



BAPTISM

Explained

by L.M. Fontaine

Baptism Explained

Copyright © 2015 by L. M. Fontaine
Tel-A-World, Inc.
P.O. Box 555
Pompano Beach, FL
33061
www.greatestnews.org

Baptism Explained



When I was a young teenager, I had a terrifying nightmare. I'd shot someone and before that person died, he shot me. As I lay dying, I was overwhelmed by the certain dread that I was minutes away from spending an eternity in hell. I woke up in a cold sweat and breathed a sigh of relief that it was only a dream.

I already had a fear of going to hell and this nightmare only intensified that fear. I pleaded with God that if there were some way of knowing I could go to heaven that He would let me know. I determined to study the Bible from cover to cover and told God I was willing to do anything necessary to escape hell.

I must confess that reading the Bible for myself was quite eye opening. My concept of being a good person fell miserably short of the standards presented in those holy pages. For instance, I was stubborn and I thought that it was an admirable quality. But I read, "stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry."¹ I was shocked! Could it really be that God considered being stubborn as serious as worshipping an idol? Apparently He does. And have you ever been rebellious? Who hasn't? The Bible says that rebelliousness is as sinful as witchcraft.²

So instead of being encouraged by what I was reading, I felt more and more hopeless and condemned. I didn't see how anyone could possibly be good enough to go to heaven.

After reading the Bible through once I decided to go ahead and just read the New Testament a second time. That's when I came to a verse that seemed to leap off the page. It records Jesus saying, "he who believes in Me has everlasting life."³

What!? Could it really be that simple? Jesus said I only had to believe in Him to go to heaven! I went to my minister the following Sunday and told him about my discovery. He informed me that it took a lot more than just that to go to heaven, so I believed him.

Three months later, I attended a Bible camp where they claimed that water baptism has nothing to do with going to heaven. They showed me verse after verse that expressed we go to heaven apart from anything we do. I saw verses that say the Lord alone is the One responsible for getting us to heaven because He is the One who paid our way by dying for our sins. I was even shown verses that say heaven is a gift.⁴

But I wasn't about to believe that! My minister had straightened me out and I saw verses that clearly taught baptism is necessary to go to heaven.

It took three days of many intense discussions with many different people to finally change my way of thinking. It is a fact that there are about 150 verses that say salvation is by faith alone in Christ alone. And there are only a few verses that *appear* to teach a person has to be baptized in water to go to heaven.

So even though I didn't perfectly understand what those few verses meant, I knew I must be misunderstanding them when I pondered Ephesians 2:8-9, which say, "For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast." I finally realized I couldn't argue with that. It does say, "*not of yourselves*," and I had to admit that being baptized in water was doing something.

I was seventeen years old and my prayer had been answered!

I knew I was going to heaven! It wasn't because of anything I did, but because of what God had done for me. When He said, "he who believes in Me has everlasting life," He meant it. A tremendous burden was lifted. I no longer lived in dread of spending an eternity in a lake of fire. I had trusted the One who had come to save me from that fate and I had no doubt I was going to heaven.

I want you to have that same assurance. I ask you to please let me share the verses that I once thought supported my beliefs along with what I think you'll see as convincing proofs from the Bible that you don't have to be water baptized to go to heaven.

Didn't Jesus Teach Baptism was Necessary for Salvation?

Jesus said, "He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned" (Mark 16:16).

That certainly sounds like you have to be baptized to go to heaven, but what I didn't understand at the time is that there is more than one kind of baptism.⁵ Mark 1:8, records John the Baptist saying, "I indeed baptized you with water, but He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit."

So the question now is: What kind of baptism is necessary for salvation – is it water baptism or Spirit baptism?

