



"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 – March 16, 2008

Heart to Heart. . . (Baptism part 6)

This is last of the articles on baptism. I pray people with honest and humble hearts read with a sincere desire for the truth. Search out the Scriptures yourself and never be afraid to ask questions from sincerity. Those that just want to argue, there is little one can do.

There is only One who saves – God through Jesus Christ. There is NO saving power in ANY human efforts! The apostles taught this. Christ knew this! When we read of faith, repentance or baptism linked with the forgiveness or salvation, there is nothing merited in those responses. One cannot work their way into a relationship with God by any man means. Salvation is a gift of God! Salvation is offered from God on God's terms, not ours.

When people heard the good news preached and wanted to have their sins forgiven (salvation), they were told to "*repent and be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins.*" (Acts 2:37-38) That was the first and initial message preached and a commanded response after the resurrected Christ. It was not debated but gladly obeyed (Acts 2:41). When Saul, who later became Paul, wanted to have his sins washed away in Christ, he was told: "*Now why do you delay? Get up and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on His name.*" (Acts 22:16) He did not argue or question but got up and was baptized as he was told (Acts 9:18). It was not merited through baptism, but faith reaching out to the words of his Savior. This was the same man who taught salvation by grace as a free gift (Ephesians 2:6-9). This same congregation at Ephesus which Paul wrote was started by 12 men, who had been only acquainted with the baptism of John, and they were baptized *into* the name of the Lord Jesus (Acts 19:1-5). When faith was present, when people believed in the Lord, they responded to what was preached and baptism was that response. Baptism is NOT a work of man, but a faith response believing in the Lord and Savior to wash away ones sins. Baptism is a result of hearing the gospel and putting faith in the gospel taught (Mark 16:15-16). Baptism was "*into*" Christ. It is where and when one enters Christ. As stated in an earlier article, baptism is not sprinkling! It is a burial with Christ.

In writing to the church at Rome, Paul reminds those who had been baptized *into* Christ what their baptism was all about. These people had been "baptized *into* Christ" (Romans 6:3). That baptism was a union with Christ and a union with His death (Romans 6:4). It was in the death of Jesus that He shed His blood and it is the blood that cleanses. One cannot have their sins remitted until they contact the blood of Christ and Paul reminded these brethren (and us) when and where that took place, at baptism. Not only were they baptized *into* His death, but they were raised up with Christ (Romans 6:4). Their union with Christ meant a union with His death and resurrection. How does this text of Scripture say they experienced that union? By being baptized *into* Christ! They were baptized *into* His death. They were baptized *into* His death that they might share His resurrection. His resurrection meant a newness of life. Ones old self, tied to sin, was rendered powerless when one is baptized *into* Christ (Romans 6:5-7). We need to allow the Scriptures to say what they mean. The apostle Paul taught this as an inspired writer. What was the end result? So each one baptized *into* Christ would walk and live in a new life (Romans 6:4-11). If one comes to baptism expecting nothing, other than a religious practice or believing they are already saved without baptism, then baptism has no meaning and there is no entrance *into* Christ. There is no cleansing or clothing with Christ (Galatians 3:27). They have not had their sins washed away by the blood of Christ and have not put on Christ!

It is in baptism that faith expresses its helpless trust in the Lord Jesus Christ. Baptism is faith's confession of the Messiah who died and rose to save us because we cannot save ourselves. It is in baptism that our heart reaches out in appealing to God for a good conscience through Christ (I Peter 3:21). Separating baptism from faith or dismissing it as optional is something one does not learn from God's Holy Scriptures. Baptism is the time and place one enters Jesus and is forgiven. The Lord taught that, the apostles of our Lord taught that. The question for us is, will we accept what is written and believe it? Think about it!!!