

“Born Again” (2)

In last week's *NEWSLETTER*, we began looking at the phrase “born again” and how it has been misinterpreted by a good many people in the denominational world. Being born again doesn't involve anything more than the recitation of a “prayer of faith” and nothing else is necessary. We looked at the example of Paul's conversion in **Acts 9 and 22**. He was told by Ananias: ***“Get up, be baptized and wash your sins away, calling on his name.”*** And that's precisely what Paul did. His faith in the Lord Jesus Christ was made evident by his obedience to Jesus' command that was given to all who taught Jesus Christ in **Mark 16 and Matthew 28**. I also made this statement last week: “In every example in Acts, those who believed in Jesus Christ as the Son of God were baptized.” Here are the a number of examples:

Probably the best example of this, other than the conversion story of Paul himself in **Acts 22** is found in **Acts 2:38**. In **Acts 2:38**, Peter and John are preaching the gospel to the crowd in Jerusalem on that Pentecost, and they are affected by what they hear. They ask what they need to do to make their relationship with God right. Peter's answer:

“Repent, and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins.”

Change your life (all of you!) and be baptized so that your sins (the ones you are turning your back on) will be forgiven. Pretty obvious to me—no spin necessary. In **Acts 8**, Phillip preached to the people in Samaria. Their response? **Verse 12: “when they believed Philip as he proclaimed the good news of the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women.”** His preaching later on to the Ethiopian official must have mentioned the necessity of baptism as indication of the official's faith. **Verses 36-38: “Look, here is water. What can stand in the way of my being baptized?” Philip said, “If you believe with all your heart, you may.” The eunuch answered, “I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God.” And he gave orders to stop the chariot. Then both Philip and the eunuch went down into the water and Philip baptized him.”**

From the time of Paul's conversion on, he preached the essentiality of baptism, both in the conversion process of those he preached to in Acts, and in the letters he wrote to the churches of Christ in southern Europe and Western Asia.

In **Acts 16:15**, it is said that Lydia ***“responded to Paul's message.”*** How did she respond? ***“...she and the members of her household were baptized.”*** Right then. No delay. No question about its necessity. In **Acts 16**, Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God with the other prisoners listening to them. I assume (my interpretation) that the jailer was also listening. An earthquake ensues and the jail doors are opened. Assuming the prisoners will escape, he is about to harm himself until reassured by Paul that they are all still there. The jailer, realizing that Paul is a prisoner for Christ, asks the question that was also asked by the masses at Pentecost: ***“...what must I do to be saved?”*** Paul's response: ***“Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved.”*** There you have it. Only faith is necessary! No...wait -- ***“They spoke the word of the Lord to him and to all the others in his house.”*** Their response? ***“At***

that hour of the night the jailer took them and washed their wounds; then IMMEDIATELY he and all his family were baptized.” Their response to ***the “word of the Lord?”*** Baptism. Must have been part of what was preached. The obvious need was to complete their faith by being baptized.

In **Acts 18:8**, it is said that the response by Crispus, the synagogue ruler and many Corinthians ***“believed in the Lord...and were baptized.”*** In **Acts 19**, John's disciples are told to ***“believein Jesus.”*** It says in **verse 5** that ***“on hearing this, they were baptized into the name of the Lord Jesus.”*** Why? Because it was necessary!

In next week's *NEWSLETTER*, we'll finish our discussion by looking at what Paul and Peter had to say about baptism in their letters. We'll see what they compare it to, what it symbolically represents, and focus on the fact that baptism is the completion of the faith that denominations put so much emphasis on.

---Johnny Stephens