

SALVATION AND SUBVERSION?

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Satan started out endeavoring to subvert the safety of the first human pair God introduced into the world. God had told Adam and Eve what they needed to do to enjoy their paradise home and warned them of the consequences of non-compliance, yet Satan said to them, “Ye shall *not* surely die” (Gen. 3:4). He elaborated, “For God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil” (v. 5). Satan is associated with subversion; God is associated with salvation. The Psalmist said of God, “He that is our God is the God of salvation; and unto God the Lord belong the issues from death” (Psa. 68:20). Two authors in three New Testament books refer six times to God as “God our Savior” (I Tim. 1:1, 2:3; Titus 1:3, 2:10, 3:4; Jude 25). Surely, sensible people today understand that Satan still strives to subvert their souls. The Bible admonishes the saved to “work out your own salvation with fear and trembling” (Phil. 2:12). Sustaining salvation means strongly standing against sources from Satan that subvert the soul.

Baptism Is Being Subverted

Satan must smile over his power to subvert one of the most straightforward and fundamental teachings in the Bible like baptism. The Lord himself said, “He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned” (Mark 16:16). It takes expert help to misunderstand this verse. The title of a new book coming out should serve as a signal of something sinister. *Down in the River to Pray: Revisioning Baptism as God’s Transforming Work* is the title. The authors affirm that they are “revisioning baptism.” Why should anyone with a copy of the New Testament think another book which “revisions” baptism would be needed? The Bible must not be added to nor taken away from (Rev. 22:18-19). The authors of this book, John Mark Hicks and Greg Taylor, have been claiming “visions” that are far removed from what is in the Bible for a long time. For example, John Mark Hicks’ “vision” for the organization and work of the church was to establish a Community Church in Memphis (Cordova Community Church), and the source of his “vision” was discovered not to emerge from the examination of some biblical teaching but from a Baptist preacher named Rick Warren who wrote *The Purpose Driven Church!* Since that time Rubel Shelly of the Woodmont Hills Family of God and Steve Flatt of Lipscomb University have hired him to work with them in Nashville. A product of their combined efforts is this book that “revisions baptism”! One reviewer says something that gets to the heart of the matter, “The

contention [is] that while baptism is God's normal means of removing sins, at his discretion, he uses other means."

These subversive authors supplant the Bible teaching on baptism and attack any who stand in their way by the position they take "that no one has a right to restrict God's freedom to extend grace whenever and wherever he chooses." What is of interest here is that never in the Christian age will they show nor are they able to show where the New Testament ever speaks or even suggests that a sinner is saved without being baptized. It, further, is of interest to observe that when Hicks "revisions" something his "vision" comes from the denominations! The argument of the book is "the condition of the believer's heart is more important in defining his relationship to God than his obedience to rituals." The position is too akin to the old statement "I know I am saved because I feel it in my heart" to think it came from anywhere other than denominationalism.

Someone needs to have the ability to speak out against this kind of subversion without always acting like the false teacher has somehow done the brotherhood a big favor. Listen to what the reviewer closed with:

For all the questions *Down the River to Pray* will be invaluable for those who want to study baptism more carefully. It calls on believers to think about their baptism, and through baptism to become God's holy people. Thankfully, the authors have challenged us to think.¹

"The authors have challenged us to think" all right, to think like denominational people! With this statement of Duane Warden we could not more heartily disagree. Hicks' and Taylor's book ought to be sent "down the river"!

The Holy Spirit said, "For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit" (I Cor. 12:13). If Hicks and Taylor were correct that "while baptism is God's *normal means* of removing sins, at his discretion, he uses other means," then the Holy Spirit would have had to say, "For by one Spirit are *SOME OF US BAPTIZED* into one body and *SOME OF US ARE BROUGHT INTO ONE BODY BY SOME OTHER MEANS AT GOD'S DISCRETION*"! Satan must be stopped from subverting Souls (Titus 1:11).

ENDNOTES

¹Duane Warden, “Baptism still requires examination” in *The Christian Chronicle*, Bailey McBride, ed., 60:12 (December 2003), p. 32. “Duane Warden is a Bible professor at Harding University, Searcy, Ark. Contact him at dwarden@harding.edu.”