

# The Authority to Baptize

Does one walk into the neighborhood church and pick out a man in the congregation to officiate at the baptism? Of course not, that's the minister's responsibility. Yet some believe that anyone immersed into Yahshua's Name has the authority to go out and baptize as well, whether ordained or not. Is this so?

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Within a very short time of deep Bible study, a sincere seeker of Bible truth feels an inner compulsion to be baptized. Baptism is an obligation we eagerly fulfill. The example of the Savior shows that He Himself was baptized by John the Baptist as the ultimate example for us:

*“And Yahshua answering said unto him, Suffer [it to be so] now: for thus it becomes us to fulfill all righteousness. Then he suffered him. And Yahshua, when he was baptized, went up straightway out of the water: and, lo, the heavens were opened unto him, and he saw the Spirit of Elohim descending like a dove, and lighting upon him: And lo a voice from heaven, saying, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.” (Matt. 3:15-17)*

Yahshua Himself submitted to baptism as the pattern for us. We are to walk in His footsteps, 1Peter 2:21. We are to do what He did. Even though He was sinless, Yahshua requested baptism by John who was of the priesthood. John protested that it should be the other way around. Yahshua should baptize John. Our Savior insisted that for now it was proper that He should be baptized by John.

At His baptism Yahshua was publicly recognized by Yahweh as His beloved Son. This obviously is also a sign for us that upon being immersed into Yahshua's Name we also are acknowledged as Yahweh's sons and daughters! We also are known as the “bride of the Messiah,” and henceforth are sealed with His Name. Notice: “Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honour to Him: for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and His wife has made herself ready.” (Rev. 19:7)

## The Proper Name

An age-old question arises as to the Name into which we are to be baptized. Most churches baptize “in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.” However, none of these is a name, but a mere title. All human beings have a father, and the boys are sons. The “Holy Spirit” is not a name, but a descriptive title.

Serious questions have been raised about Matthew 28:19-20, and many Bible scholars look upon this as a spurious verse as it is not in harmony with Scriptural practices. (Write for our mini-study on Matthew 28:19)

Significantly, when one is baptized in the proper Name of His Son YAHshua, the short or poetic form “Yah” of Father Yahweh is included. So we have the Name of the Father “Yah” and the Son “Yahshua.” The Holy Spirit is also present as it is sent in the Son's Name (John 14:26). Notice that the spirit will indwell the individual:

*“And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever; Even the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it sees him not, neither knows him; but you know him; for he dwells with you, and shall be in you.” (John 14:16-17)*

Paul is quite clear in his writings that the formula for baptism is immersion into the saving Name of Yahshua. He is the One Who is the head of the Body, the Captain of our salvation:

*“Know you not, that so many of us as were baptized into Yahshua the Messiah were baptized into his death? Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Messiah was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. For if we have been planted together in the likeness of His death, we shall be also in the likeness of His resurrection: Knowing this, that our old man is impaled with Him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin.” (Romans 6:3-6)*

Paul again clarifies that we are baptized into the Name of Yahshua the Messiah. We belong to the Messiah and are joined to Him along with those who have been sealed in His Name through baptism:

*“Now this I say, that every one of you says, I am of Paul; and I of Apollos; and I of Cephas; and I of Messiah. Is Messiah divided: was Paul impaled for you? or were you baptized in the name of Paul? I thank Yahweh that I baptized none of you, but Crispus and Gaius; Lest any should say that I had baptized in mine own name.” (1Cor. 1:12-15)*

### **Then Who Baptizes?**

Baptisms into titles or the wrong name are improper. Once we recognize that a baptism performed in Yahshua’s saving Name is the only true baptism, the question becomes, who does the baptizing?

Should only the ordained ministers do the baptizing? Or can anyone who has been immersed into Yahshua’s Name go out and baptize others? What do examples of baptism tell us?

The first baptism for the remission of sins recorded in the New Testament is found in Acts 2. Peter gave a rousing sermon to the gathered house of Israel that resulted in the baptism of 3,000 by the chosen Apostles who had been instructed by the Savior, Acts 2:38-42.

However, Phillip, a recognized deacon, was actively concerned with the Samaritans and evidently was the first to proclaim the Good News: “But when they believed Phillip preaching the things concerning the kingdom of Yahweh, and the name of Yahshua Messiah, they were baptized, both men and women.” Acts 8:12.

