

Glad Tidings

“And we bring you good tidings of the promise made unto the fathers...” (Acts 13:32)

Vol. XXIX

February 3, 2019

No. 5

The Church Sign Response

(Jerry Fite)

The church sign read, “*Baptism Saves You...Interested in How?...I Peter 3:21.*”

The church phone rang. A female voice, determined to speak from a heart coupled with a hint of uncertainty in how her thoughts would be received, began to sound forth her problem regarding the sign. In her mind, we fellow Christians were demoting Christ. Only Jesus saves! She had been passing by the sign daily, and now, on this day, she had to take up for her Lord.

A few days prior, I was thinking about a new Scriptural statement for our sign, I wanted to encourage a response. I always make sure a Scripture reference is underlying the Scriptural thought. This time, I was direct in asking for further inquiry. I now had my prayerful response. However, it was not “how...?” but “how could you...?”!!! With mutual respect, we listened to each other. In the end she allowed me to answer the question of “how?”.

First, I wanted to ease her fears of any cultic desire on our part to promote doctrine that demotes or supplants Jesus in any way. Jesus is the **ONLY WAY** unto the Father in heaven (*John 14:6*). We believe that the Father sent His Son “*to be the Savior of*

the world” (*I John 4:14*). He accomplishes this purpose today, one “believer” at a time (*I Timothy 4:10*).

Establishing agreement on “Who” saves us, we were ready to examine “what” saves us? God’s “grace” saves us (*Ephesians 2:5*). Jesus’ shed “blood” redeems or saves us (*Hebrews 9:12*). The “Gospel” saves us (*Romans 1:16*). It is not grace alone that saves us, but we are saved by “grace through faith” (*Ephesians 2:8*). Or, when one responds to God’s “grace” by “believing” the message of the “Gospel,” by trusting in Jesus’ “blood” for the remission of sins, the “what of salvation” joins the all-important “Who of salvation.” The Spirit-led Peter teaches us that “baptism” is also one of the “what’s” that connects us with Jesus, our Savior.

Peter first connects the waters of the flood in Noah’s day to the waters of baptism in our day. (*I Peter 3:20-21*). The waters of the flood, that separated the saved from the lost, predated the waters of baptism. Peter, reminding us of the salvation of eight souls from the past flood waters, adds, “*after a true likeness doth now save you, even baptism*” (*I Peter*

3:21). The waters of the flood “*struck against the waters of baptism*” making them the “type” of the substantive “antitype,” baptism. Peter is not saying that baptism is “figurative,” but he is connecting saving- baptism in water, *the antitype*, with the saving of eight souls from the flood waters, *the type*.

Peter also reminds us of the basis for baptism now saving us: “*...by the resurrection of Jesus Christ*” (*I Peter 3:21*). You know that if Jesus has not been raised, you are still “*in your sins*” (*I Corinthians 15:17*). You know the “*blood of Christ*” has the power to “*cleanse your conscience from dead works*” so you can serve the living God (*Hebrews 9:14*).

Faith and baptism come together in our salvation. When baptized for the remission of our sins, we are believing that we are being baptized into Jesus’ death and being raised to a new life by Jesus’ resurrection (*Romans 6:3-4. Colossians 2:12*). Peter says in baptism we are seeking “*a good conscience before God*” based not only upon Jesus’ death, but in His resurrection as well.

She said she understood and appreciated the explanation. People still read and react to signs!