

7 - BAPTISM AND SALVATION

by
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After Jesus' resurrection He gave His apostles an awesome responsibility. "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to the whole creation. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that disbelieveth shall be condemned" (Mark 16:15,16). The apostles were to wait in Jerusalem until they were baptized in the Holy Spirit (Luke 24:49). It was on Pentecost that the Spirit came to guide them into all truth (Acts 2:1-4; John 16:13). It was with the guidance of the Spirit that Peter spoke. What he said came from God.

"A sound as of the rushing of a mighty wind" brought together a multitude of Jews from every nation under heaven (Acts 2:2,5,6). After explaining that the miraculous events of the day were the fulfillment of Scripture (Acts 2:14-21), Peter preached to the assembly proving that the Jesus whom they had crucified was "both Lord and Christ" (Acts 2:36). This brought an immediate response. "Now when they heard this, they were pricked in their heart, and said unto Peter and the rest of the apostles, Brethren, what shall we do?" (Acts 2:37). What do they want the apostle to tell them? Peter had told them that they "by the hand of lawless men did crucify and slay" Jesus the Lord (Acts 2:23). Surely they must be asking how to be forgiven of such a heinous crime. Peter's answer was clear. "And Peter said unto them, Repent ye, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ unto the remission of your sins; and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit" (Acts 2:38). That answer merits careful study for what was required of them is required of all.

In giving the commission, Jesus had said, "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved," but Peter did not tell them to believe. Why not? Did Peter make a mistake? No. He spoke as the Spirit gave him utterance (Acts 2:4). Was faith no longer necessary? Of course not. Then why did Peter not tell them to believe? There is only one possible answer. He didn't tell them because it was not necessary to tell them. Why not? Faith comes by hearing the word of God (Rom. 10:17). They had heard Peter's message (Acts 2:37) and believed. This is obvious from Luke's

statement, "they were pricked in their heart." They were smitten with the reality of the immensity of their sin of killing Jesus. Before Jesus' death they had shouted, "Let his blood be on us" (Matthew 27:25). They shouted these hateful words because they did not believe He was the Christ. After hearing Peter "they were pricked in their heart." Thus they were believers when they asked, "What shall we do?" If they had not been believers, Peter would have told them to believe on the Lord. If they were believers (and they were), why didn't Peter tell them they were saved? Because they weren't! Men today say you are saved merely by believing, but the Spirit-guided apostles never said such. After one believes, there is more to do before he is saved.

What did Peter tell them to do? "Repent ye, and be baptized every one of you." What must believers do to have remission of sins. Don't answer according to your thoughts, or your church's teaching, but by what the New Testament says. Before remission of sins comes to the believer, he must "repent and be baptized." Most people deny that baptism precedes forgiveness. If it does not, then neither must repentance since both are together in Peter's answer to their honest inquiry. You can study and restudy this first example of apostolic preaching under the commission, but it always comes out the same. The man who hears the gospel, believes its message, and is convicted of his sins must do the same thing these similarly convicted sinners did: "repent and be baptized."

Salvation is by faith, but it is a faith that accepts all of God's word, and does what God requires for the reason God gives. The Scriptures clearly teach that water baptism to a penitent believer is essential to salvation for alien sins. Too many preachers are misleading people by telling them that baptism follows salvation. The New Testament shows that baptism precedes salvation (Mk. 16:16; Acts 2:38; 22:16; Gal. 3:26,27; I Pet. 3:21). Study these verses in your Bible with an open mind. Nowhere does the New Testament tell anyone to be baptized because he is saved.

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