

Is Baptism Essential to Pleasing God?

By John R. Gibson

[Editor's note: This article is intended as a companion to the lesson from October 13, 2019 entitled ["Baptism: Who, What, When, Where, Why and How."](#) After reading this article we encourage you to click the link and listen to the lesson. JRG]

To say that questions about baptism generate controversy is to be guilty of vast understatement. Issues regarding baptism's significance and importance can inflame passions and while I do not expect this article to put an end to all arguing, I do hope that simply allowing the Bible to speak will be helpful.

Does the Bible teach that baptism is part of God's plan for people everywhere?

"Go therefore and make disciples of (or teach) 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..." (Matthew 28:19,20).

"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'" (Mark 16:15, 16).

Does the Bible say anything about a connection between baptism and salvation?

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

"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 anti-type 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" (1 Peter 3:20, 21).

"When God's patience waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was being prepared, in which a few, that is, eight persons, were brought safely through water. Baptism, which corresponds to this, now saves you, not as a removal of dirt from the body but as an appeal to God for a good conscience, through the resurrection of Jesus Christ" (1 Peter 3:20, 21—English Standard Version).

Does the Bible ever link baptism with the remission (forgiveness) of sins?

"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'" (Acts 2:38).

Should we "just preach Jesus" and stay away from questions about baptism?

"Then Philip opened his mouth, and beginning at this Scripture, preached Jesus to him. Now as they went down the road, they came to some water. And the eunuch said, 'See, here is water. What hinders me from being baptized?'" (Acts 8:35, 36).

Wasn't Paul saved on the road to Damascus before he was baptized?

The third day after the Lord had appeared to him, the following words were spoken to Paul. "And now why are you waiting? Arise and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on the name of the

Lord” (Acts 22:16). (The complete story of Paul’s conversion may be found in Acts 9:1-19; 22:3-16; 26:12-18).

But doesn’t the Bible teach that we are saved by Jesus’ death on the cross?

“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” (Romans 6:3, 4).

Since all spiritual blessings are in Christ (Ephesians 1:3), how can baptism be that important?

“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” (Galatians 3:26, 27).

How long should one wait after he knows that he needs to be baptized?

“Then they spoke the word of the Lord to him and to all who were in his house. And he took them the same hour of the night and washed their stripes. And immediately he and all his family were baptized” (Acts 16:32, 33).

“And now why are you waiting? Arise and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on the name of the Lord” (Acts 22:16).

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