

## THE BAPTISM OF REPENTANCE

In these days of seeker-sensitive churches with their watered-down message and resultant carnal Christians, I am struck that the 'gospel' of Jesus does not change.

He was introduced by John the Baptist who declared, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand". (Matt 3:2)

His own message was, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand". (Matt 4:17)

When He sent out the twelve on their first evangelistic journey, their message was to be, "The kingdom of heaven is at hand". (Matt 10:7) Later, the 70 were sent out with this message, "The kingdom of heaven is at hand". (Luke 10:9).

These latter two references are followed by a warning that where there was no repentance, it would be worse for them than Sodom or Gomorrah, (Matt 10:15); Chorazin, Bethsaida, Tire and Sidon, (Luke 10:13).

Where is the preaching of repentance these days?

We have preached a (false) gospel of "Give your heart to Jesus and you'll have a ticket to heaven; accept Him and you'll have a wonderful life". There is no call to repentance, to putting to death the 'old man', to obedience to the laws of the kingdom (written upon our hearts), to separation from the world. No wonder the church (of North America) has lost its power and influence!

In 1 Corinthians 12:13 we read that *'by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free, and we were all made to drink of one Spirit.'*

Further, in Ephesians 4:5 Paul writes, *'There is one Lord, one faith, one baptism'*

To what baptism is Paul referring? Water baptism, by which we give testimony that we have been delivered from the old taskmasters of Egypt? Spirit baptism (Acts 1:5), by which we are empowered to do what He designed us to do? Or, **neither of these**, for surely neither is a requisite for entering the 'body of Christ'. If the former baptized us into the 'body', salvation would be by works; if the latter baptized us into the body, the apostles would not have received the life of the Spirit in the upper room where Jesus, having returned from offering the sacrifice at the mercy seat in heaven, breathed on them, imparting that life (John 20:22).

There is another baptism which **is** a requisite for salvation! It is the 'baptism of repentance'.

In Mark 1:4 we read *'John did baptize .. and preach the baptism of repentance'*.

Luke 3:3 tells us he was *'preaching the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins'*.

In Acts 19:4 Paul says, *'John truly baptized the baptism of repentance', saying to the people that they should believe on ... Jesus Christ'*.

Note that repentance is here called 'a baptism'. The baptism of repentance includes saving faith in the Lord Jesus, or regeneration, and this is the baptism of 1 Cor 12:13, the baptism that alone can put us into the Christ's body.

We find further, in Acts 11:18 that repentance is a gift from God that brings us into life. It is strongly suggested that there can be no **life** without repentance!

Just before He ascended, Jesus commanded His disciples to 'preach repentance' (Luke 24:47); Peter preached repentance (Acts 3:19); Paul preached repentance (Acts 26:20). Why should we think we do not need to do the same today???

I was in Haiti visiting some missionaries. One of them had a ministry in which he would bring in three doctors each week, to travel with him in the mountains to remote villages. There they would treat the villagers and present the gospel. One Friday evening as they sat over their computers recording their week's work, they noticed a fire back up the hill in the village they had just left. Quickly, they drove back up the hill until they came to the voodoo doctor's house, which was in the final stages of being burnt to the ground. They began to commiserate with the 'doctor' who was standing nearby, until he informed them that he had set the house on fire deliberately. "Today I gave my life to Jesus" he said, "so I gathered all my paraphernalia together inside the house and burnt it all"! That's repentance!