One place in the Bible that conclusively answers that question is found in Acts 10:43-44. It's recorded that the Lord sent the Apostle Peter to tell some people how to have eternal life. Listen to his message – "To Him all the prophets witness that, through His name, whoever believes in Him will receive remission of sins."⁶ Peter said the only condition to go to heaven is to believe in Jesus, and nothing more. And while he was

presenting the truth that forgiveness for sins comes by simply believing, the people listening received the Holy Spirit. The next verse says, “While Peter was still speaking these words, the Holy Spirit fell upon all those who heard the word.”⁷

Then Peter asks, “Can anyone forbid water, that these should not be baptized who have received the Holy Spirit just as we have?”⁸

Which came first – receiving the Spirit or baptism in water?

These people were baptized with water because they had already been baptized with the Holy Spirit.

Another confirmation of this is found in the following chapter - Acts 11. It is recorded that some Jews criticized Peter for going to people who weren’t circumcised, and Peter shared with them how God had commanded him to go.

In relating the story Peter explained, “And as I began to speak, the Holy Spirit fell upon them, as upon us at the beginning. Then I remembered the word of the Lord, how He said, ‘John indeed baptized with water, but you shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit.’ If therefore God gave them the same gift as He gave us when we believed on the Lord Jesus Christ, who was I that I could withstand God?”⁹

This passage tells us that Peter remembered that Jesus taught there are two different kinds of baptisms – water and Spirit. And clearly, Peter understood it was the Spirit baptism and *not* water baptism that is required to enter heaven.

Later on in the book of Acts, Peter again refers to this same occurrence because a disagreement about circumcision had arisen. Some of the Jews were teaching that circumcision was necessary in order to gain eternal life.¹⁰

Peter put an end to the dispute when he explained, “Men

and brethren, you know that a good while ago God chose among us, that by my mouth the Gentiles should hear the word of the gospel and believe. So God, who knows the heart, acknowledged them, by giving them the Holy Spirit just as He did to us, and made no distinction between us and them, purifying their hearts by faith. Now therefore, why do you test God by putting a yoke on the neck of the disciples which neither our fathers nor we were able to bear? But we believe that through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ we shall be saved in the same manner as they.”¹¹ Peter is saying that salvation came to those Gentiles the same way that it did to him and the other apostles. He said it was only because they believed in Jesus. This has been the message of salvation from the beginning.

Did you know that we obtain eternal life exactly the same way as Abraham and King David? How do I know that? It is explained in Romans chapter 4. Did Abraham get baptized to go to heaven? Did David? What did they do?

The Apostle Paul answered that question by quoting Scripture. Concerning Abraham, he quoted Genesis 15:6, which says, “Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness.”¹² Concerning David, he quoted Psalm 32:1-2. Paul wrote, “Just as David also describes the blessedness of the man to whom God imputes righteousness apart from works: ‘Blessed are those whose lawless deeds are forgiven, and whose sins are covered; Blessed is the man to whom the Lord shall not impute sin.’”¹³

Paul wanted his readers to understand that salvation has always been by faith in God apart from anything we do. In fact, the condition to be accounted righteous in the sight of God is that we do *nothing* to obtain it. Paul explains, “But to him who

does not work, but believes in Him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is accounted for righteousness.”¹⁴ Did you catch that? It’s the person “who does not work, but believes” who is accounted righteous in the sight of God.

And Paul defined faith in verses 21-22, by explaining exactly what Abraham did to be accounted righteous. He wrote, “And being fully convinced that what He had promised He was able to perform. And therefore ‘it was accounted to him for righteousness.’” In other words, Abraham was convinced that what God had promised He was able to do. So faith is taking God at His word – that He will keep His promises. It is that simple. Then Paul went on to explain; “Now it was not written for his sake alone that it was imputed to him, but also for us. It shall be imputed to us who believe in Him who raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead.”¹⁵

The previous verses prove conclusively that we go to heaven exactly the same way Abraham did. Old Testament saints didn’t get baptized to go to heaven, and neither do we. Faith *alone* is and always has been the *only* requirement.

