

THE MYSTERY OF BAPTISM

One who is knowledgeable of the New Testament is probably scratching their head about now, seeing the word "mystery" connected to baptism. To them, there is no mystery. The Bible is quite clear about the subject. But, therein is the mystery. With the Bible being so clear about the subject of baptism, how can one maintain that a person can be saved without having been baptized, and baptized for the right reason?

Quite a few years ago, a Baptist preacher responded to the quotation of Peter on Pentecost (Acts 2:38) with the words, "but Peter was just a man". We will not even get into answering the fallacy of seeing Peter as "just a man", but let us note what Peter said about baptism before we proceed to the rebuttal the Baptist received. Peter, in answer to the question from the Jews present about what they had to do told them, "Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins...". Now, unless one can be saved without having the remission of sins, and remission of sins comes when one is baptized, then there can be no salvation without being baptized.

Now, the response to that Baptist preacher whet like this. "Jesus Christ, the Son of God said, "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned" (Mark 16:16). Now why don't you just go ahead and try to convince me that the Son of God was just a man?" No response followed the challenge. On a few occasions, the argument is thrown up that Jesus was talking about being baptized in the Holy Ghost. However, this is Mark's account of the great commission and in Matthew's account He says, "Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them...". The apostles were to do the baptizing. It was Jesus that would do the baptizing in the Holy Spirit, not the apostles (Matt. 3:11). This was water baptism.

It's surprising that so many rashly rush to the apostle Paul for aid in upholding a doctrine of salvation without having been baptized. Surprising because it was the apostle Paul that wrote twice that a man is "baptized into Christ" (Rom. 6:3; Gal. 3:27). Now, since one has to be baptized "into" Christ, in order for one to be saved without being baptized, they would have to be saved "outside" of Christ. If not, why not?

Indeed, it is a mystery how people can fail to understand what the Bible says about baptism as well as numerous other topics. *Tilis*

THE NOBLE ONES

Paul and Silas proclaimed the word of God in Thessalonica with some becoming believers. However the Jews gathered and assaulted the house of Jason. In the night, Paul and Silas were sent away by the brethren and went to the city of Berea. Of those of Berea, the Bible says, "These were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so. Therefore many of them believed..." (Acts 17:11-12). Thus, we refer to those of Berea as "the noble ones".

They were noble because they received the word with all readiness of mind. When Peter had preached his first sermon to those gathered on Pentecost, they were pricked in their hearts and wanted to know what to do (Acts 2:37). Peter revealed to them the commands of God, to repent and be baptized" (Acts 2:38). "Then they that gladly received his word were baptized..." (Acts 2:41). Then, as now, the majority of man does not wish to hear the true word of God. For those who are sincerely seeking, nobility can be ascribed to them.

They were noble because they examined the scriptures to determine if what was being taught them was in harmony with the word of God. Jesus as well as most every New Testament writer warned that there would be many false teachers. Jesus said they were as ravening wolves, dressed in sheep's clothing (Matt. 7:15). One cannot believe and follow just any and everything that is taught. John said that we should "believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God" (I John 4:1). Paul said, "Prove all things; hold fast that which is good" (I Thess. 5:21). Each person is responsible for himself to find out if what he is being taught is indeed the truth. That is the noble thing to do.

They were noble because once having determined the words spoken to them to in fact be the truth of God's word, they embraced it. As mentioned above, those that "gladly received" the gospel preached by Peter, obeyed the commands of God that he had revealed. James said, "But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves" (James 1:22). Jesus said that those that heard His word but did not obey it was like a man who built his house upon the sand. When the floods came, their house fell and great was the fall of it (Matt. 7:26-27). Noble ones will also obey the truth they learned. *RCO*