

Rebaptized?

4-6-14

In Acts 19:1-7 we are introduced to the Ephesian 12. These men were disciples of John the Baptist who had not yet heard of the Gospel, the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus Christ. When they heard the truth, they were baptized for what appears to be the second time. These men were baptized in a fashion that appears identical to the baptism of Christ. However, the purpose of their "first" baptism made it invalid in Christ. Though baptized, they were not saved.

What is the purpose of baptism? If we walk through the Scriptures, we find that Baptism is described as follows:

Mark 16:16 – Salvation

I John 5:6 – Testimony of your salvation

John 3:5 – Being born again

Acts 22:16 – Calling on the name of the Lord

Acts 2:38 – Removing Sin

Romans 6:5 – Receiving eternal life

Acts 2:42 – Being added to the church

One thing we need to understand is that it is NOT a work of men but of God (Titus 3:5). While faith, repentance and confession are described as works of men, baptism is described as a work of God.

When is baptism not effective? For one thing, baptism is not effective when it is simply NOT baptism. Some believe that baptism is a spiritual event (they may even identify it with the Baptism of the Holy Spirit, which in Scriptures was ONLY given to the Apostles; see John 14, 15 & 16, and Acts 2), Many denominations practice sprinkling which they call baptism; of course, the word baptism means "immerse", which describes a specific act.

Baptism is NOT effective when it is done for the wrong reasons (as was the case of the Ephesian 12). When it is done for social acceptance. When it is done to obtain church congregation membership. Most commonly, many protestant denominations teach that one is saved prior to baptism (a direct contradiction to the Scriptures listed above). They will say that baptism is the sign that we have been saved ("Outward sign of an inward grace"). Like the Ephesian 12, they have truly not been baptized if that is their purpose.

Finally, baptism is invalid when it is done without understanding. Examples include infant and child baptisms. In such cases, there is neither faith nor sin which must be removed.

What makes a saving baptism? 1 John 5:6-8 tells us that three things must be present: Water, Blood and Spirit. Blood refers to the Grace of Christ(Ephesians 1:7). When John baptized, this grace was not yet revealed. Water refers to the action of Baptism, as seen in I Peter 3:20-21. Finally, the Spirit refers to the revelation of God (John 6:63). So we are saying that baptism, to be effective, must have the work of God, the work of water, and understanding. Then it is a saving baptism.

What must a person know to be baptized? Philip would not baptize the Ethiopian eunuch unless he understood certain things (Acts 8:36-37). According to Hebrews 6:1-2, there are six basic principles we must know to be saved.

Repentance from dead works
Faith toward God
The doctrine of baptisms
Laying on of hands (authority)
Resurrection of the dead
Eternal judgment

That being said, what things do not effect baptism? One is the depth of our maturity. Scriptures reveal that we are babes after obeying the Gospel (1 Peter 2:2). Another point is who baptizes us (1 Corinthians 1:14). Since the work of baptism is by God, not man, we see that the power of baptism (in the blood, water and Spirit) is not vested in the "baptizer". He need not be ordained, as he is only an instrument of the moment.

Should I be "Re-baptized"? Consider this: If you were "baptized" not knowing the Elementary Principles of Christ, if you were "baptized" differently than the method of the Covenant of Christ, or if you were told or believe your "baptism" wasn't what saved you, you do not need to be "re-baptized", you need to be baptized. Your previous immersion only got you wet. However, if you were "baptized" not having a complete knowledge of the truth, or if you were "baptized" but fell into sin since that time, or if you did not feel "baptism" change you, you need to learn to grow in confidence of the work God did when you were baptized.

'And now why are you waiting? Arise and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on the name of the Lord.' - Acts 22:16