What is the Purpose of Water Baptism?

You might be wondering what is the purpose of water baptism, since it has nothing to do with going to heaven.

It says in John 4:1-2, that “Jesus made and baptized more disciples than John (though Jesus Himself did not baptize, but His disciples).” This explains that baptism has to do with becoming a disciple.

The difference between becoming a believer in Jesus and becoming His disciple is expressed in John 8:30-32. It says, “As

He spoke these words, many believed in Him. Then Jesus said to those Jews who believed Him, ‘If you abide in My word, you are My disciples indeed. And you shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free.’”¹⁶

Discipleship requires that we do something. It requires a sacrifice on the part of the believer. Jesus said, “So likewise, whoever of you does not forsake all that he has cannot be My disciple.”¹⁷

Peter and the other apostles had forsaken all to follow Christ. Peter wanted to know what he was going to get for his sacrifice. He asked the Lord, “See, we have left all and followed You. Therefore what shall we have?”¹⁸

Did the Lord tell him heaven was awaiting him for his sacrifice? No. We go to heaven because of Christ’s sacrifice for us, not our sacrifice for Him. Peter was told he would be rewarded for what he had done. He had a glorious future ahead of him. Jesus said, “Assuredly I say to you, that in the regeneration, when the Son of Man sits on the throne of His glory, you who have followed Me will also sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel.”¹⁹

Those believers who live for Christ and suffer for His sake are promised rewards so great they can’t even be compared to any suffering they may have had to go through. The Apostle Paul, who had gone through tremendous hardships for the cause of Christ, wrote, “For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us.”¹⁹

In view of what the future holds for the obedient believer, the Lord told the disciples how they should react when they undergo persecution for His sake. Jesus said, “Blessed are you

when men hate you, and when they exclude you, and revile you, and cast out your name as evil, for the Son of Man's sake. Rejoice in that day and leap for joy! For indeed your reward is great in heaven, for in like manner their fathers did to the prophets.”²⁰

Having great reward in heaven is cause for one to rejoice and leap for joy!

Do you see the clear distinction between believing in Christ as your Savior and following Him as your Lord and Master? A person trusting Christ alone is going to receive a home in heaven because it is free. But the believers who follow Christ are promised rewards in heaven because they are earned.

Eternal life is free because it is based on Jesus' sacrifice for us. But discipleship costs a lot because it is based on our sacrifice for Him. Jesus said, “If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me.”²¹ How different is this from the message of how to receive the gift of eternal life!

Ephesians 2:8-9, say, “For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast.”

So if a believer understands what is involved in becoming a disciple and is willing to make this sacrifice for Christ, then he should be baptized to make his commitment public.

Jesus said to His followers, “Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you.”²²

What Does it Mean to be Born of Water?

Another passage that people think teaches the necessity of water baptism for salvation is where Jesus said you had to be born of water and the Spirit. Please note that the Lord was talking about being born, not being baptized. There is a huge difference between being born of water and being baptized in water.

Jesus told a religious leader named Nicodemus, “Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God.”²³

Nicodemus responded, “How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter a second time into his mother’s womb and be born?”²⁴

Nicodemus couldn’t understand how it was possible to be born a second time. If Nicodemus was confusing a birth with a baptism, I think the Lord would have explained that to him. Instead, Jesus confirmed that He was talking about a birth. Jesus explained, “Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God. That which is born of flesh is flesh and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.”²⁵

There are two different kinds of births – physical and spiritual. The physical birth is being born of the flesh, or as Jesus expressed it - “born of water.” Some people question why Jesus would refer to physical birth as “born of water.”

It is a fact of nature that while we were in our mother’s womb, we were completely submerged in a fluid, and natural birth can’t take place until “the water breaks.”²⁶

And to make it clear He was speaking of a physical birth,

Jesus told Nicodemus, “That which is born of flesh is flesh and that which is born of Spirit is spirit.” Humans can give birth only to other human beings and only God, who is Spirit, can cause a spiritual birth.

