



"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 17, 2008

## Heart to Heart... (Baptism part 2)

People ask, "Does one have to be baptized to be saved?" Let's open our minds and hearts and think about this. Who was the first person to ever ask that question? When you read God's word, you never read of anyone asking that question, you only read of a man asking, "***What prevents me from being baptized?***" (Acts 8:36) It was not, "*Do I have to be baptized?*" Hearing the teaching of the Christ and risen Lord from the Scriptures (Acts 8:34-35), his heart was moved to desire baptism. Something must have been taught about our risen Lord and the connection to baptism for this man to desire it. He wanted to know what kept him from it while today, many ponder if they must be baptized to be saved!

Many people question baptism tied to salvation, not grasping the truth of God's intention. On the day of Pentecost, 50 days after the resurrected Christ, that first sermon we read so much about preached by Peter and the apostles, baptism was never questioned (Acts 2). After convincing proof that Jesus the Nazarene was the Messiah and Lord sent by God, many of those Jews were pierced deep in their heart (Acts 2:22-36). They asked, "***What shall we do?***" (Acts 2:37) The inspired apostle Peter spoke plainly they needed to repent and be baptized into the name of Jesus Christ for the purpose of having their sins forgiven (Acts 2:38). No one questioned or argued over the teaching of baptism to cleanse them of their sins. Those who had faith in the word spoken, received that word and their faith responded through baptism (Acts 2:40-41). It was clear cut for those listening to find forgiveness from the Lord was repentance accompanied by baptism into His name or they would be left under condemnation. (Jesus taught the same thing in Mark 15:15-16.)

When God sent His Spirit on the open-hearted Cornelius (Acts 10-11), you never heard Cornelius debating whether he needed to be baptized into the name of Jesus Christ. Peter commanded it and Cornelius and his household responded in faith (Acts 10:47-48).

When one reads of the conversion of Saul, this penitent man who later became the apostle Paul, did not argue with Ananias when he was told to "*arise and be baptized and wash away your sins calling on the name of the Lord.*" (Acts 22:16) His calling on the name of the Lord was tied to baptism. The washing away of his sins was tied to baptism. No questioning! No doctrinal argument! No twisting or manipulating the word. He arose and humbly obeyed immediately. It was not optional or an outer sign of an inner faith. He was not "joining" some religious group. It was the difference between finding forgiveness of his sins or remaining in his sins! He was not saved until he responded by his faith to what was spoken! He later writes Romans 6 to describe in detail, to the Roman brethren who had already been baptized into Christ, the purpose and depth of what baptism accomplishes. Many religious people quote Paul's writings in Romans 10 to prove how one is saved (Romans 10:9-10 in particular). We need to carefully read the chapter. Paul is addressing those who **had already** been baptized (remember Romans 6 is before Romans 10), trying to show them that the word of faith that was being preached needed to continue to be heeded! It was not a teaching of how one is saved but if they would continue to believe in what was preached? Because baptism is not mentioned with every conversion does not mean it was ignored. The conversion and salvation of people was by faith in Christ Jesus and faith responds to what is spoken, which includes baptism (Colossians 2:12). Baptism was not a work or option. It was faith responding to the teaching of the apostles, putting their trust in the death of Jesus. It is the difference of whether one is saved or lost! And people ask, "Does one have to be baptized to be saved?" More next week. Think about it!!!

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