



"And this is the commandment we have from Him, that the one who loves God should love his brother also." 1 John 4: 21

Sunday – February 10, 2008

Heart to Heart... (Baptism part 1)

It is often spoken about. Some want to argue while others simple question. It goes something like this: "Does one have to be baptized to be saved?" or "Do I have to be re-baptized to join your church?" Questions like this reveal the utter confusion that exists about baptism and the church of the Lord. Religion is not uniting people to oneness in teaching to the Lord but is dividing and sending out a message to pick and choose what you like. That is completely opposite of what Jesus taught and prayed (John 17:16-21). There are many people who sincerely are striving to live a life that pleases the Lord but have no understanding what the truth of His word teaches about baptism, saving faith and the true church Jesus built. People see one church as good as another, bouncing from here to there for whatever suits them (friends, entertainment, social activities), never investigating (or not wanting to know) what is being taught about the truth of salvation. One does not want to get to eternity finding out they either were deceived or deceived themselves by not seeking the truth. Let's take some time, with open hearts toward God's word and look closely at what the apostles of Jesus, who received their teaching from Jesus, taught about baptism in relation to salvation after His resurrection.

What many believe about baptism (and the majority believe in baptism in some form), is a take it or leave it attitude. Many believe baptism is a simple religious ceremony. Certain days are set aside for this event. Others think baptism is how you "join" a certain denomination. These teachings/beliefs did not come from the teachings of Jesus and His apostles.

Let's start with the word "baptism". The word literally means "the process of immersion, submersion and emergence." (Vines Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words.) Notice it is "immersion" or "submersion" which is to dip or put under. It **is not** a sprinkling or pouring of water over the head. Sprinkling is a completely different Greek word than baptism. Baptism is spoken in contrast to the word 'buried'. (See Romans 6:3/Colossians 2:12) A person "buried" does not have some ground sprinkled over them or some dirt poured over their head. Baptism was always understood in Biblical times as a complete burial, an immersion into water to emerge in a newness of life. It was not a new idea to the Jew's but the meaning took on newness after the apostles taught about the relationship of baptism to salvation.

Many believe that salvation is by God's generous grace (and it is!) but in the process, they ignore the purpose of baptism in relationship to God's grace. It is often claimed baptism has nothing to do with salvation, so the many believe they are saved before baptism and baptism was nothing more than an outer sign of an inner faith. That concept is completely foreign in God's word. If baptism has nothing to do with salvation, then why do it? If baptism has nothing to do with salvation, there is no need for it! This is where many stray from the truth. Salvation is by grace through faith and will always be by grace through faith! In man's response to God's grace through faith in Christ, God still calls all people to be baptized into the name of Jesus Christ (Matthew 29:19/Acts 2:38/Acts 22:16). The grace of God and faith in Christ must be tied to baptism and cannot be ignored. There must have been something major about baptism if Jesus instructed His own apostles after His resurrection to "**go into all the world and preach the gospel to all creation. He who has believed and has been baptized shall be saved; but he who disbelieves shall be condemned.**" (Mark 16:15-16) Jesus tied baptism to faith in the gospel prior to being saved. No belief in the gospel, no baptism! No baptism, no salvation! That's the very words of Jesus. More next week. Think about it!!!

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