

Pondering Questions

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Many times we can find ourselves pondering a variety of different questions. When reading the Scriptures this can be a useful tool. One cannot understand what is meant by something 2000+ years past and hope to see how it applies today without finding out what it meant to the people who would read it first. Paul said in Ephesians 3:4-5 "Whereby, when ye read, ye may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ; Which in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men, as it is now revealed unto his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit." Being able to understand requires study, diligent study, and a desire to know what God intends for man.

One question that was asked in the days of the Patriarchs was pondered by Job as he suffered with trials beyond our imaginations. Three times in his account Job asked "how can man be just before God" (Job 4:17, 9:2, 25:4). This question would plague mens thoughts for centuries. Why? Like many students in the public education system today, they did not heed the schoolmaster (Gal 3:24-25). Had they done so they would have readily seen that the Christ was the fulfillment of all prophecy and the promise that went all the way back to Abraham (Gen 12:1-3) to whom the Jews proudly boasted their heritage. Because Israel was the nation through whom God chose to bring the seed of the Messiah they elevated themselves much higher than they aught (Matt 23:5-12; Pro 27:2; Rom 12:3). In this elation of thought the Jews could not see past their traditions to be able to view the Messiah clearly (Matt 15:6). Again the question arises how can man be just before God?

Paul would answer this question when he penned the letter we today know as "The Epistle to the Romans." So many will run to this epistle and try to lay claim to the doctrine of "faith only," or "all you have to do is believe." This is a complete

misunderstanding of what Paul and other inspired writers recorded (James 2:19, 20, 26). In fact Paul opened and closed the letter with one word that cancels the "faith only" doctrine. If one were to look in Romans 1:5, 16:26 he would see the word "obedience" related to faith. This is active faith. It is obedience to God's commands that justifies man, as Paul exclaimed "For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek. For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, The just shall live by faith" (Rom 1:16-17). Paul would explain that neither the Jewish nor Gentile world produced salvation, only the Gospel could bring man to justification. Paul used, what we know as chapter 7, to show what it was like living under the Law of Moses, that there was no justification, it was added for transgression and pointed out sin (Rom 7:7). Job's inquiry is answered in Romans 8:1, "There is therefore NOW (Emph. mine) no condemnation to THEM WHICH ARE IN CHRIST JESUS (Emph. mine), who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit." Paul clearly pointed out that to be justified one must be in Christ.

This author will pause and ask you, dear reader, to answer this question. If justification, salvation (reconciliation), is found only "IN" Christ Jesus, how does one get "INTO" Christ Jesus? It directly implies that one can be outside of Christ (Rom 3:23). So many today are told that "all you have to do ask Jesus into your heart." Really? I challenge any holder to this doctrine to offer Book, Chapter, and Verse as proof. Peter recorded, "If any man speak let him speak as the oracles of God" (1Pet 4:11) That means speak as the Bible speaks, not as some man desires to speak to achieve public approval by the easiness of his doctrine. Friend that is a doctrine of the devil (1Tim 4:1). Paul said to be justified one must be "IN" Christ Jesus. The challenge is; How do you answer this question, Biblically? In Christ is found the love of God (Rom 8:39), the truth (Rom 9:1), the body (Rom 12:5), sanctification (1Cor 1:2), triumph (2Cor 2:14), a new creature (2Cor 5:17), a child of God (Gal 3:26). How is one sanctified? In "putting off the body of sins of the flesh" (Col 2:11)? How is one made a new creature? "Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized INTO (Emph. mine, remember, justification is to them who are IN Christ Jesus) Jesus Christ were baptized into his death? Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection:

Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin" (Rom 6:3-6). All of the steps to God's plan are essential (Rom 10:17, John 8:24, Acts 17:30-31, Matt 10:32-33, Acts 2:38). To say that baptism is not essential is to call Paul a liar. To call Paul a liar is to call Jesus (John 3:3-5; Eph 6:20) a liar. That is a pair of shoes that no one should be so bold to wear when the judgement day comes (Acts 17:31).