

Salvation from Sin

Salvation, God's greatest gift – man's greatest need! The greatest question man can ask is recorded in Acts 16:30, "***Sirs, what must I do to be saved?***" It is the greatest question man can ask because it involves:

- The Greatest Love – "...***God so loved...***" (John 3:16).
- The Greatest Gift – "***For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son...***" (John 3:16).
- The Greatest Sacrifice – "...***while we were still sinners, Christ died for us***" (Romans 5:8).
- The Greatest Amount of Time – Eternity.

Truly this question, which was asked by the Philippian jailer, is the greatest question man can ask because the answer will determine where immortal souls will live eternally.

Note God's answer to this question which was given through the apostle Peter as he was guided by the Holy Spirit (John 14:26; John 16:13; Acts 2).

"Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly that God has made this whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ. Now when they heard this, they were cut to the heart, and said to Peter and the apostles, Men and brethren, what shall we do? Then Peter said to them, Repent, and let every one 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" (Acts 2:36-38). In verse thirty-eight we read that repentance and baptism were for the same purpose, i.e. unto remission of sins.

Isn't this Putting Too Much Emphasis on Water?

The terms *water* and *baptism* are not synonymous. Water is the element in which one is baptized (Acts 8:36), and baptism is the act which brings the sinner into union with the blood of Jesus. The apostle Paul describes what takes place in baptism in Romans chapter six.

"What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound? Certainly not! How shall we who died to sin live any longer in it? Or do you not know that as many of us as were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death? Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life" (Romans 6:1-4).

Is this Attributing Salvation to Baptism?

In the New Testament the sinner's salvation is attributed to several sources.

The Sinner Is Saved By:

- *Jesus Christ* – Matthew 1:21
- *The Blood of Jesus Christ* – Romans 5:9
- *Gospel of Jesus Christ* – 1 Corinthians 15:1-2
- *The Grace of God* – Ephesians 2:8-9
- *The Life of Jesus* – Romans 5:10
- *The Mercy of God* – Titus 3:5

Matthew 1:21 – "***And she will bring forth a Son, and you shall call his name Jesus, for He will save His people from their sins.***"

Romans 5:9 – "***Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him.***"

1 Corinthians 15:1-2 – "***Moreover, brethren, I declare to you the Gospel which I preached to you, which also you received and in which you stand, by which also you are saved, if you hold fast that word which I preached to you - unless you believed in vain.***"

Ephesians 2:8-9 – "***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.***"

Romans 5:10 – "***For if when we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life.***"

Titus 3:5 – “...**not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us, through the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit.**”

From a careful reading of these passages it is evident that the sinner is saved by: Jesus Christ, the blood of Jesus, the Gospel, the grace of God, the life of Jesus, and the mercy of God.

The Bible teaches further that the sinner is saved by:

- Baptism – 1 Peter 3:21
- Calling on the Lord – Romans 10:13
- Faith – Romans 5:1
- Hope - Romans 8:24
- Saving Ourselves – Acts 2:40
- Works – James 2:24

1 Peter 3:21 – “**There is also an antitype which now saves us – 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...**”

Romans 10:13 – “**For whoever calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved.**” (See Matthew 7:21 for what is involved in calling upon the name of the Lord).

Romans 5:1 – “**Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.**”

Acts 2:40 – “**And with many other words he testified and exhorted them saying, Be saved yourselves from this perverse generation.**”

James 2:24 – “**Ye see then that a man is justified by works, and not by faith only.**” (Not by works of merit – Ephesians 2:8; not by works of the Law of Moses – Romans 3:28; but by works of obedience – James 2:22).

A careful study of these passages indicates that the sinner is saved by: baptism, calling on the Lord, faith, hope, saving ourselves, and by works of obedience.

From these charts we realize that salvation has both a divine side and a human side. There are certain things which God has done for man, things which man cannot do for himself, in order that he might be saved. On the other hand there are certain things which man must do for himself, things which God will not do for man since he is a free-will being. In order to obtain salvation, God saves man through His grace, mercy, Son, the life and blood of His Son, and the Gospel (none of which man can provide for himself).

To this offer of salvation, provided by God, man responds with his faith and obedience. In this study it is vital that we realize that we cannot leave out any of these elements to which our salvation is attributed – the New Testament includes them all, and to please God we much accept this truth.

Relationship of Salvation to Baptism

Noting in God’s Word that the salvation of the sinner is dependent upon several things, let’s now turn to one of these areas for a more detailed consideration. This area concerns the subject of baptism.

In the New Testament we find several passages of scripture in which the terms *salvation* and *baptism* appear. Reading each passage closely the careful student is able to determine whether baptism precedes salvation or salvation precedes baptism.

Mark 16:16 – “**He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned.**” (Baptism, then salvation).

Acts 2:38 – “**Then Peter said to them, Repent, and let every one 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.**” (Baptism, then remission of sins).

Acts 22:16 – “**And now why are you waiting? Arise and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on the name of the Lord.**” (Baptism for removal of sins).

Romans 6:4 – “**Therefore we were buried with him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.**” (Baptism, then newness of life).

1 Peter 3:21 – “ ***There is also an antitype which now saves us – 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...***” (Baptism is said to save us).

In each passage where baptism and salvation are used in the same context the act of baptism *always precedes* salvation.

Saved By Baptism?

The apostle Paul pointed out that the man is saved by grace (Ephesians 2:8). Is man saved, and *then receives the grace of God*? No, grace is a vehicle through which man is saved. Man is saved by faith (Romans 5:1). Is man saved and *then believes* that Jesus is the Son of God? No, for faith is a vehicle through which man becomes a Christian. Man is saved by obedience (Acts 2:41 and James 2:24). Is man saved and *then obeys* the teachings of God? No, for it is through his obedience that he can be saved (Hebrews 5:8-9). The Bible also teaches that we are saved by baptism (1Peter 3:21). Can man be *saved* and *then be baptized*? No more than one can be saved by faith and then believe on Jesus after he obtained salvation. Baptism is a vehicle through which man is saved, just as grace, faith, mercy, and obedience. Yes... baptism saves!

