

What's Missing?

(Scripture quotes are from the American Standard Version)

There are many "Christian" groups who minimize the importance of Baptism as a necessity for obtaining the forgiveness, or redemption, that can be found only through the blood of Jesus Christ's sacrifice on the cross of Calvary almost 2,000 years ago. I have not been able to find any Bible teachings that allow for that premise. These are my thoughts regarding that situation.

Beginning with Mathew 7:13-14, we find that there will be few who find the way to life, even though it is offered, and available, to all. Also in that same chapter of Mathew, we find that there will be many who are fully expecting to have this salvation, but for some reason, Jesus will say to them, "Depart from me, for I never knew you!" (Matt 7:21-23) These people would even say, "Did we not prophesy in Your name and in Your name cast out demons, and in Your name perform many miracles?" These were people who believed in Jesus as the Son of God, and were active in their service to Him, but were apparently caught up in the greatest "lie" that Satan ever developed. Now, just what was their problem?

To begin with, the very next verse (24) tells us that "hearing the words of Christ" requires action, just as James said in James 2:19-20, not only that "even the demons also believe, and shudder, but that faith without works is useless." I don't think that you want to find yourself in this situation, when standing before God's judgement, so please follow this thought, and then make your own decision based on your understanding of what the Scriptures are saying to you.

Let's start in the book Acts, Luke's account of the beginning and early history of the church. In Acts 2, we have Peter's message to the Jews who were assembled in Jerusalem for Pentecost. As a result of his teaching, many believed that the person, Jesus, whom they had just killed, truly was the Son of God. With this new understanding, they were "pricked in their heart, and asked '.....what must we do?'"

They were told to "repent and be baptized for the remission of their sins", and they would "receive the gift of the Holy Spirit." Those who "gladly received his word" were baptized, and after doing this, they were added, by God, to the church. Continuing through Luke's account in Acts, he records six more examples of conversion, and the one single item that was done on each occasion was that they were baptized right then in obedience to hearing and believing the Gospel!

We already saw the group of about 3,000 in Acts 2. The others were Saul (Acts 9:1-20; 22:5-16), Simon (Acts 8:13), the Ethiopian eunuch (Acts 8:27-39), the Centurion (Acts 10:1-48), Lydia (Acts 16:14-15) & the Jailer (Acts 16:27-34).

Saul, when encountered by Jesus on the road to Damascus, believed & obeyed Jesus (22:8-10), and prayed (9:11). But he was still guilty of his sins which required baptism (obedience to the gospel) to "wash away" his sins (22:16) by the shed blood of Christ. This verse also shows the urgency by stating "Why are you waiting?" (NIV) or ""Why do you delay?" (RSV) of being baptized.

Later, in Rom 6:3-9, the Apostle Paul describes what took place when they had been baptized. They who "were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death". They had been "buried with Christ" and then were able to be "raised to a new life with Christ" (also Col 2:10-13) Our old "man of sin" is crucified with Christ, and that dead body of sin is buried in baptism where we are washed with the blood

of Christ (Acts 22:16). Only then are we able to be raised with Christ to a new life free from our old sins. Col 3:1 says that we are “raised together with Christ”;

Gal 3:27 tells us that “For as many of you as were baptized into Christ did put on Christ.”, and 1 Cor 12:13 says “For in one Spirit were we all baptized into one body...” And the body is what Jesus is going to save (Eph 5:23), which is also the church.

All spiritual blessings are “in Christ” (Eph 1:3), so that is where I want to be.

1 Pet 3:20-21 tells us that Noah and his family were saved from the sin of the world through water by being in the ark, and that this is a likeness of baptism putting us into the body of Christ to save us from the sinful world. They had to be in the ark to be saved by water, and we have to be in Christ to be saved by his blood.

1 Cor 15:1-4

¹ Now I make known unto you brethren, the gospel which I preached unto you, which also ye received, wherein also ye stand,

² by which also ye are saved, if ye hold fast the word which I preached unto you, except ye believed in vain.

³ For I delivered unto you first of all that which also I received: that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures;

⁴ and that he was buried; and that he hath been raised on the third day according to the scriptures;

Rom 6:17 says “¹⁷ But thanks be to God, that, whereas ye were servants of sin, ye became obedient from the heart to that form of teaching whereunto ye were delivered;”

So, how then can we be “obedient” to that “form” of teaching, or the Gospel, which is the death, burial & resurrection of Christ? In baptism, just as Paul explained earlier in Rom 6. This is what “ties” our belief to the blood that Jesus shed on the cross, and what we are obedient to, allowing God to add us to his church, the body of Christ, of which he is the head and savior, and be raised to a new life in Christ.

So, how can the religious world totally overlook something that is so simple, yet so important? I think it is Satan’s biggest deception that he wants us to fall for, and many have.

Refer back to Matt 7:23 - “I never knew you”.

Study and pray regarding this, and let me know what you think. I have tried very hard to find a different answer, but have been unable to do so.

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