

*From Where I Sit . . .*

## **Baptism: Why All The Fuss?**

I heard it on the television so it must be so! The preacher said that baptism was more important than some folks say it is, and less important than others say it is. This was a prominent tele-evangelist, and a whole panel of men agreed with him. But what did he mean?? He never explained. It was just a neutral statement leaving it up to the listeners to figure it out.

I don't know of any religious topic that has been more controversial than that of baptism -- Questions like: "Who should be baptized?" "Why should they be baptized?" "How should they be baptized?" "What kind of baptism are we to experience?" "What happens to those who are not baptized?" It's obvious that it's a religious subject because so many religions practice some form of baptism. But in all fairness, if you ask representatives from all these various groups why one is baptized we would have many conflicting reasons.

Several years ago a deputy general of a major denominational hierarchy visited the city where I preached and was interviewed for our local newspaper. He was part of an ecumenical effort to merge seven major denominations into one, but the merger was in trouble as there were seven conflicting doctrines about baptism to be dealt with. It seems that some compromise was needed and the merger never took place.

Can the reader see the irony of this? The Apostle Paul wrote in Ephesians 4, verses 3 through 6, "Endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling; One Lord, one faith, one baptism, One God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all."

Did you catch the thought? Unity is desirable, even necessary and attainable; and one doesn't have to compromise on seven different baptisms because there is only one baptism. One doesn't have to be confused about baptism in the Bible. While it is true that there are many baptisms talked about in the Scriptures (viz. with Moses in the cloud and in the sea; fire; Holy Spirit; John's baptism; and water baptism) the text indicates there is one baptism for the Christian age.

Israel of old was totally immersed with Moses in the cloud and in the Red Sea. John's baptism was preparatory for the coming Kingdom of our Lord. After John, that baptism was no longer practiced (see Acts 19:1-5). The baptism of fire is our Lord's description of judgement and condemnation -- a warning instead of a command to be obeyed. The baptism of the Holy Spirit was a pouring out from Heaven in fulfillment of a promise. It was never given as a command to be obeyed; it was a fulfilled promise that has happened; and it is not something one can expect to receive miraculously today.

Water baptism (immersion) for the remission of sins is commanded by Peter in Acts 2:38. There is no room for controversy or misunderstanding. One has to totally rewrite the Scriptures to remove baptism from the subject of becoming a Christian. With love for the Truth in our hearts. . . .

..... Terry Broome

Printed in the *Broad Street Banner*, Volume XVII, Number 43, October 30, 2002.