

Baptized When Saved

One of the last things the Lord Jesus Christ taught before He ascended into Heaven was that those who are saved must be baptized:

Matthew 28:19: “Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost:”

Being baptized is important. The Bible tells us that Jesus Himself was baptized:

Matthew 3:13-17: “Then cometh Jesus from Galilee to Jordan unto John, to be baptized of him. But John forbad him, saying, I have need to be baptized of thee, and comest thou to me? And Jesus answering said unto him, Suffer it to be so now: for thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness. Then he suffered him. And Jesus, when he was baptized, went up straightway out of the water: and, lo, the heavens were opened unto him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove, and lighting upon him: And lo a voice from heaven, saying, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.”

When He did this He set an example for us to follow. Since He was baptized we can't say that we don't need to be baptized. Baptism is important! It matters to God. Jesus teaches that we must be baptized after we're saved.

It's important to understand that baptism does *not* save us. It's not part of the salvation process! The apostle Peter made that clear:

1 Peter 3:21-22: “The like figure whereunto even baptism doth also now save us (not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God,) by the resurrection of Jesus Christ: Who is gone into heaven, and is on the right hand of God; angels and authorities and powers being made subject unto him.”

Baptism is a picture of salvation. It's a public declaration that just as Jesus died and was resurrected, so we've died to our sins and have been raised up to God:

Romans 6:4: “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.”

Baptism is a public confession that we've become a different person. Our life is no longer our own; instead it belongs to Jesus. It means we've repented of our sins and turned from them. It declares that Jesus had transformed us into new creatures that hate sin and love righteousness. In the past we were dead in our sins, but now we've been raised to new life in Christ.

I want to emphasize that we're saved by repenting of our sins and placing our faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, *not by baptism*. Salvation *only* comes by trusting that His death and resurrection fully pays the penalty for our sins. We're saved by grace, not by works such as baptism. All those who believe in Jesus and publicly confess Him will be saved:

Acts 16:31: “And they said, Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house.”

Romans 10:9: “That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved.”

Likewise, all those who refuse to publicly confess Jesus, but instead deny Him, will be damned:

Matthew 10:32-33: “Whosoever therefore shall confess me before men, him will I confess also before my Father which is in heaven. But whosoever shall deny me before men, him will I also deny before my Father which is in heaven.”

In order to be saved we must believe in Jesus, and we must also confess to others that we believe in Him. Those who deny Jesus aren't saved. Those who believe in Jesus and publicly confess their faith will be saved, even if they're never baptized. The lost are those who don't believe, not those who aren't baptized:

Mark 16:16: “He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned.”

Notice that the verse does *not* say “but he that isn't baptized is damned”. The thief who believed in Jesus on the cross wasn't baptized, but when he publicly testified of his faith in Jesus he was told that he would be in paradise with Jesus that day:

Luke 23:42: “And he said unto Jesus, Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom. And Jesus said unto him, Verily I say unto thee, Today shalt thou be with me in paradise.”

Baptism is a public confession to the world that we're saved. It has no power to save us. The thief on the cross wasn't baptized, but he did publicly confess Jesus and therefore he was saved. If you baptize someone who isn't a Christian they'll remain unsaved. As we saw in 1 Peter 3:21, baptism doesn't wash away our sins! Only the blood of Jesus can do that:

Revelation 1:5: “And from Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness, and the first begotten of the dead, and the prince of the kings of the earth. Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood,”

This is why baptizing infants is a waste of time. It accomplishes nothing, because the act of baptism doesn't wash away our sins. We're saved by grace through faith, not by baptism:

Ephesians 2:8-9: “For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast.”

The Bible is clear that only those who believe in Jesus should be baptized. This can be seen in what Philip told the Ethiopian eunuch:

Acts 8:36-37: “And as they went on their way, they came unto a certain water: and the eunuch said, See, here is water; what doth hinder me to be baptized? And Philip said, If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest. And he answered and said, I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God.”

Philip only allowed the eunuch to be baptized after he confessed that he believed in Jesus. It's clear that Philip didn't believe the act of baptizing someone saved them! If he believed that then he would have encouraged the eunuch to be baptized regardless of what he believed. Instead Philip taught that baptism is something people must do *after* they believe.

There are many examples of being baptized in the Bible. All of these examples teach us that people are baptized immediately after they're saved, with no delay. In fact, in many cases baptism happened within minutes of people being saved.