And how is a person born again – is it by believing in Jesus, or by baptism in water?

John 1:12-13, explain, “But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe in His name: who were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.”

These verses say we have no part in the new birth. It is God who produces the new birth when we place our trust in Jesus to save us. At that moment we become children of God. As Galatians 3:26 says, “For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus.”

Why Does the Bible Say Baptism Saves Us?

Another passage that I used to think supported my position was I Peter 3:20-21, where Peter states that baptism saves us. He related how in the days of Noah, eight souls were saved by water. When I saw the words *baptism*, *saved*, and *water*, I thought it couldn't be clearer.

But let's look at the passage and see if Peter is teaching that we are saved by water baptism. Peter was speaking of Noah and his family when he wrote, “when once the longsuffering of God waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was being prepared, in which a few, that is, eight souls, were saved through water. There is also an antitype which now saves us, namely baptism (not the removal of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a

good conscience toward God), through the resurrection of Jesus Christ...”

When you read these verses, what appears to be so apparent can be shown to be flawed by simply asking two questions -

Question one: Were Noah and his family saved by water? No, the water was God’s judgment and killed everyone besides Noah and his family.

Question two: What did save them? It wasn’t the water, it was the ark. Because they were in the ark, they escaped God’s judgment of the flood.

This is the point that Peter is making – there is a baptism that saves us from God’s judgment. Just as Noah and his family had to be in the ark to escape judgment, we have to be in Christ to escape eternal judgment. The question now is – how do we get into Christ? Is it by being placed into water by a human being, or is it by having the Holy Spirit place us into the body of Christ? Paul answered the question in First Corinthians 12:13, where he wrote, “For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body.”

Peter wanted to make it abundantly clear that he is not referring to the physical act of baptism. He says, “not the removal of the filth of the flesh.” When a person is submerged in water, his body may be cleaner when he comes out, but that action doesn’t cleanse his heart. How is one’s heart purified? The answer is by faith *alone* in Jesus.

Peter explains in Acts 15:8-9, “So God, who knows the heart, acknowledged them by giving them the Holy Spirit just as He did to us, and made no distinction between us and them, purifying their hearts by faith.”

What Does Acts 2:38 Mean?

But doesn't this contradict the message that Peter preached on the day of Pentecost to those Jews who Peter claimed were responsible for the death of Christ? He told them they had to be baptized.

Peter said, "Repent, and let everyone of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit."²⁷

This verse is misunderstood on two fronts – baptism and repentance. As we will see, baptism is for service, not salvation and repentance means to change your *thinking*, not your *lifestyle*.

To properly understand this verse, it must be understood who the audience was. It says in Acts 2:5, "And there were dwelling in Jerusalem Jews, devout men, from every nation under heaven."

Interestingly, these were not the Jews who lived in Jerusalem, but the ones who were only visiting for Pentecost. God commanded the Jews to gather in Jerusalem three times a year. Those scattered among the nations, who were faithfully keeping God's laws, travelled no matter how great the distance, to remain faithful to the commands of the Lord.

Fifty days earlier, these same Jews, who were from every nation under heaven, had come to Jerusalem for Passover. Now they were in Jerusalem for Pentecost. These are the ones who Peter addresses.

Peter said these particular people had seen and heard Jesus preach. They had even witnessed "miracles, wonders, and signs"²⁸ performed by Jesus. But they had rejected Him and

His claim that He was the Promised One. Only fifty days earlier they had been part of the crowd who shouted,²⁹ “Crucify Him, crucify Him!”³⁰ when Pilate wanted to set Him free.

What could make men who were so opposed to Jesus that they demanded His death, now know they had made an horrific mistake? It was nothing less than a miracle of astounding proportions!

