



NEW TESTAMENT SALVATION

Acts 2:38

The subject of salvation should be of interest to everyone, especially to professing Christians and to those who love the Lord.

There is much in the Word of God that many people do not know and much that they do not believe. The Spirit of God comes to lead us into all truth, but it is very hard for people to receive new truth, especially those who have already had a Christian experience. Many people are very afraid of anything that is not taught in their particular denomination and are apt to classify it as heresy, false teaching, or fanaticism without stopping to see whether or not it is really found in the Word of God. Saul of Tarsus truly believed that he was serving God when he persecuted and imprisoned the Christians of his day, but after Jesus appeared and spoke to him, he was dramatically transformed. He later declared, "After the way which they call heresy, so worship I the God of my fathers" (Acts 24:14).

The Apostolic Teaching

Have you ever stopped to compare the religion of today with that of the apostles? They baptized (immersed) all their converts in Jesus' name (not in the titles Father, Son, and Holy Ghost). They were baptized with the Holy Ghost and spoke in other tongues. They believed and practiced divine healing. Any one of these things is called fanaticism by many modern churches. Who is wrong—the Bible or modern churches? Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever (Hebrews 13:8). There is one Lord, one faith, and one baptism (Ephesians 4:5).

Many people have inherited religious beliefs from their mothers and fathers and have never stopped to

compare those beliefs with our only guidebook—the Bible. There are also "blind leaders of the blind" (Matthew 15:14), who have never been born again themselves and therefore cannot properly interpret the truths of the Bible. The natural man cannot understand the things of the Spirit, for they are spiritually discerned (I Corinthians 2:14).

The death of Jesus Christ purchased a far greater salvation than most people know anything about today. Many people believe that by repenting of their sins and striving to live as best as they can they experience all there is to salvation. But as Paul said, "O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!" (Romans 11:33). God desires to give all of us righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Ghost (Romans 14:17), and receiving the Holy Ghost is a very definite experience with definite supernatural evidence. Peter and the Jews with him perceived that the household of Cornelius had received the Holy Ghost "because they heard them speak with tongues" (Acts 10:46), and we should expect the same evidence today. Because many people do not, they mistakenly believe that they have received the Holy Ghost when they really have not. For this reason, there is great deadness in many churches and much unreality in the lives of professing Christians.

On the Day of Pentecost, when the New Testament church was inaugurated, the Holy Ghost filled all who were waiting for Him, and they all spoke with other tongues as the Spirit gave them utterance (Acts 2:4). Peter explained, "This is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel; And it shall come to pass in the last days, saith God, I will pour out of my Spirit upon all flesh"

(Acts 2:16-17). If God worked in this way in the days of the apostles, then why do some people (even preachers) dare to call the same experience today the work of the devil? If we do not understand something, we should go slowly and see whether it is really in the Bible, lest we be found fighting against God and He would say to us as He did to Saul, "It is hard for thee to kick against the pricks" (Acts 9:5).

When Peter preached his marvelous sermon on the Day of Pentecost, the Holy Ghost pricked the hearts of the hearers with conviction, and they cried out, "Men and brethren, what shall we do?" (Acts 2:37). Peter gave them the only New Testament method of receiving salvation: *Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost*" (Acts 2:38).

How terribly this method has been changed and twisted today! No wonder many churches do not have the results the apostles did. If it is to stand the test of these last days, a person's experience must be "built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone" (Ephesians 2:20). In fact, Paul declared, "Though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel . . . let him be accursed" (Galatians 1:8).

There has been a measure of truth in most churches, and therefore they have brought a measure of blessings, but God has planned an abundant salvation for the whole person—spirit, soul and body. Most of the deeper truths concerning salvation are either called heresy today or else we are told that they were only for the apostles. But God is no respecter of persons. He will do for us just what He did for the apostles if we meet the same conditions.

Repentance, Baptism, and the Holy Ghost

First, we must repent, turning our back on all sin and turning to God in faith. Repentance is motivated by godly sorrow, and it includes confession of sins to God.

Second, we must be baptized (immersed) in the name of Jesus Christ. In Matthew 28:19 Jesus told His disciples to baptize in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Ghost. He did not say to baptize in the *titles*. If this command literally meant to use the titles Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, then there would be a great contradiction in the Bible, for the disciples never baptized in any way but in the name of Jesus. (See Acts 2:38; 8:16; 10:48; 19:5; 22:16.) But Jesus said to baptize in the *name* (singular) of the Father, Son and Holy Ghost. These titles are not the one proper name of God, but terms that describe God's relationships to humanity.

These three roles of God are revealed to us in the name of Jesus. The name of the Son is Jesus (Matthew 1:21). Moreover, Jesus said that He came in the Father's name and that the Holy Ghost would be sent in His name (John 5:43; 14:26). The one saving name of God is Jesus, which literally means Jehovah-Savior. Jesus was the one God of the Old Testament who came in flesh to be our Savior. "There is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved" (Acts 4:12). "Repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name" (Luke 24:47). In Jesus dwells all the fulness of the Godhead bodily (Colossians 2:9), so to fulfill Matthew 28:19 we must baptize in Jesus' name.

Third, God will pour out the gift of the Holy Ghost on us as He did on the disciples, and we will receive the same Bible evidence—speaking in other tongues. (See Acts 2:4; 10:46; 19:6.) As Jesus said, "These signs shall follow them that believe . . . they shall speak with

new tongues" (Mark 16:17). It takes all three steps to complete God's plan of salvation for the New Testament church.

My heart is burdened for those who really love the Lord but who through ignorance or fear are being cheated out of their inheritance. Will you not search the Scriptures, see whether these things are true or not, and earnestly ask God to baptize you with the Holy Ghost? These are the days of the "latter rain," which God is sending to ripen the grain for the harvest. Soon He will come to catch away those who have the same Spirit dwelling in them that raised up Jesus from the dead. Now is the time to examine yourself to see whether or not you are in the faith of the apostles.



Pastors' Keith & Donna Walker

SERVICE TIMES:

Sunday's: 10am & 6pm

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5 N. Mustang Rd. Tuttle, OK 73089

whpctuttle.com | 405-544-7220

Tract #1567220657

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8855 Dunn Road

Hazelwood, MO 63042-2299