In passages where baptism and salvation are used in the same context, baptism always preceded salvation. This is brought into union with the blood of Christ which removes our sin (Hebrews 9:22; Revelation 1:5; and Romans 6:1-4). No man can be saved without the precious blood of Jesus, and to come in contact with His blood we must be baptized into His death.

I. Isn't the Baptism Mentioned in Acts 2:38 and Romans 6:1-4 Holy Spirit Baptism?

The answer to this question is found in Matthew 28:19-20, where Jesus stated, “***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; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.***” In this passage Jesus commanded His apostles to:

- Go make disciples
- Baptizing them
- Teaching them whatsoever He commanded
 - *That is:*
 - Go make disciples
 - Baptizing them
 - Teaching them to do the same thing.

Thus we see that the baptism Jesus commanded was a baptism administered by man.

Holy Spirit baptism is administered by divinity (Matthew 3:11). Baptism of the Holy Spirit was never a command but a promise (John 14:16-26; John 16:13). In these passages the promise was made to the twelve apostles, and the promise was fulfilled in Acts 2, on the day of Pentecost.

II. What about the Translation of Acts 2:38?

“***Then Peter said to them, Repent, and let every one 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***” (Acts 2:38).

Can't this be translated, “...let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ *because of the remission of sins ...*”?

The same grammatical construction appears in Matthew 26:28, which reads, “***For this is My blood of the new covenant, which is shed for many for remission of sins.***”

We know that this is impossible; if remission of sins were available to and attainable by man, the Christ would *not* have had to die. Jesus died that man could obtain forgiveness (Romans 5:8-10 and Hebrews 9:22).

Of all the translations of the scripture available for study, I do not know of a single translation which renders Acts 2:38, “...because of remission of sins.” Each translation renders Acts 2:38 in such a way as to show that baptism is required for remission of sins.

III. Was Jesus Baptized for Remission of Sins?

No, Jesus was not baptized for remission of sins. Jesus was born, lived, and died under the Law which came by Moses (John 1:17; Galatians 4:4). Our Lord committed no sin (1 Peter 2:22). He was baptized to fulfill all righteousness (Matthew 3:15), and to be our example (1 Peter 2:21-25). Jesus would have been guilty of sin if He has failed to be baptized because He would not have fulfilled all righteousness.

IV. If Baptism is by Immersion, How Do You Baptize in a Desert Place as Philip Did in Acts 8:26 and 37?

The word, *desert* used in Acts 8:26 is the same Greek word used in Mark 6:32 and 35. It is defined as:

“of a place abandoned, empty, desolate, and lonely.” (*A Greek English Lexicon of the New Testament* by W.F. Arndt and F. W. Gingrich, p. 308).

A careful reading of Mark 6:32-39 will point out that in this deserted, lonely place, Jesus bade the multitude to “...**sit down...on the green grass**” (Mark 6:39).

V. What About the Thief on the Cross? He was Saved While on the Cross and He Wasn't Baptized.

Jesus observed the Passover with His apostles, was crucified, rose from the dead on the first day of the week, appeared unto them by the space of forty days, Acts 1:3, and ascended to the Father's right hand, Acts 1:9. One of the last commands He gave them before He left them was:

1. Go preach the Gospel and baptize (Matthew 28:18f; Mark 16:15-16; Luke 24:46-47).
2. Where was the thief on the cross when Jesus commanded baptism for the remission of sins? He had been dead for 43 days!

In Acts, chapter 2, we have the first account of the Gospel of Jesus Christ being preached to sinners. They were convicted and in answer to their question, “...**what shall we do?**” Peter told them, “**Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins**” (Acts 2:36-38). This is exactly what Jesus had commanded the apostles to do (Matthew 28:18 and Mark 16:15-16). Where was the thief? He has been dead for 53 days!

There is no possible way that the thief could have been baptized under Jesus' baptism:

- He had been dead 43 days before Jesus commanded it.
- He had been dead at least 53 days before Peter preached it as a term of God's forgiveness.

VI. I was Baptized as an Infant.

To be a proper subject for baptism one must repent of sins. Of what sin can a child repent?

- Sin is a transgression of the law (1 John 3:4). What law of God does an infant transgress?
 - An infant cannot be guilty of sin of another (Ezekiel 18:1-2 and 19-24; 2 Corinthians 5:10).
- Baptism is a burial in water, not sprinkling water on an infant (Romans 6:1-6; Colossians 2:12; Acts 8:37), and to be scripturally baptized we must follow the teachings of God's Word.

VII. The First Converts

The first converts to Jesus the Son of God were told, “**Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins ...**” If you haven't obeyed this command of Jesus (Mark 16:16), as proclaimed by Peter (Acts 2:38), you need today to submit your will to Him. May God bless you to this end!

VIII. The Lord's Teaching Concerning Salvation

- Sinner Must Have Faith – Mark 16:16; John 8:24; Hebrews 11:6.
- Sinner Must Repent of Sins – Luke 13:3-5; Acts 2:38; Acts 17:30.
- Sinner Must Confess Jesus as the Christ – Matthew 10:32-33; Romans 10:10; Mark 14:61-62; 1 Timothy 6:13-14.
- Sinner Must Be Baptized into the Death of Jesus to be Cleansed by His Blood.
- Christian Must Live Faithful Unto Death – Revelation 2:10.