



Is Baptism Necessary For Salvation?

DISCOVERING GOD'S WORD BIBLE STUDY SERIES

Q&A NUMBER: 15

www.GodSaidSo.com/QA15

Is baptism necessary for salvation? That is, has God required that each one of us be baptized in order to be forgiven of our sins and have eternal life in Heaven? Most religious organizations today will answer that question as “No” – often saying that baptism is a command of God and is something that a believer *should* do; but, that it is not necessary for your salvation. Yet, how does the Bible answer this question? Let’s investigate.

John 3:3-6

John 3:3-6 records the following conversation between Jesus and Nicodemus: “Jesus answered and said to him, ‘Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.’ Nicodemus said to Him, ‘How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter a second time into his mother's womb and be born?’ Jesus answered, ‘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 the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.’”

As Jesus speaks with this individual who had come to Him by night, Jesus says that it is ***necessary*** to be born of water and the Spirit in order to enter the kingdom of God. Now, let’s begin by understanding what an individual enters when he/she enters the “kingdom of God.” Throughout the Scriptures, it is clear that the “kingdom of God” is used in reference to the church Jesus Christ would establish in Acts chapter 2 (see how the terms “church” and “kingdom” are used interchangeably in Matthew 16:18-19). This is significant because Christ’s church (kingdom) is His collection of the saved!

Then, having established that it is essential to be part of Christ’s kingdom (church), let’s clearly understand that Jesus said being born of water and the Spirit is necessary in order to enter this kingdom (church). First, an individual is born of the Spirit whenever he/she is obedient to God’s commandments (given by the Holy Spirit). Second, an individual is born of water whenever

he/she is baptized. So, Jesus has just said that being baptized is necessary to be part of His kingdom (church) and be saved (just as Paul also says in 1 Corinthians 12:13)!

Matthew 28:18-20

Matthew's account of the "Great Commission" Jesus gave to His apostles is recorded in Matthew 28:18-20 (we'll notice Mark's account in just a moment): "And Jesus came and spoke to them, saying, 'All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. 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.' Amen."

Notice, first, that Jesus Christ possess all (complete) authority in Heaven and on earth. Therefore, whatever He commands or instructs *must* be done! Mankind simply has no authority to go against the commandments or instructions of Jesus Christ! Specifically, in this passage, Jesus is using His authority to command something of His apostles regarding their work in preaching the gospel throughout the world.

He instructs His apostles to go and make disciples of all the nations. Now, remember that to be a disciple is to be a Christian (see Acts 11:26). So, we need to take special notice concerning how Jesus told them they would accomplish the great feat of making disciples of all the nations. Notice carefully that He tells them baptism in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit would be involved in this! So, Jesus authoritatively says that baptism is involved in an individual becoming a disciple (Christian)!

Mark 16:15-16

In addition to Matthew's account of the "Great Commission," Mark also records Jesus' instructions to His apostles at the conclusion of his gospel record. Mark records the following: "And He said to them, 'Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned.'"

Again, notice that Jesus Christ commanded His apostles to go into the entire world and preach the gospel to "every creature." Then, you will notice what Jesus says about how those individuals who hear the preaching respond. First, Jesus says that the one who believes and is baptized will be saved (in Heaven). Second, Jesus says that the individual who does not believe will be condemned (in Hell).

So, Jesus says that belief *and* baptism are involved in an individual being saved! Notice carefully that the word "and" couples belief and baptism together – as both are necessary for the same thing (salvation). However, all that an individual must do to be lost is fail to believe!

Acts 2:37-38

Acts chapter 2 records the events that transpire on the Day of Pentecost – including Peter’s proclamation of the gospel. Specifically, verses 37-38 records a question that Peter’s audience asks in response to his preaching – and Peter’s answer to their question. “Now when they heard this, they were cut to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of 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.’”

Before considering the implications about baptism from what Peter said in verse 38, consider two facts. First, consider that Peter’s audience had their hearts stirred by the message they had just heard (particularly notice verse 36) – and wanted to know if there was anything they could possibly do in order to be saved from their sins. Second, consider that throughout Peter’s preaching, Acts 2:4 says that he (and the other apostles) were speaking in tongues as the Holy Spirit of God gave them ability. So, his message was not his own – it was God’s!

