

BAPTISM: WHAT IS THE PURPOSE? (3)

By Keith Greer

Many times I have been asked, "**Why should I be baptized?**" "**Does God command one to be baptized?**" These are excellent questions and we need to be able to show people God's answers as to what man must do in order to be saved.

Some of our religious friends would tell us that "baptism is an outward sign of an inward grace." This is concluding that baptism is evidence that man has taken the benefits of Christ's death on the cross, and it is NOT essential to salvation.

Still others believe that "baptism is a work", and since we cannot "earn" our salvation, it is NOT essential to salvation.

WHAT DOES THE BIBLE TEACH?

Obviously, baptism is performed by man, but what part does God also have in it? What happens in the burial in water? "In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace which He made to abound toward us in all wisdom and prudence." (Ephesians 1:7,8)

How does one come into contact with that blood? "In Him you were also circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, by putting off the body of the sins of the flesh, by the circumcision of Christ, buried with Him in baptism, in which you also were raised with Him through faith in the working of God, who raised Him from the dead. And you, being dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He has made alive together with Him, having forgiven you all trespasses." (Colossians 2:11-13)

One's obedience to baptism results in a spiritual operation with the "**CIRCUMCISION MADE WITHOUT HANDS**", (Colossians 2:11) and those "**HATH HE QUICKENED TOGETHER WITH HIM, HAVING FORGIVEN YOU ALL TRESPASSES.**" (Colossians 2:13) "**AND YOU HATH HE QUICKENED, WHO WERE DEAD IN TRESPASSES AND SINS.**" (Ephesians 2:1)

When does forgiveness occur – through the waters of baptism!

"For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body--whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free--and have all been made to drink into one Spirit." (1 Corinthians 12:13) "For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ." (Galatians 3:27) When Israel trusted God and obeyed Him, as they crossed the Red Sea they were "**BAPTIZED UNTO MOSES.**" (1 Corinthians 10:1-2) When we trust God and obey Him today, we will be baptized for the remission of our sins and the Lord will add us to His church. (Acts 2:47)

Sin is what separates us from God. So, is baptism a work by which man saves himself?
"For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God."
(Ephesians 2:8)

On the day of Pentecost when the first gospel sermon was preached, Peter told the Jews that were gathered there in Jerusalem, "Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly that God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ. Now when they heard this, they were cut to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, Men and brethren, what shall we do? Then Peter said to them, "Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit." (Acts 2:36-38)

As we read further, "Then those who gladly received his word were baptized; and that day about three thousand souls were added to them. And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers... praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved." (Acts 2:41,47)

Why were those baptized on the Day of Pentecost? Remission of sins! (cont.) ***