For example, when Peter preached the gospel on the day of Pentecost, the new converts were baptized that same day:

Acts 2:41: "Then they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls."

The Ethiopian eunuch was baptized a few minutes after he was saved:

Acts 8:35-38: "Then Philip opened his mouth, and began at the same scripture, and preached unto him Jesus. And as they went on their way, they came unto a certain water: and the eunuch said, See, here is water; what doth hinder me to be baptized? And Philip said, If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest. And he answered and said, I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God. And he commanded the chariot to stand still: and they went down both into the water, both Philip and the eunuch; and he baptized him."

The same is true of the apostle Paul. God sent Ananias to heal Paul's blindness and fill him with the Holy Spirit. As soon as

Ananias did that, Paul (who at that time was still named Saul) was baptized:

Acts 9:17-18: “And Ananias went his way, and entered into the house; and putting his hands on him said, Brother Saul, the Lord, even Jesus, that appeared unto thee in the way as thou camest, hath sent me, that thou mightest receive thy sight, and be filled with the Holy Ghost. And immediately there fell from his eyes as it had been scales: and he received sight forthwith, and arose, and was baptized.”

The keeper of the prison was baptized immediately after he was saved:

Acts 16:32-33: “And they spake unto him the word of the Lord, and to all that were in his house. And he took them the same hour of the night, and washed their stripes; and was baptized, he and all his, straightway.”

What we see in these passages is that there was very little delay between the time a person believed and was saved, and the time a person was baptized. People didn't have to attend months worth of classes in their local church before they were baptized. Churches didn't wait months or years to see the fruits of a person's life and make sure they were truly saved before baptizing them. Instead people were baptized immediately.

There are some churches that require people to attend classes, and wait a long time, before they're baptized. That's not Biblical! The only theology test that Philip gave the Ethiopian eunuch was whether he believed in Jesus with all his heart.

This means there are some people who will be baptized who aren't Christians at all. People must be baptized immediately, but it takes time to tell if someone is genuinely saved. Jesus gave

several examples of people who seem to be saved, but who are eventually revealed to not have been saved at all.

For example, Jesus taught this in the parable of the sower:

Matthew 13:21: “Yet hath he not root in himself, but dureth for a while: for when tribulation or persecution ariseth because of the word, by and by he is offended.”

In this example the person started out well but eventually rejected the faith when he was persecuted. The Bible teaches that those who reject the faith were never actually saved. They were false converts all along:

1 John 2:19: “They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would no doubt have continued with us: but they went out, that they might be made manifest that they were not all of us.”

The passage of time reveals the nature of a person's heart. Jesus taught the parable of the tares, which addresses this topic:

Matthew 13:24-30: “Another parable put he forth unto them, saying, The kingdom of heaven is likened unto a man which sowed good seed in his field: But while men slept, his enemy came and sowed tares among the wheat, and went his way. But when the blade was sprung up, and brought forth fruit, then appeared the tares also. So the servants of the householder came and said unto him, Sir, didst not thou sow good seed in thy field? from whence then hath it tares? He said unto them, An enemy hath done this. The servants said unto him, Wilt thou then that we go and gather them up? But he said, Nay; lest

while ye gather up the tares, ye root up also the wheat with them. Let both grow together until the harvest: and in the time of harvest I will say to the reapers, Gather ye together first the tares, and bind them in bundles to burn them: but gather the wheat into my barn.”

In this parable a field contained both wheat and tares. The householder wanted the wheat, but didn't want the tares. However, there was no good way to identify which plants were wheat and which ones were tares until they had fully grown. In order to avoid uprooting any wheat, the householder commanded his servants to leave the plants alone until harvest time, and then they were were burn the tares and gather the wheat.

Salvation works the same way. It's impossible to tell in the beginning if a person is truly saved or not. The only way to find out is to wait and see how they react to the problems of life. If they ultimately reject the faith, or fall away in times of persecution, then they were never saved at all. This process can take months or even years.

In spite of this the Bible teaches that people must be baptized *immediately* after they believe in Jesus. It doesn't teach that the church must wait months or years to verify that a person is saved, and only then baptize them! It doesn't even teach that we must first put people through a weeks-long course to make sure they understand all the doctrines of the church before they're baptized. Philip only gave the eunuch one criteria: did he believe in Jesus with all of his heart? That's all it took.

People must be baptized immediately after they're saved, with as little delay as possible. That's what the Bible teaches.