

God Has Spoken
Tract Series

**IS BAPTISM NOT REQUIRED OF ME
BECAUSE IT WAS NOT REQUIRED
OF A THIEF?**

And one of the malefactors which were hanged railed on him, saying, If thou be Christ, save thyself and us. But the other answering rebuked him, saying, Dost not thou fear God, seeing thou art in the same condemnation? And we indeed justly; for we receive the due reward of our deeds: but this man hath done nothing amiss. And he said unto Jesus, Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom. And Jesus said unto him, Verily I say unto thee, To day shalt thou be with me in paradise (Luke 23:39-43).

Incomplete Argument

Why is the thief on the cross offered as proof that baptism is not required in order to be saved from sin? The Lord spoke such a blessing to others during His life on earth. Why do we not hear people holding up others as proof that baptism is not required for salvation?

Why not argue from the palsied man who was let down through a roof in Capernaum? Matthew 9:2 – *And, behold, they brought to him a man sick of the palsy, lying on a bed: and Jesus seeing their faith said unto the sick of the palsy; Son, be of good cheer; thy sins be forgiven thee (Mark 2:5; Luke 5:20).* Are we saved by the faith of others, without baptism?

Why not argue from those who forgive people who sin against them? Luke 6:37 – *Judge not, and ye shall not be judged: condemn not, and ye shall not be condemned: forgive, and ye shall be forgiven (Matthew 6:14).* Are we saved from sin without baptism if we forgive others?

God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us by his son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds
(Hebrews 1:1-2).

Why not argue the point from the woman in the pharisee's house in Nain? Luke 7:47-48 – *Wherefore I say unto thee, Her sins, which are many, are forgiven; for she loved much: but to whom little is forgiven, the same loveth little. And he said unto her, Thy sins are forgiven.* She wiped the Lord's feet with her hair, and washed them with her tears, but nothing is said about her being baptized. Are our sins forgiven merely for our showing love to others?

To argue that baptism is not necessary to salvation because it is not mentioned to the thief is an incomplete argument. One might show salvation promised to others without the mention of baptism, but what does that prove? It proves nothing about baptism because nothing is said about baptism. It proves nothing about the church, or a Christian's conduct in the world for these are not mentioned in the immediate text. Are these therefore not important to the Lord?

Inconclusive

The argument that baptism is not essential to salvation because Jesus said nothing to the thief about baptism is inconclusive. Consider the healing of the severed ear.

When Jesus was arrested *one of them which were with Jesus stretched out his hand, and drew his sword, and struck a servant of the high priest's, and smote off his ear* (Matthew 26:51). It does not say that Peter used the sword. Was it therefore not Peter? It does not say that Malchus was the servant whose ear was smitten off. Was it therefore not Malchus? John identified both of those men by these names (John 18:10); therefore everyone can know without the least doubt who struck whose ear. Matthew's omission of the names does not prove that it was not Peter and Malchus.

Does that not answer the question of baptism and salvation as we consider the thief on the cross? What is not taught in one passage is often taught elsewhere with obvious application to every case.

Rightly dividing

II Timothy 2:15 – *Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.*

The rule of God under which Jesus spoke to the thief ended when Jesus died (Colossians 2:14), and the Lord delivered the rule for all generations to follow (Hebrews 1:1-2). What He required of them is not what He requires of anyone today.

Jesus Explained

Matthew 9:6 – *But that ye may know that the Son of man hath power on earth to forgive sins, (then saith he to the sick of the palsy,) Arise, take up thy bed, and go unto thine house.*

He cured the palsy to prove His identity and authority as the Son of God (John 20:30-31). Being the Son of God Jesus had the power to walk on water (Matthew 14:25), raise the dead (Luke 7:11-15), heal diseases (Matthew 4:23), and forgive sin. Having forgiven the sins of some while He was on earth – and having demonstrated His authority both to forgive and to declare the conditions of forgiveness – He then told the world the conditions under which sins will be forgiven ever after. The relationship of baptism to salvation is stated in the following eleven passages (NKJV).

Matthew 28:19 – *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.*

Mark 16:16 – *He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned.*

Luke 3:3 – *And he went into all the region around the Jordan, preaching a baptism of repentance for the remission of sins,*

Acts 2:38 – *Then Peter said unto 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 2:41 – *Then those who gladly received his word were baptized; and that day about three thousand souls were added to them.*

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.*

Romans 6:3-4 – *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.*

I Corinthians 12:13 – *For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body – whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free – and have all been made to drink into one Spirit.*

Galatians 3:27 – *For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ.*

Colossians 2:12 – *buried with him in baptism, in which you also were raised with Him through faith in the working of God, who raised him from the dead.*

I 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.*

Every time the New Testament discusses both baptism and salvation (or the forgiveness of sins) in the same context, baptism always precedes, and is prerequisite to, the forgiveness of sins and the salvation of the soul. The baptism commanded by Christ's apostles is into the death of Jesus. Jesus could not require it of the thief, for the Lord had not yet died. He does decisively require it of every soul on earth today. The New Testament shows that the baptism that leads to salvation from sin is preceded by belief that Jesus is the Son of God (Mark 16:16), repentance from sin (Acts 2:38), and profession of that faith in Christ (Acts 8:36-38).

What Jesus told the thief – what God told Moses – is not what He tells us today.



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