

San Juan church of Christ

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Baptism and Salvation

Two questions will be answered in this article. Can a person become a Christian by “giving their heart to Jesus” and asking God to forgive them? Is baptism just an ordinance of the church?

God has extended salvation to mankind in a clearly revealed plan. This plan has been made known to us through the gospel. To give one’s heart to God one must be careful to embrace obedience revealed in the scriptures. The apostle Peter wrote, “Since you have in OBEDIENCE to the truth purified your souls for a sincere love of the brethren, fervently love one another from the heart” (1 Peter 1:22). The apostle Paul also wrote about obedience: “Do you not know that when you present yourselves to someone as slaves for OBEDIENCE, you are slaves of the one whom you obey, either of sin resulting in death, or of OBEDIENCE resulting in righteousness?” (Romans 6:16-18). This is the means by which we give our hearts to God and receive forgiveness.

Scriptural baptism never was a church ordinance. It was ordained by Jesus for repentant believers and not the church. Jesus, in the Great Commission, told the apostles, “Go into all the world and preach the gospel to all creation. He who has believed and has been baptized shall be saved” (Mark 16:15-16). This commission was given by our Lord before the church was established, so this baptism was ordained by Him, not by His followers [church]. In giving the commission, Jesus plainly stated the results of obeying Him in baptism: “shall be saved.”

When the gospel was first preached, after the resurrection of Jesus, the apostle Peter told the Jews who were assembled in Jerusalem on Pentecost, “God has made Him both Lord and Christ, this Jesus whom you crucified,” (Acts 2:36). These Jews were “pierced to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, ‘Brethren, WHAT SHALL WE DO?’” (Acts 2:37) The answer was simple, “Repent, and each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit,” (Acts 2:38). The results of those who were OBEDIENT is also clearly stated: “So then, those who had received his word [Peter] were baptized...And the Lord added to the church those who were being saved,” (Acts 2:41,47).

Saul of Tarsus was persecuting Christians, when the Lord stopped him (Act 9). Jesus sent a man by the name of Ananias to find Saul, and he found him praying. In stead of encouraging Saul to pray for forgiveness, Ananias told him, “Now why do you delay? Get up and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on His name,” (Acts 22:16). False teachers have reversed this order telling sinners to pray, and telling the “saved” to be baptized.

God is the author of our salvation and we must rely on His revealed word, not on the creeds of men.

Please send any comments, questions, or requests for a Bible study to:
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