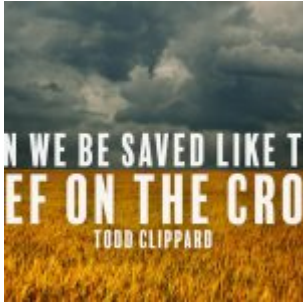


# Can we be saved like the thief on the cross?

July 7, 2016



**The thief on the cross didn't get baptized, so how did Jesus say he would be with Him in paradise?**

First, the thief on the cross was saved because Jesus spoke his sins forgiven (Luke 23:43). Jesus had power while on earth to remit sins (Matthew 9:1-8).

Second, it cannot be proven that the thief had not been baptized. Multitudes came from Judaea to John the Baptist to be baptized of him (Matthew 3:5). Also, the thief also had some knowledge of the coming kingdom (Luke 23:42). Where had he heard this "kingdom message?" This was John the Baptist's message from the beginning of his work (Matthew 3:2). Thus, there is some evidence to suggest the thief had been taught at an earlier time.

Paul said a man who received the baptism of John was to believe on Him who was to come after, that is, on Jesus (Acts 19:4). The thief certainly did this. However, it is a moot point as Jesus clearly stated the thief would join Him in paradise that same day.

James said, "You see then how that by works a man is justified, **and not by faith only**" (James 2:24, emphasis mine

TC). Earlier, James said the demons believe and tremble (2:19). Are the demons saved?

*There is not one verse in all the Bible relegating baptism to being nothing more than a symbol.*

[easy-tweet tweet="There is not one verse in all the Bible relegating baptism to being nothing more than a symbol." user="HousetohouseHTH"]

Concerning Jesus and His teaching on baptism, you might hear, "Jesus says it is very important, yes, but not how you are actually saved."

**What Jesus said was – "He who believes and is baptized shall be saved."** This is not difficult to understand. Jesus specifically joined faith in the gospel message and baptism to salvation. The two verbs are joined by the conjunction "and" which places equal value on each action as necessary to receive salvation. Have an English teacher diagram Mark 16:16 and then ask him if both belief and baptism are necessary to be saved.

Additionally, how can one deny baptism when Saul of Tarsus was told in Acts 22:16 to **"Arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord"**? This verse not only shows the washing away of sins takes place in baptism, but also explains how one "calls on the name of the Lord" in order to be saved (cf Acts 2:21; Rom 10:13).

Finally, Peter's statement in 1 Peter 3:21 should put this argument to rest once and for all. The KJV reads, **"The like figure whereunto even baptism doth now also save us."** The NASB reads, **"Corresponding to that, baptism now saves you – not the removal of dirt from the flesh, but an appeal to God for a good conscience – through the resurrection of Jesus Christ."**

The fact that baptism is missing from the last half of Mark 16:16 is irrelevant. If one does not believe in Jesus, he is

condemned already (John 3:18) and baptism is not an option for him. Consider the following example:

I am a physician, and everyone on the planet has a deadly disease. The only cure for the disease is to pass through a machine in my office. Therefore, it may be rightfully said, "Whosoever comes to my office and passes through the machine shall live, but whosoever will not come to my office shall die." Do I have to mention "and does not pass through the machine" for people to understand the necessity of coming to the office AND passing through the machine? To ask the question is to answer.

Consider also the situation in Numbers 21 and the fiery serpents. Anyone bitten by one of these serpents had to go to where Moses had lifted up the brass serpent and look upon it in order to be saved. If Moses had said, "Whosoever comes to the brass serpent and looks upon it shall live, but whosoever does not come to the brass serpent shall die," do you think people would understand the necessity of both? Then why do people refuse to understand Mark 16:16? It's not that difficult!

My perspective on baptism comes from the many other verses that could be cited to show the absolute necessity of baptism for remission of sins.

- Read Acts 2:36-41 and tell me if those people thought baptism was necessary for remission of sins.
- Read Acts 22:16 and tell me if Saul of Tarsus thought baptism was necessary for remission of sins.
- Read 1 Peter 3:21 and tell me if baptism has any connection to salvation.

To deny the essentiality of baptism for salvation is to deny the clear statements of Jesus and the inspired writers.