



The Voice Of Truth

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What about the Thief on the Cross?

By Jimmy Pettigrew

Many people will stand before God and attempt to justify their exemption from God's simple command to be baptized for the remission of sins (**Acts 2:38; 22:16**) because - "the thief on the cross wasn't baptized and he was saved."

By what Scripture can anyone say, "the thief on the cross was never baptized"? There is no Scriptural basis for such a conclusion. John the immerser had baptized multitudes of people (**Matt. 3:5-6; Mk. 1:4-5**). It is possible that the thief on the cross could have been baptized by him. Admittedly, it is just an assumption to believe that the thief had been baptized. However, it is just as much of an assumption to believe he had not been baptized.

Scripturally, one cannot deny the necessity of N.T. baptism for one's salvation by pointing to the thief on the cross any more than he can by pointing to King David. Like David, the thief lived and died during the Mosaic Dispensation, before Christ's Last Will and

Testament went into effect. It did not come of force until after Christ's death (**Heb. 9:16-17**). We can see that the thief was not subject to the command of immersion because this command was not given until after the thief's death. It was not until Christ was resurrected that He said, "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved" (**Mk. 16:16**). It was not until Christ's death that the O.T. ceased (**Mat. 27:51; Col. 2:14**).

The thief on the cross could not have been baptized the way the new covenant stipulates you and I must be baptized. For **Romans 6:3-4** teaches that if we wish to acquire "newness of life," we must be baptized into Christ's death, be buried with Christ in baptism, and then be raised from the dead. There was no way for the thief to comply with this N.T. baptism - Christ had not died! Christ had not been buried! Christ had not been raised! Therefore, "even baptism doth also now save us ..." (**1 Pet. 3:21**).

If One Dies Before Baptism, Is He Saved?

If someone has accepted the Lord Jesus in repentance, and dies before baptism, is he saved? The truth is that no one can "accept the Lord Jesus" without baptism, for it was the Lord who put baptism into the gospel and required it of all who would come to Him.

Christ doesn't give us options about how to accept Him. Please notice these passages: Redemption is found IN CHRIST (**Romans 3:24**); There is no condemnation to them which are IN CHRIST (**Romans 8:1**); the love of God is found IN CHRIST (**Romans 8:39**). We are sanctified IN CHRIST (**1 Corinthians 5:17; Galatians 6:15**); we are reconciled back to God by being IN CHRIST (**Isaiah 59:1-2; 2 Corinthians 5:19; Ephesians 2:13**); we are all the children of God by being IN CHRIST (**Galatians 3:26-27**); All blessings are found IN CHRIST (**Ephesians 2:6**); Grace of God is found IN CHRIST (**2 Timothy 2:1**). We were dead spiritually because of sins (**Ephesians 2:1**), but now made "alive unto God IN CHRIST" (**Romans 6:11**). Eternal life is found IN CHRIST (**Romans 6:23**); Salvation is IN CHRIST (**2 Timothy 2:10**).

The truth is that until one is **BAPTIZED INTO CHRIST (Romans 6:3)**, he is not IN CHRIST. Until one believes and is baptized, he is not saved (**Mark 16:16**). Until one is "born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God" (**John 3:5**). Baptism washes away sins (**Acts 22:16**). And until one is baptized into Christ, into his death (**Romans 6:3**), his sins have not been washed away.

These passages show the Lord's purpose for baptism. Can you please answer these questions? "Is one in Christ before baptism" (**Romans 6:3**)? "Are sins washed away before baptism" (**Acts 22:16**)? "Is one saved before baptism" (**Mark 16:16**)? "Is one in the kingdom before baptism" (**John 3:5**)? "If a man dies on his way to his own

wedding, is his intended bride a widow?

The truth is that no one can accept the Lord Jesus without baptism, for it was the Lord who put baptism into the gospel and required it of **ALL** who would come to Him. One cannot accept the Lord by faith only, by repentance only, by confession only, nor by baptism only. All, not just one, of those are required by Christ!

Does the Bible teach infant baptism?

I have read my Bible carefully, and I still do not find any case where babies were ever baptized. It does not contain one command to any preacher to baptize infants. Are we to base our faith (and practice) on what the Bible does **NOT** say, or what it says? I read that "faith cometh by hearing, and hearing the word of God" (**Rom. 10:17**).

Jesus made a promise in **Mark 16:16**, "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved." In **Acts 8:37**, when a man asked, "What doth hinder me to be baptized?" He was told, "If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest." Faith must precede baptism! One must believe before he is ready to be baptized. But infants are incapable of believing and trusting Christ. Infants are incapable of repenting (**Acts 2:38**). Repentance must precede baptism! Infants are incapable of confessing Christ (**Rom. 10:10; Acts 8:37**). Confessing faith must precede baptism! Infants cannot confess Christ.

The purity of little children is revealed in **Matthew 18:3**. And again Jesus said, "Whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child, he shall in no wise enter therein" (**Lk. 18:15-17**). Infants do not inherit the sins of Adam or their parents (**Ezek. 18:20**); they have no knowledge of good and evil (**Deut. 1:39**). Through growth children learn to choose between good and evil (**Isa. 7:15-16**). I want to say God gives us our spirits (**Eccl. 12:7**). God would not bring forth an unclean soul (**Matt. 7:18a; Ezek. 28:15**). The wicked go astray (**Psa. 58:3**). Solomon said, "Behold, this only I found: that God made man upright; but they have sought out many inventions" (**Eccl. 7:29**). God gives the spirit, God made man upright, so he goes astray. These passages show that man is born innocent, becomes depraved, and goes astray. He is simply not born a sinner!