Accepting the Gospel-Baptism

Matthew 28:18-20; Mark 16:15,16: Luke 24:46-48

In most cases, the last, parting words of a person are usually the most important. Moments before Jesus ascends to be with the Father again, He leaves behind what is commonly referred to as the Great Commission. This Commission is recorded in three of the four gospels (and partly, the beginning of the book of Acts). Let’s visit the gospel passages:

Matthew 28:18-20: *And Jesus came and spoke to them, saying, “All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.”*

Mark 16:15,16: *And He said to them, “Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned.”*

Luke 24:46-48: *Then He said to them, “Thus it is written, and thus it was necessary for the Christ to suffer and to rise from the dead the third day, and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem.”*

These passages show us Jesus teaching His disciples about going out into the world to make disciples and what to do when a person accepts the status of being a disciple. In each of these three passages, we find Jesus stressing three things: faith, repentance and baptism. (In Acts 1 Jesus gives the place to start and where to go next.) The first two are universally accepted as essential while a very large portion of the protestant realm denies the necessity of baptism. They believe that we are saved by grace and faith *alone*.

Those that deny the necessity of baptism use Ephesians 2:8,9 which state that we are saved by grace though faith and not by works. They believe baptism is a “work” because it is something that we do. So, they replace baptism with a “Sinner’s Prayer.” Interestingly, the prayer is still something a person “does.” This brings up the question: if baptism is considered a work, then why are not believing in Jesus, repentance, and confession counted as works? For instance, is believing something we do which requires work, or does belief just magically appear in our heart? Is repentance something we do which requires work, or do we just mysteriously become a different person with no recollection of who we once were? It gets worse. Most who deny the role of baptism in salvation will say it is very important to be baptized as a public testimony, i.e. confession of our faith in Jesus. Hmmm. Doesn’t the scripture say in Romans 10:9,10 that confession of Jesus is essential to salvation? By that rule, baptism is still essential.

The moot argument that baptism in not necessary for salvation is rooted solely in the idea that baptism is a work that we do. Search Scripture and you will find no place which states that baptism is a work we do, but you will find many verses which state that baptism is the point where God does immense work on us.

What does God do for us in baptism? He remits our sins and gives us HIs Holy Spirit (Acts 2:38). He washes away our sins (Acts 22:16). He crucifies and buries our old self and raises us up a new creation. (Romans 6:3-6). He circumcises sin from our hearts (Colossians 2:11,12). He clothes us with Christ (Galatians 3:27). He saves us through a good conscience answering to God (1 Peter 3:21). Notice: all of these *are* works, but they are works that God does on us!

The Acts of the Apostles is the book that tells the story of the spread of the Good News. In this book, you will find 19 stories of conversions. In none of these instances is any person told to simply accept Jesus into their heart by faith and say a prayer asking Jesus to come into their life. Here are a few examples of true conversions: Acts 2:14-41; Acts 8:12,13; Acts 8:26-38; Acts 9:1-18; Acts 16:25-33.

There are more examples, but these illustrate that the disciples had people do exactly what Jesus told them to do as part of His Great Commission: believe, repent, and be baptized. More conversion stories showing baptism include Acts chapters 10, 16, 18, 19, 22.

All of the above-mentioned blessings come to us by God’s grace through faith. Never let anyone tell you baptism is a human work. When you receive baptism through obedience, you are not doing a work of any kind, God is! You cannot do anything to earn what God gives you when you are baptized. These are God’s gifts to you when you trust Him to redeem you. Baptism is not your idea. It is given to us specifically by the Son of God. Baptism is the place where you show your acceptance of Jesus as your Lord (Hebrews 5:9). Don’t argue about it, just do it in faith, and Jesus will do what He is supposed to do.