

Does The Thief On The Cross Prove Sinners Today Can Be Saved Without Water Baptism?

First, we don't know the thief was never baptized. Luke 23:42 ("And he said unto Jesus, Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom.") indicates the thief seemed to know perhaps even more than the apostles, so he could have been baptized with John the Baptist's baptism before he was hung on the cross. And if you are going to use the thief to prove one doesn't have to be baptized, you better know for sure he wasn't baptized. We don't.

Second, Rom 10:9 reads "... if thou shall ... believe ... that God hath raised Him from the dead, thou shalt be saved." The thief couldn't have believed in the resurrection of Christ (as an accomplished fact) – so obviously he lived under a different covenant than we do (else he couldn't have been saved based upon Rom 10:9).

Third, the thief on the cross didn't need to be baptized for basically the same reason Adam, Moses, and a whole host of other Old Testament children of God were not baptized; that is, the New Testament law (which requires baptism) had not come into effect yet. We can see that from Heb 9:15-17 – "And for this cause he is the mediator of the new testament ... For where a testament is, there must also of necessity be the death of the testator. For a testament is of force after men are dead: otherwise it is of no strength at all while the testator liveth."

Finally, keep in mind three facts:

- The thief was forgiven before Jesus died (therefore was not forgiven based upon New Testament law – Col 2:14).
- The thief on the cross died before the "great commission" was ever given (therefore was not responsible to Jesus' Mark 16:16 command to be baptized in order to be saved).
- Luke 24:47 ("And that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem") is the third account of the great commission. Doesn't this verse make it obvious the great commission was to begin to be preached (begin to be binding) at Jerusalem? And wouldn't "at Jerusalem" be referring to the day of Pentecost (Luke 24:49)? And the second account of the great commission is where Jesus required water baptism for salvation. Do you see then why I don't think the thief had to be baptized to be saved?

Verses like Mark 16:16, Acts 2:38, Acts 22:16, and I Pet 3:21 prove a sinner must be baptized in water to be saved. The story of the Thief On The Cross doesn't contradict those passages.