Now, consider what Peter tells this audience must be done in order for them to be saved. Clearly, he states that they must repent – and every one of them must be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ “for the remission of sins”! So, both repentance and baptism were necessary in order to have their sins forgiven. Therefore, since it is necessary for salvation to have your sins forgiven, Peter says that baptism is necessary for salvation!

Acts 22:16

In Acts 9:18, Saul (who later became the apostle Paul) was baptized. In Acts chapter 22, Paul was preaching to the Jews, and telling them about his conversion. Specifically, notice what he said he was told to do (by Ananias, the preacher God had sent to him): “And now why are you waiting? Arise and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on the name of the Lord.”

Ananias clearly indicated an immediacy for baptism – as he asked Saul, “why are you waiting?” The reason for this immediacy was in its purpose – the washing away of Saul’s sins. This is just as we saw Peter command in Acts 2:38. Baptism is necessary in order for an individual to be forgiven of his/her sins (or, to have his/her sins washed away)!

Also, notice that baptism was said to be involved in “calling on the name of the Lord.” According to Romans 10:13, “whoever calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved.” Since calling on the name of the Lord is necessary for salvation – and baptism is involved in calling on the name of the Lord, baptism is necessary for salvation!

Galatians 3:26-27

Next, consider the connection between baptism and being “in Christ,” according to Galatians 3:26-27: “For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ.”

First, in order to fully appreciate this connection, we need to develop a proper understanding of why it is necessary to be “in Christ.” Ephesians 1:3 indicates that all spiritual blessings are located “in Christ.” Ephesians 1:7 indicates that the forgiveness of sins is in Christ. 2 Timothy 2:10 says that salvation is “in Christ Jesus.” And, Romans 6:23 says that “the gift of God is eternal life” – and that it is “in Christ Jesus our Lord.” Clearly, we must be “in Christ”!

Now, please consider how Galatians 3:26-27 says we come into Jesus Christ. He says, “as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ.” Now, only as many as are baptized come into Jesus Christ (no more and no less). So, you cannot be in Christ (where salvation is) without having put on Christ in baptism!

1 Peter 3:20-21

Finally, I want us to consider the teaching of Peter in 1 Peter 3:20-21: “who formerly were disobedient, when once the Divine longsuffering 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 — 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.”

First, notice that Peter points to the example of Noah and his household being saved through water while they were in the ark. That is, Noah and his household were saved by God through the flood from the sinful world which was around them! Notice the phrase “saved through water” very clearly.

Second, in verse 21, notice that Peter says there is an “antitype” (pointing us back to what he’s just said about Noah’s family being “saved through water”) that “now saves us.” What is this which now saves us? He says it is baptism! That is, just as Noah and his family were “saved through water,” baptism now saves us! Peter says this is not because baptism removes the filth of the flesh; but, because obeying God’s commandment to be baptized is how we obtain a good conscience – and through the resurrection of Jesus Christ!

Conclusion

Is baptism necessary for salvation? While most churches and preachers answer this question with a “No,” we have seen how God answers this question. God has said that baptism is necessary to enter the kingdom of God (John 3:3-6), to be His disciple (Matthew 28:18-20), to be forgiven of your sins (Acts 2:37-38; Acts 22:16), to be “in Christ” (Galatians 3:26-27), and to be saved (Mark 16:15-16; 1 Peter 3:20-21). Yes, baptism is necessary for your salvation!

Discovering God’s Word Bible Study Series
Study Number: QA15
Written by Eric Krieg

Copyright: Copyright © 2018 GodSaidSo Press. Please use this material to God’s glory and honor. Feel free to copy and distribute this material in any way that will bring God glory and help souls to be saved. However, you may not take any of the material out of context or change the material in any way. Please provide the author with the proper credit for the material.

Scripture quotations: Unless otherwise indicated, all scripture quotations are taken from the New King James Version. Copyright © 1982 by Thomas Nelson, Inc. Used by permission. All rights reserved.