It started with hearing a sound like no other they had ever heard – it was a sound that originated from heaven. It says that when the 120 disciples were gathered in one place, “suddenly there came a sound from heaven, as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting.”³¹ It appears as though it was only the disciples and the Jews gathered from all nations who heard this sound. When this sound occurred, it was these Jews who came to where the disciples were congregated. But they were greeted by even a greater miracle. This miracle was Babel in reverse! You see, even though these individuals were from all over the world and spoke a multitude of different languages, it says each one of them heard the apostles speak in his own native language!

It says they were amazed and marveled because they knew the people speaking were Galileans and couldn’t possibly know any of the languages they were speaking. And what did they hear the disciples preach? – “we hear them speaking in our own tongues the wonderful works of God.”³²

It was this miracle that led them to believe the message that the Apostle Peter then delivered to them.

It says in Acts 2:37, that once Peter had convinced them that they had indeed rejected their own Messiah, they “were cut to the heart, and they asked the apostles, ‘Men and brethren,

what shall we do?” To this question, Peter responded, “Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit” (ESV).

Think of it. The very Jews who had demanded His death 50 days earlier are now asking what they could do. At this point they know that Jesus was the Promised One foretold in the Hebrew Scriptures.

Was their question, “What shall we do be saved?” No, it was simply, “What shall we do?” The question of how to be saved was asked by a Philippian jailor to Paul and Silas. The question and answer are recorded in Acts 16:30-31, “Sirs, what must I do to be saved?’ So they said, ‘Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you will be saved, you and your household.’”

Salvation is by believing alone, and we will see that Acts 2:38 doesn’t differ from that at all.

Keep in mind that the Jews listening to this message were well acquainted with the teachings of Jesus. Listen to what Peter had said to them –“Men of Israel, hear these words: Jesus of Nazareth, a Man attested by God to you by miracles, wonders, and signs which God did through Him in your midst as you yourselves also know.”³³

The Lord Jesus and John the Baptist taught that baptism was for discipleship, not for salvation, and the Jews listening to Peter already understood that. John’s Gospel message is recorded in John 3:36, which says, “He who believes in the Son has everlasting life; and he who does not believe the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him.”

What is Repentance?

At this point I think it's important for me to define what it means to repent. Unfortunately, many people think it means to turn from their sin or feel sorry for their sin. However, what most people haven't heard is that 80% of the time in the Old Testament, when it speaks of someone repenting, that Someone is God Almighty! Clearly, repentance can't have anything to do with turning from or feeling sorry for sin.

In the New Testament, the word "repentance" is from the Greek word *metanoia* and means a *change of mind*. The word itself doesn't carry with it the idea of turning from sin or sorrow for sin.

It is interesting to note that the Apostle John said he wrote his Gospel account specifically so people could believe and have eternal life,³¹ yet John never once used the word *repent*. However, the word, *believe* is found 99 times.

The reason John didn't use the word *repent* is because people have to change their minds in order to believe.

They need to change their way of thinking about how to go to heaven. I personally had to change my mind about water baptism being necessary to go to heaven and trust Christ alone for my salvation.

Just think of the concept of a savior. If you were to save a man from drowning, you wouldn't demand that he swim a few strokes before you'd save him. God is our Savior; He doesn't ask us to turn from our sins or feel sorry for our sins before He will save us. He asks nothing from us, but our faith. Your sorrow for sin and your attempts to turn from your sins don't contribute to the Lord's finished work on the cross. Anyone

thinking that he has some part in getting himself to heaven – no matter how small – has not yet put his faith in Christ *alone*. And without faith in Christ **alone** there is no salvation.

Now does a person have to repent (change his thinking) *and* get baptized in order to receive forgiveness of his sins? Acts 2:38 does say “be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins.” That certainly sounds like you have to be baptized to have your sins forgiven.

I believe the Greek language holds the key to understanding this verse. The entire New Testament was written in Greek and there is grammatical proof that repenting (changing your mind) is responsible for the forgiveness of sins, not baptism.

