

AFTER BAPTISM, WHAT?

By Terry Jones, September 21, 2008

Christ's Church at Tiffin, Ohio

Acts 2:42

CENTRAL SERMON THEME – After baptism, what? Devote yourself to instruction in the apostles' teaching, fellowship of other Christians, celebration of the Lord's Supper, and prayer.

INTRO. - After our baptism, what? Before we answer that question we must answer this question. Before baptism, what? Acts chapter two answers what God requires before and after baptism. The primary topic in Acts 2 is not baptism. Baptism is a minor issue which is connected to the major issue, Jesus Christ.

Peter preached the OT the prophecies of King David about the Messiah or The Anointed One. David wrote the Messiah (Christ) would die but His soul would not be left in Hades and His body would not decay. His language suggests a mystery needing to be solved. How could anyone die without the body decaying? Maybe the body could be preserved as the Egyptians excelled in doing. How could a saved person die but the soul not stay in Paradise or Hades? No one has ever permanently escaped death.

God solved this mystery with the resurrection of Jesus Christ. God the Father raised Jesus from the dead to never die again after evil men crucified Him. God not only raised Jesus from the dead but God exalted Jesus to be Lord and Messiah. Peter's preaching and the Holy Spirit pierced the hearts of the Pentecost celebrators. They cried out, "What shall we do?" They believed what Peter said about Jesus being raised from the dead and being exalted to being Lord and Christ. Peter, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, answered, "Repent." Repent means to change one's mind and behavior. The question asking what to do indicates they were changing their minds to do whatever God commanded.

Peter attached baptism to repentance. Belief in Jesus Christ and changing one's mind and life precede baptism. If faith and repentance do not precede baptism, the individual goes into the water dry and lost and came out of the water wet and lost. I fear to consider the people I have baptized who have not repented. May God lead them to correct their error.

Repentance is basically a negative command to forsake sin. Baptism is positive. When someone instructs us to do something positive our first reaction is, "How?" The Greek language of the NT answers this question.

The Greek word for baptism means to submerge, immerse, or put under. Biblical baptism is immersion. Baptism is the only form of baptism no one questions in all the groups calling themselves Christian.

The next question about baptism is, "Why must I be baptized?" Acts 2:38 answers, "for the forgiveness of sins and to receive the gift of the Holy Spirit." Mass confusion reigns over the relationship of baptism and salvation. Jesus only is the source of salvation. Can baptism only save us? The answer is conclusively, "No!" Can faith that leads us to change our minds and hearts about Christ, to confess Jesus as the Son of God and to be baptized save us? "Yes!" We are saved by grace through faith.

Jesus' death, burial and resurrection finalize the gift of God's grace. We do something very similar to what Jesus did to complete our salvation. We re-enact Jesus' death, burial and resurrection in our baptism. Our baptism finalizes our reception of God's gift of grace. Romans 6:4 - Therefore we have been buried with Him through baptism into death so that we may live a new life.

God gives us the Holy Spirit at our baptism. The study, Peace Treaty, describes what God does for us in baptism. In baptism we give ourselves to God and God gives Himself to us. Paul writes in 1 Cor. 6:19 our body is a temple of the Holy Spirit. God's Spirit causes us to grow the fruit of the Spirit - love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. We are saved by God's grace (God is the exclusive source of salvation.), through faith in Jesus Christ, in baptism (marks the timing of God's forgiveness), and for good works. We are ready to answer the question, "After baptism, what?" Acts 2:42 summarizes what the first Christians did after baptism.

I. CONTINUE IN BIBLICAL TEACHING

- A. They were continually devoting themselves to the apostles' teaching.
 - 1. We do not know the content of what the apostles taught.
 - 2. The apostles taught what Jesus had taught them.
 - a. Jesus taught about His identity from the OT; descendent of David, divine Son of God, forgiver of sins, healer of diseases.
 - b. The apostles used OT prophecies to prove Jesus is the Messiah; Acts 3:22 - Moses said, "The Lord God will raise up for you a prophet like me from your brethren; to Him you shall give heed to everything He says to you." Acts 8:26ff - Philip preached Jesus as the fulfillment of Isa. 53.

- B. The apostles were Spirit inspired men who taught the early Christians and wrote Scripture for us.
1. The biggest issue before churches today is the inspiration and authority of the Bible.
 2. As a church we believe God's Spirit gave the Scriptures to selected human writers without errors or mistakes and that the Bible has all authority over the church and the church does not have authority over the Bible.
 3. Our mission is to lead people into a personal, lifelong relationship with Jesus Christ. How? Bible.
- C. Applic. - The Bible instructs us to study and know it.
1. Personal Ex. - My greatest Christian joys are discoveries of the meaning of the Bible and applying that meaning to my life. I want to know what the Bible says.
 2. The Bible is the answer to not falling away from God.
 - a. 2 Peter 3:17, 18 - Be on your guard so that you are not carried away and fall from your own steadfastness but GROW in the GRACE and KNOWLEDGE of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.
 - b. My study of Acts and the NT letters has convinced me the apostles and early church leaders established the goal to keep Christians faithful to God through every trial including persecution and martyrdom.
 3. Continue in biblical instruction for the rest of your life; small group Bible studies.