Phillip did baptize the Samaritans, but he could not lay hands on them. We are not told the reason Phillip was pressed to immerse these Samaritans. It may have been necessary for this deacon to act on behalf of the Samaritans, for not being Jews, the Elders perhaps did not consider them worthy of baptism and ignored them. They likely were not aware that Yahweh was calling both Jew and Gentile as well as Samaritans into the “Ekklesia.” Phillip also baptized the Ethiopian eunuch, we read in Acts 8:38.

### **Elders Sent to Lay on Hands**

Phillip was given extra miraculous power to convince the multitude that his work was of Yahweh. Powerful miracles were not a part of other baptisms, however.

Baptism by a deacon (Phillip) is the exception and not the rule. Baptisms were done by the ordained ministers who also were responsible for the laying on of hands following immersion for the giving of the Holy Spirit.

Elders Peter and John were sent from Jerusalem to Samaria for this very purpose:

*“Now when the apostles which were at Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the word of Yahweh, they sent unto them Peter and John: Who, when they were come down, prayed for them, that they might receive the Holy Spirit, (For as yet he was fallen upon none of them: only*

*they were baptized in the name of the Master Yahshua). Then laid they [their] hands on them and they received the Holy Spirit.” (Acts 8:14-17)*

The laying on of hands plays a very important part in Yahweh’s scheme of things, for thereby the Holy Spirit was given, Acts 8 and 19. The laying on of hands is to confirm a spiritual communion for spiritual gifts, healing, and ordination. It is to strengthen the spiritual bond among believers, much as the spiritual blessing was passed on in the days of the Old Testament. (See 1Tim.4:14; 2Tim. 1:6)

Take note that Peter was active in baptizing the assembled Jews in Jerusalem, and later took part with John in laying hands upon those of Samaria. Next we read of Peter’s participation with the Gentiles who were given the Holy Spirit even before they were baptized.

The acceptance of Gentiles occurred ten years after Pentecost when Cornelius, a centurion, desired to see Peter. Having been given a special vision of clean and unclean, Peter soon understood that the vision was not a lesson on clean or unclean foods, but that believing Gentiles were to be a part of the “ekklesia,” the called-out-ones.

Ten years after the ascension of the Savior, Peter said he had eaten nothing common or unclean. That was not the issue, for Peter had continued to avoid unclean foods.

Notice Peter’s declaration: *“Of a truth I perceive that Elohim is no respecter of persons: But in every nation he that fears Him, and works righteousness, is accepted with Him.” (Acts 10:34-35)*

After understanding the vision, Peter came and spoke to the centurion assembled with his kinsmen and friends (Acts 10:24-25). While he was speaking the Holy Spirit fell upon all those who heard his words, verse 44. This convinced the gathered Jews that Yahweh was calling not only Israelites and Samaritans, but also Gentiles, to be a part of the Body of believers. Notice that even though the Gentiles had already received the Holy Spirit, they were nevertheless baptized into Yahshua’s Name.

*“Can any man forbid water, that these should not be baptized, which have received the Holy Spirit as well as we? And he commanded them to be baptized in the name of [Yahshua]. Then prayed they him to tarry certain days.” (Acts 10:47-48)*

It is clear that baptism into Yahshua’s Name has a great depth of meaning. Not only are we given a portion (earnest) of the Holy Spirit, but we also become a part of the spiritual body of believers. Being baptized into the Body of Messiah means joining the body, the koinonia, the fellowship, the union of kindred minds and attitudes. We become one in the Spirit.

### **John’s Baptism: Repentance**

Paul now comes on the scene after being struck down on the Damascus road. He wonders whether certain new believers he met from Ephesus had received the Holy Spirit. These disciples replied that they had never heard of the Holy Spirit since they believed. They had been baptized unto John’s baptism.

Paul explained that John’s baptism was unto repentance; that is, to prepare them to receive Yahshua as Sovereign and Ruler in their lives. With this explanation they decided to be baptized unto salvation in the saving Name of Yahshua. When Paul laid hands on them, the Holy Spirit came upon them, and they spoke in different tongues and prophesied. (Acts 19:1-5)

By this example we look upon all previous baptisms not done in Yahshua’s saving Name as a type of John’s baptism. That is, the individual has gone as far as he or she could in their incomplete understanding. But upon comprehending that we must be baptized into the only

Name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved (Acts 4:12), the truly repentant eagerly comply.