I don’t want anyone to get bogged down at this point so I will explain in the footnote why the Greek language supports the following: “Repent, *all of you*, for the forgiveness of your sins and *all of you* will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit; and let *each one* be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ.”³²

How was Paul Saved?

Finally, let’s talk about Paul (whose Hebrew name was Saul), and how he came to salvation. Many look at Acts 22:16 and think the answer lies there. Three days after the Lord appeared to Paul, Ananias came to Paul and said to him, “And now why are you waiting? Arise and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on the name of the Lord.”

This verse is talking about how Paul became a disciple, **not** how he became a believer. According to Paul’s own testimony, he was saved three days earlier when the Lord appeared to him on the Damascus Road. Paul expressly stated that he received

the Gospel directly from the Lord Jesus and not from any human source. He wrote to the Galatians, “But I make known to you, brethren that the Gospel which was preached by me is not according to man. For I neither received it from man nor was I taught it, but it came through the revelation of Jesus Christ.”³⁶

And what did the Lord tell Paul he needed to do to be saved?

When Paul was before King Agrippa, he shared some of what the Lord had said to him. Paul told King Agrippa that when Jesus commissioned him to go to the Jews and the Gentiles, He said that it was “to open their eyes and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and an inheritance among those who are sanctified by faith in Me.”³⁷

How did Jesus say you receive forgiveness of sins? Was baptism even mentioned? No, the answer here is “by faith in Me.” It sounds like John 3:16, doesn’t it? I’m assuming my readers are familiar with that verse. But for any who aren’t, the Lord said, “For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life.”

Paul had to believe the same message we have to believe. What was the message that Paul preached to the Philippian jailor? Was it believe and be baptized, and you will be saved? No, it was, “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you will be saved.”³⁸

Ananias wasn’t sent to an unbeliever to tell him how to complete his salvation. Salvation is received upon believing in Christ alone. Paul already was a brother in the Lord when Ananias went to him. That’s why Ananias addressed him as

“Brother Saul.”³⁹

Ananias told Paul the reason he was sent to him was “that you may receive your sight and be filled with the Holy Spirit.”⁴⁰ Please note that he didn’t say he came so Paul could receive his sight and *receive* the Holy Spirit, which is what Ananias would have said if he were coming to an unbeliever to present the Gospel. What he did say is that he came so that Paul could “be filled with the Spirit.”

Before you can be filled with the Spirit, the Spirit must first indwell you.

And how does one receive the Spirit? In the book of Ephesians, Paul explained that *upon believing* the Gospel, all receive the Spirit; He is given to believers as a guarantee that they will receive new glorified bodies someday.

He wrote, “In Him you also trusted, after you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation; in whom also, having believed, you were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, Who is the guarantee of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, to the praise of His glory.”⁴¹

Paul also wrote, “And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by Whom you were sealed for the day of redemption.”⁴² So you see, even though it is possible to grieve the Spirit, it is not possible to grieve Him away. You cannot lose what God has given as a permanent possession. This verse says that believers are sealed until the day of redemption. That means the believer is so secure that the only way he could go to hell is if the Holy Spirit went with him, which is obviously impossible. We have no part in securing our salvation, and we can do nothing to lose it. To teach otherwise is to teach works for salvation.

But being indwelt by the Spirit and being filled with the

Spirit are two different things. Having the Spirit in us is a result of trusting Christ as Savior. The Holy Spirit is a Gift imparted to all believers. You can receive the Spirit only once. But the filling of the Spirit is dependent upon the believer yielding to Christ in obedience. And because it is dependent upon the believer, the filling of the Spirit is something that can take place regularly or occasionally. Or in the case of some disobedient believers, it can be something that never takes place.

The proof that some believers never yield to the Spirit is the fact the Bible says there will be some believers in heaven without even one reward.⁴³ The only way that can happen is if that believer never did anything for God.