II. CONTINUE IN CHRISTIAN FELLOWSHIP

- A. Fellowship is the word, koinonia.
1. Fellowship is sharing one's life with another person.
 2. God established the church knowing we are stronger when together.
 3. Even Jesus needed friends on earth.
- B. Ric Warren teaches there are four levels of fellowship in a church.
1. Level 1: Membership: Choosing to Belong
 - a. Eph. 2:19 - So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints, and are of God's household.

- b. “In Christ we who are many form one Body, and each member belongs to all the others.” Rom. 12:5 (NIV)
 - c. Membership is not essential for salvation but is essential to remain faithful.
- 2. Level 2: Friendship: Learning to Share, Acts 2:44 - And all those who had believed were together and had all things in common.
 - a. Experiences - Prov. 27:17; Iron sharpens iron, so one man sharpens another. You need a place where you can tell about your victories and sorrows in life.
 - b. Hospitality - Be hospitable to one another without complaint. 1 Peter 4:9. When in need, your small group will know first and be the first responders.
 - c. Problems - “Let us not give up the habit of meeting together. Instead, let us encourage one another...” Heb. 10:25 (TEV). Small groups are made up of three types of people with problems; first are those who have been through and survived their struggles, second are those who are in the midst of a crisis, and third are those who are entering a crisis.
- 3. Level 3: Partnership: Doing my Part - For we are God's fellow workers; you are God's field. 1 Cor. 3:9; The whole Body is fitted together perfectly. As each part does its own special work, it helps the other parts grow, so that the whole Body is healthy and growing and full of love.” Eph. 4:16 (NLT). Service is best done in small groups or united small groups.
- 4. Level 4: Kinship: Loving Believers like Family
 - a. Be devoted to one another in brotherly love. Rom. 12:10
 - b. John 13:35 - By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.
 - c. The NT Christians are amazing how they endure persecutions but they helped each other.

III. CONTINUE IN THE LORDS SUPPER

- A. The first Christians celebrated the Lord's Supper regularly.
 - 1. Acts 20:7 says they met on the first day of the week to break bread.
 - 2. We follow that schedule in this church.
- B. Illus. - Some of our best memories are meals we shared together as family and friends. I usually awoke in the mornings to the smell of coffee being brewed downstairs as my father got ready to go to work.

My mother makes a treat called Fried Dried Apple Pies. She dries small pieces of apples during the time they are ripe. She soaks the dried apples in water until they are saturated. She seasons the apples which looks like apple sauce but is brown. The apples are put in a layer of biscuit dough, folded over to form a half-moon, and dried briefly. Good! When our children visit us here in Tiffin, they always want to go to Fort Ball Pizza. I heard if your house is for sale you can help sell it when a potential buyer looks at it. Bake a cake because the aroma of baking cake or cookies makes people happy. We love to eat.

- C. The Lords Supper aids our memories through both taste and smell.
1. Jesus wants His followers to remember Him when they eat.
 2. Ex. - One writer says the ancient Jews never cut bread, they always broke their bread. The broken bread points to the broken body of Jesus on the cross.
 3. The juice is a reminder of the blood Jesus gave up on the cross.

IV. CONTINUE IN PRAYERS

- A. The early church prayed often.
1. Ten days of prayer preceded the Pentecost feast.
 2. They prayed at 3:00 each afternoon after the church was established.
 3. Acts 12 - Peter is arrested but the church prays all night until an angel of the Lord releases Peter.
 4. If you could ask the leaders in the early church the greatest factor in their growth, they would answer, "Prayer."
- B. Illus. - God created the land sufficient to feed us. We plant and harvest our crops to feed us. As a church God has made everything available for His church to grow. We have a means of tapping God's resources. Prayer.
- C. Illus. - In Kentucky a church was about to close their doors because the membership was aging and dying. Only a few members remained in this dying church. The few members decided to meet every week to pray for God to save their church. Their prayer meetings were effective for people started attending and conversions were happening. They tell people that prayer saved them. 1 Cor. 3:6 - I planted, Apollos watered, but God was causing the growth.

CONCLUSION - A missionary in India went to an area to work with a tribal people. Many extremists were present when he and his two young sons, five and eight arrived. The extremists beat on his van. They set it on fire refusing to let the missionary and his two sons escape. The father and his two sons died in the fire. The funeral for them was conducted the next day. A well known reporter asked the wife and mother, "How do you feel?" She answered him, "I feel no revenge. I forgive the people who killed my husband and two children. I hope they come to know the hope and forgiveness available through Jesus Christ." She held her thirteen year old daughter by the hand as they both sang, "Because He lives I can face tomorrow. Because He lives all fear is gone. And life is worth the living just because He lives." The surviving family's testimony was broadcast over India. Thousands of people said, "If that is Christianity, I want to be Christian."

If we desire for the message of Christ to reach our world, we need a similar passion for our Lord and Savior. Those before us in the NT and in other places of the world are willing to suffer for Christ. How about us?