

## **The Bible is Not Moonlite Bar-B-Q**

Recently some friends invited me to Sunday dinner following the AM worship assembly. This special couple was celebrating their 40th wedding anniversary and so they asked me to go along and commemorate the happy occasion.

Our destination...? Owensboro, Kentucky and the Moonlite Bar-B-Q

Everybody in this neck of the woods knows about Moonlite. Think "casual dining." Think "family feel." Think "all-you-can-eat" BBQ buffet. Underline the word "all." Hungry guests stand in line with a plate and then help themselves to a smorgasbord of tasty, home-style dishes.

Buffet. Choose what you want. Skip what you don't want. Go back as many times as you wish. This is gastronomical heaven. I loaded my plate with country favorites -- mashed potatoes, pulled pork, and green beans, but then skipped the macaroni and cheese, gravy and rolls.

I left the restaurant full as the proverbial tick. Okay, maybe not *full* -- I stopped just one bite shy of gluttony.

The meal was great. The Christian company was even better.

It occurs to me that many preachers treat the Word like a trip to Moonlite. They fill their theological dinnerware with perennial favorites. They "eat" what their doctrinal belly desires (Phil. 3:19), but then pass over those food items which their denomination deems unpalatable. For instance, some heap their plate with faith, but then consciously omit what the Scriptures teach about baptism. They select SOME of God's word but not the SUM of God's word. They claim to be "Bible-believing," but then do a "Moonlite" on those passages which teach the necessity of immersion.

Does the New Testament require baptism? No? Look again.

- According to Matt. 28:19-20 baptism is something I must do to become a disciple of Christ.
- According to Mark 16:15-16 baptism is something I must engage in if I want to be saved.
- According to Acts 2:37-38 baptism is something I must undergo in order to be forgiven of my sins.
- According to Acts 8:12-13, 38, baptism is something I must submit to, even if it means changing my religion.
- According to Acts 10:48 baptism is something I must obey because it has been commanded.
- According to Acts 16:14-15, 33, baptism is something I will yield to -- immediately -- in order to be faithful to the Lord.
- According to Acts 22:16 baptism is something I must do if I desire my past sins to be taken away (cf. Acts 9:6).
- According to Rom. 6:3-7, baptism is that which makes a difference (slave of sin vs. slave of righteousness) in my life.
- According to 1 Cor. 12:13, baptism is the means by which I enter the body or church (cf. Eph. 1:22-23).
- According to Gal. 3:26-27, baptism is the way that I become a child of God. According to 1 Pet. 3:21 baptism saves.

Got your Bible handy? Read through Jeremiah 36. Jeremiah prophesied during the closing days of the Southern kingdom of Judah. On one occasion, the prophet received a divine message from God and then had the words written on a scroll (vv. 1-3). This inspired document was later read to king Jehoiakim by Jehudi (vv. 21). When Jehudi read that the kingdom-nation would be overthrown by the Babylonian empire, Jehoiakim decided he couldn't "stomach" anymore. The arrogant ruler took a scribe's penknife, cut up the scroll, and then cast it into the fire until it was consumed (vv. 22-24).

Jehoiakim would have liked Moonlite. Eat what you want. Skip what you don't want. Mashed potatoes "yes,"

dinner rolls "no." Authoritarian rule "yes," servile bondage "no." Faith "yes," baptism "no."

Dear reader, the Bible is not a self-serve restaurant. We can't pick out the parts that we like and then reject or cut out the portions that don't strike our fancy. We must declare and consume (Jer. 15:16) the whole counsel of God (Acts 20:27; cf. 2 Tim. 4:2-4), including those passages which teach the necessity of baptism.

**(by Mike Benson, author of KneMail)**