But before Paul, or any believer, can be filled with the Spirit, there has to be a washing away of one's sins. This has nothing to do with one's salvation, but rather with his relationship with his Heavenly Father. Ananias said to Paul, "Arise and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on the name of the Lord."⁴⁴

How does a believer do that?

Let me give you an example from the Old Testament. When the Jews were living in rebellion to the Lord, He said to them, "Wash yourselves, make yourselves clean; put away the evil of your doings from before My eyes. Cease to do evil, learn to do good."⁴⁵ These Jewish believers were told to wash away their sins by getting their lives straightened out and bringing them under God's control.

Saul (Paul) had been Christianity's greatest opponent. It says in Acts 9:1, that he was "breathing threats and murder against the disciples of the Lord." Who was Paul persecuting? He was persecuting the disciples. When the Lord commanded Ananias to go to Paul at first he protested. He said to the Lord,

“Lord I have heard from many about this man, how much harm he has done to Your saints in Jerusalem. And here he has authority from the chief priests to bind all who call on Your name.”⁴⁶ Who are the ones who call on His name? Disciples.

And for Paul to be of any use to God, he had to publicly denounce his former lifestyle by getting baptized and calling on the name of the Lord – that’s how he could put his past behind him and thus wash away his sins. He had to become a disciple.

You can look at the story of Stephen, the first Christian martyr, to see an example of someone calling on the name of the Lord. Paul was there, consenting to Stephen’s death. He witnessed Stephen praying to Jesus. Acts 7:59 says, “And they stoned Stephen as he was calling on God and saying, ‘Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.’”

Therefore those who call on His name recognize Jesus as God and pray to Him. That’s what it means to call on His name.

To prove that there is a difference between calling and believing, one can read what Paul wrote in Romans 10:14, where he asks, “How then shall they call on Him in whom they have not believed?” Believing precedes calling because a person has to be a child of God before he is in a position to address God as his Father and appeal to Him for help. So when Ananias told Paul to call on His name, he knew he was addressing someone who already had believed.

If baptism were required to enter heaven, Paul would have made that clear in his writings. Instead he made a distinction between the Gospel and water baptism.

Consider the fact that Paul wrote in Romans 1:16, “For I am not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes,” and he wrote in

I Corinthians 1:17, that “Christ sent me not to baptize, but to preach the Gospel.”

This bears repeating – salvation is free and baptism is a work.

Baptism is for believers who have decided to follow the Lord in obedience. The person who wants to become a disciple demonstrates this by going into the water as a picture of washing away the old lifestyle and beginning a new one.

This formal practice was always done publically, and by another believer (you can’t very well baptize yourself!).

How different this is from salvation. You don’t have to be in the presence of another person to trust Christ as your Savior. And if a believer is never baptized, he will still go to heaven, but the choice not to be baptized will cause loss of rewards in heaven.

Remission of sins comes only through faith in the sacrifice of Christ. Discipleship, on the other hand, is only for those who have already received remission of sins, and water baptism is intended to be a public demonstration of that commitment.

This is what I came to understand at the Bible camp I attended. I was shown verse after verse that said believing alone was the only requirement for heaven and I had to conclude that water baptism was something separate and apart from salvation and it had to fulfill another purpose. Obviously baptism is doing more than believing.

I hope and pray this is clear to you. It couldn’t be more important.

If a verse *appears* to contradict the very clear teachings of Scripture, that verse must be understood in the light of the overwhelming number of verses that say otherwise. The

Bible does teach faith alone for salvation. If a person reads the Gospel of John, he will read where John explained he wrote it specifically so people could have eternal life.

He wrote, “But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in His name.”⁴⁷

Jesus said, “Most assuredly I say to you, he who believes in Me has everlasting life.”⁴⁸

Eternity is a long time. We can’t afford to be wrong on this. The Bible teaches we go to heaven only because of what Christ accomplished on our behalf.

