like that all Paul meant by this statement

was that preaching the gospel was the more important thing and that he delegated the less important task of baptizing to others. If Paul had delegated the baptizing to others, it would still have been under Paul's authority that the people would have been baptized. This fact is evident from John 4:1,2 where "Jesus made and baptized more disciples than John, (though Jesus himself baptized not, but his disciples,)." If it could be said that Jesus was baptizing when His disciples were actually doing the work, it could also be said that Paul was baptizing when he delegated this work to his helpers.

The conclusion is that water baptism is based on a Mosaic rite which was incorporated into the gospel of the coming Kingdom to earth. Water baptism was only one of the many practices which accompanied the Kingdom program, along with Kingdom sign-gifts such as miraculous healing, talking new languages, raising the dead, cleansing the lepers, and handling of serpents. These practices passed with the complete setting aside of Israel (Romans 11:11-15), and the temporary suspension of that phase of the Kingdom of God called the earthly millennial kingdom. Paul's ministry spanned the period of transition during which God was setting aside those Kingdom manifestations and bringing in the full establishment of the dispensation of the Mystery. Paul practiced a number of things connected with Israel's Kingdom gospel. But as revelation progressed concerning the Body of Christ program, Paul finally declared in Ephesians 4:5: "There is one Lord, one faith and ONE baptism".

Those who do not understand that this one baptism excludes all others, are often inconsistent in their theological reasoning. They will turn the Roman Catholic to 1 Timothy 2:5 and correctly insist there is only one mediator, and since this is Christ, He excludes all other mediators. However, when Paul says ONE baptism they often conclude there can still be a second.

There can be no doubt as to which baptism is meant in Ephesians 4:5. 1 Corinthians 12:13 plainly states we are put into the Body of Christ by the baptism of the Holy Spirit. Romans 12:5 says to be in the Body of Christ is to be "in Christ." Romans 8:1 says if we are "in Christ" there is no more condemnation; in other words, we are saved.

(Source: 'Water baptism, Its History, Importance and Cessation' by Vernon A. Schutz)