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THE SURE WORD by Jonnie Hutchison

SALVATION: BEFORE OR AFTER BAPTISM?

Many religious people believe and teach that salvation comes before and without water baptism. A careful consideration of the wording of relevant passages in the New Testament should settle this question in any objective mind.

Consider Mark 16:16, "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned." Does salvation come before or after baptism in this passage? If you answer before then should not the passage read, "He that believeth and is saved shall be baptized"? If not, why not? Jesus placed salvation after, not before, faith and water baptism.

Consider Acts 2:38. After Peter had declared that "God has made this same Jesus whom you have crucified both Lord and Christ" his hearers asked, "Men and brethren what shall we do?". "Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost" 36-38). In this passage, does the "remission of sins" come before or after baptism? If you answer before then should not the passage read, "Repent and receive the remission of sins every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ and then be baptized...."? If baptism comes after rather than before one receives the remission of sins, then Peter was obviously mistaken when he told his listeners to "Repent and be baptized...for the remission of sins. "Peter made no mistake for he spoke as the Holy Spirit gave him utterance (Acts 2:4). According to Acts 2:38, the remission of sins comes after repentance and water baptism, not before.

Denying that baptism is essential to salvation does not change what the Bible teaches. The Bible teaches that baptism is the point where a penitent believer who confesses faith in Christ reaches the blood of Jesus which washes away sin. Jesus shed His blood when He died on the cross (John 19:33-34). The Bible clearly shows the connection between water baptism and the death of Jesus. Romans 6:3-4 reads, "Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death? Therefore, we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life." To reach the death of Jesus is to reach His blood. Thus, one's sins are washed away by the blood of Jesus when one is baptized into His death. According to this passage, when does one "walk in newness of life," before or after one is baptized into the death of Jesus?