There is nothing higher than being baptized into Yahshua and taking on His saving Name. This is the epitome of becoming the bride of Messiah.

The examples in Acts establish that baptisms were done by the early Apostles who were the ministers chosen of the Savior. The example of Phillip shows that the Elders still had the responsibility to lay hands upon the candidate. There is no example of just anyone taking upon himself this authority of laying hands, but it was carried out by the Elders. Baptisms as well were done by the Elders and not lay members.

### **Into What Name?**

Note that in the following verses Paul specifically mentions Apollos and Peter (Cephas) who did the baptizing:

*“Now this I say, that every one of you says, I am of Paul; and I of Apollos; and I of Cephas; and I of Messiah. Is Messiah divided? was Paul impaled for you? or were you baptized in the name of Paul?” (1Cor. 1:12-13).* Laying on of hands or baptisms by lay people is unknown in any of the above instances.

Being immersed into Yahshua’s saving Name carries a significance overlooked by many. The first example in Acts (2:38) tells us that those who are baptized into the Name of Yahshua will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. That is to say, the Holy Spirit indwells that person, is within that individual.

Yahshua explained that the Holy Spirit (the Comforter) would surround His people, but upon baptism would be placed within them: *“[Even] the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it sees him not, neither knows him: but you know him; for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you.” (John 14:17)*

### **Gifts of the Spirit**

Through the Spirit of Yahweh indwelling us following baptism, Yahweh gives us a special gift. Paul explains: *“Neglect not the gift that is in you, which was given you by prophecy, with the laying on of the hands of the presbytery.” (1Tim 4:14)*

Paul goes on to state that we each are given a special gift to be used for the good of the Assembly: *“Now there are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit. And there are differences of administrations, but the same master. And there are diversities of operations, but it is the same Elohim which works all in all. But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal.” (1Cor. 12:4-7)*

In 1Corinthians 12:8-10 Paul lists these gifts: wisdom, knowledge, faith, healing, miracles, prophecy, discernment, tongues, and interpretation of tongues. Each member has his own gift that is to be used for the edification of the Assembly. *“Even so you, forasmuch as you are zealous of spiritual [gifts], seek that you may excel to the edifying of the assembly.” (1Cor. 14:12)*

Being baptized into the Body of Messiah and given a spiritual gift, one is expected to use that gift to edify, build up, and strengthen His Body of believers. By using our gifts we encourage and build up others in the most holy faith.

### **Fruitbearers**

We are also to bear fruits of the Spirit as Paul describes in Galatians. Notice: *“But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith.” (Gal 5:22)*

The exercising of our gifts and bearing fruits of the Spirit are not to be done in a corner. Those who think they can be a credible follower of Yahshua and avoid being a part of the Body are making a big mistake. One cannot be a hermit and develop character. The fruits of the Spirit are a result of interacting with the Body of believers. This is where the true fruits are grown and nurtured.

We are to show love. Exhibit joy. Promote peace. Prove our patience. Show gentleness. Exercise goodness. Deepen faith. Remain meek. Be tolerant. How? Only by interacting with others.

When baptized into the saving Name of Yahshua, we join with those who have accepted the only Name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved. We are among the company of believers who have been sealed with His Name. We look forward to standing on Mount Zion with the Lamb and the one hundred forty and four thousand awaiting the marriage supper.

*“And I looked, and, lo, a Lamb stood on the mount Sion, and with him an hundred forty [and] four thousand, having [His Name and] His Father’s Name written in their foreheads.” (Rev. 14:1)*

Our conclusion, according to Scripture, is that only an ordained minister should baptize. He is a recognized representative of the Body of Messiah and can better counsel one on the solemnity of the occasion. It is also from the Presbytery (body of Elders) that the gifts of the Spirit are given by laying on of hands (1Tim. 4:14).

Perhaps you should heed the words given to the Apostle Paul as he recounts his conversation with Ananias in Acts 22:16: *“And now why do you tarry? arise, and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on the name of Him, [the Righteous One].”*

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