I plead with you to put your faith in the One who already did everything necessary for you to spend eternity with Him.

“These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, that you may know you have eternal life.”⁴⁹



Footnotes

1. 1 Samuel 15:23
2. 1 Samuel 15:23
3. John 6:47
4. Romans 6:23, Ephesians 2:8
5. Paul wrote in Ephesians 4:5 that there is only one baptism. This is not a contradiction. It is simply stating the fact that there is only one baptism that places us into the Body of Christ. He also said, “There is one body and one Spirit,” (Ephesians 4:4). Is there only one kind of body? Of course not; the body Paul is speaking of here is the body of Christ. He wrote, “And He put all things under His feet, and gave Him to be the head over all things to the church, which is His body...” (Ephesians 1:22-23).

The only way to get into the Body of Christ is by baptism! But Paul explains it is the Spirit who does the baptizing. First Corinthians 12:13, says, “For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body...”

6. Acts 10:43
7. Acts 10:44
8. Act 10:47
9. Acts 11:15-17
10. Acts 15:1-2
11. Acts 15:7-11
12. Romans 4:3
13. Romans 4:6-8
14. Romans 4:5
15. Romans 4:23-24
16. Luke 14:33
17. Matthew 19:27
18. Matthew 19:28
19. Romans 8:18
20. Luke 6:22-23

21. Luke 9:23
22. Matthew 28:19-20
23. John 3:3
24. John 3:4
25. John 3:5-6
26. While we were in our mother's womb, we were enclosed in a sac containing amniotic fluid, which is a liquid very similar to diluted seawater. Only when this sac ruptures can birth take place.

I was reading where an English farm veterinarian explained that in England, both the doctors and the midwives call the natural rupture of this sac, at the point of birth, "the bursting of the waters." He explained that vets use a similar expression when asking the farmers about their animals that are trying to give birth – they ask the farmer, "Has the water-bag burst yet?" Or as a pastor from Haiti put it – "Jesus meant physical birth; to be born the first time. If you have watched the birth of animals, you know what 'born of water' is."
27. Acts 2:38
28. Acts 2:22
29. Acts 2:23
30. Luke 23:21
31. Acts 2:2
32. Act 2:11
33. Acts 2:22
34. John 20:31
35. The command to repent and the command to be baptized don't match grammatically. The phrase "for the forgiveness of your sins" goes with repentance, not baptism. "Repent" and the phrase "for the forgiveness of your sins" are both in the second person plural. But the command to be baptized is third person singular – therefore, the command is – "let each of you be baptized."

If you were to put baptism with the phrase "for the forgiveness of your sins" and translate it into English, you would have, "let each one (singular) be baptized for the remission of your (plural) sins." Did you catch that? In English it's not a problem. I could be talking

to one person or a thousand people and I could say, “You need to trust to Christ to have your sins forgiven” They are both the same in English.

But in Greek (as is true in many languages) to put them together would be like saying, “let each one of you be baptized so that you and everyone else here can have their sins forgiven.” Obviously, that doesn’t make any sense.

What Peter literally did tell them was, “Repent, all of you, for the forgiveness of your sins; and let each one be baptized.” The forgiveness of sins comes through a change of mind (repentance); but water baptism is for discipleship.

- 36. Galatians 1:11-12
- 37. Acts 26:18
- 38. Acts 16:31
- 39. Acts 9:17
- 40. Acts 9:17
- 41. Ephesians 1:12-13
- 42. Ephesians 4:30
- 43. First Corinthians 3:15
- 44. Acts 22:16
- 45. Isaiah 1:16-17
- 46. Acts 9:13-14
- 47. John 20:31
- 48. John 6:47
- 49. I John 5:13

[illegible]

[illegible]

Published by
TEL-A-WORLD, INC.
P.O. Box 555
Pompano Beach, FL 33061
www.greatestnews.org