

Objections To Baptism
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Good morning, everyone.

Thank you so much for allowing me the opportunity to bring about our second “Basics” lesson on baptism.

This morning, we're going to be focusing on objections to baptism.

To start, I'd just like to state that in most Christian groups or Christian religions, there is a general consensus that belief, repentance and confession are required by God in order to be saved.

However, most of these religions reject baptism.

As we established in the previous lesson, it should be clearly seen that baptism has always been part of God's salvation plan.

The Bible clearly teaches this through multiple examples, such as the conversion of the Ethiopian Eunuch, the conversion of Saul, Lydia, the Philippian jailer, and more.

Now, despite these examples, many people, including what I would call well-meaning truth seekers, have questioned baptism and have raised objections to it.

So, in today's lesson, we are going to discuss some of the most common arguments against baptism, as well as the Biblical answers to them.

This brings us to our first point: the thief on the cross.

And this tends to be the first thing that comes up in most people's minds, and it is probably one of the most compelling arguments against baptism.

We learn about the thief on the cross in the 23rd chapter of Luke when we are given the account of Jesus crucifixion. And in it, we see the faith of one penitent thief.

If you'd like to turn your Bibles with me to Luke chapter 23, we're going to go to verse 39. It says that one of the criminals who were hanged blasphemed Him saying, “If you are the Christ, save yourself and us.”

But the other answering rebuked him saying, “Do you not even fear God seeing you are under the same condemnation? And we indeed justly, for we received the due reward of our deeds. But this man has done nothing wrong.”

Then he said to Jesus, “Lord, remember me when you come into your kingdom?”

And Jesus said to him, “Assuredly, I say to you today, you will be with me in paradise.”

People who assert that faith alone saves a person will often point to the scripture as evidence of that.

Now, to their point, we can agree that the thief on the cross was in fact saved. Given how Jesus said that he would be with Him in paradise.

What differentiates people today from the thief on the cross, is that we live under different covenants. Before Jesus died, the Law of Moses was still in effect.

During Jesus' life, He was expected to live out the Law of Moses. And Jesus expected the same of his followers.

Only after His death was the law of Moses fulfilled.

What this means, practically speaking, is that the thief was never expected to be baptized.

The command to be baptized did not come until after Jesus' resurrection, as we read in Mark 16, starting in verse 15. Jesus said that "he who believes and is baptized shall be saved."

The writer of the book of Hebrews also made a distinction between the old and new covenants in chapter nine and verse 16. It says that "where there is a testament, there must also of necessity be the death of the testator; for a testament is enforced after men are dead since it has no power at all while the testator lives."

The Church, and the law of Christ that we are judged by, did not come into effect until after Jesus died.

Now, a second point to make about the case of the thief on the cross is that it just doesn't make sense for the thief to have been baptized.

Because spiritually speaking, we reenact the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus through baptism.

Paul made his point in Romans chapter six and verse four.

Again, that is Romans chapter six and verse four. Here, he explains that "we were buried with Christ 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."

So, when we consider that baptism is the reenactment of the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus, it simply doesn't make sense that the thief would need to be baptized since Jesus Himself had not even died.

So, to summarize, we must understand that both Jesus and the thief died under the old covenant as Jews. The law of Christ, and even the church, were not established until the day of Pentecost when the Holy Spirit descended upon Jesus' Apostles, which was after Jesus' resurrection and ascension into the Heaven.

On that day of Pentecost, Peter gave the first Church sermon in which he commanded his audience, as we read in Acts chapter 2 and verse 38, "repent and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins."

This conveniently "brings us to our second argument that often it's made. And I'm just going to call it, "the For Argument."

So that same verse we just read, Acts chapter 2 and verse 38, happens to be one of our key verses that demonstrates our responsibility to be baptized.

However, there are people that call into question the wording of that verse.

Again, Peter commanded, "repent and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins."

Those who deny the scriptures' emphasis on baptism, will often manipulate the word "for" to mean "because of." So, if we were to reread the verse in that light, it would sound like this instead: "Repent and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ because of the remission of sins."

Practically speaking, what this would imply is that salvation would come before an individual is baptized.

Many protestant churches say that baptism is an outward sign of an inward change, or is something merely meant to show your belief in God.

Now, if the Bible had been written in English, this argument would have some legs to stand on.

Oftentimes we use the word "for" to mean "because of." As an example: "So and so went to jail for murder.

Obviously, we understand that phrase to mean "because of murder," not "to be murdered."

But here is where the trouble lies in that argument. The New Testament was not written in English. It was first written in Greek.

The word used in the original Greek text is "eis," which translated to English means "into," "unto," or "in order to."

Another place the Greek word "eis" appears is in Matthew chapter 26 and verse 28. If you wouldn't mind, turn with me. That's Matthew 26 and verse 28.

"For this is my blood of the new covenant, which is shed for many, for the remission of sins.

Obviously, Jesus did not shed his blood because sins had already been forgiven. Christ's blood is what forgives us of our sins. To say otherwise would mean that Christ needlessly died, which of course would thwart the whole purpose behind the gospel.

And I don't think that any genuine person calling themselves Christian would actually believe that.

So given that the original Greek text means into, we have to read Acts 2:38 to mean that we are baptized so that our sins can be remitted.

And finally, we come to our third point, which is the "grace through faith argument."

So, besides the case of the thief on the cross, many people push back against baptism because of Paul's writings in Ephesians chapter two, starting in verse eight.

Again, that's Ephesians chapter two, starting in verse eight. The scripture states, "for by grace, you have been saved through faith and that not of yourselves. It is the gift of God, not of works lest anyone should boast."

Let's clarify that the verse itself is not the problem here. All scripture is given through inspiration of the Holy Spirit.

The problem lies in the way that this verse is often misinterpreted. The misunderstanding comes when people assert that baptism is one of the works described by this passage.

Faith, in this context, is often misunderstood as belief. Yet, in reality, faith equates to obedience. Let me explain what I mean by "equates."

As in the previous arguments, the best way to cut through this misunderstanding is to consider the greater whole of what scripture says.

Let's turn to Hebrews chapter 11 to understand what true faith looks like.

Throughout Hebrews chapter 11, we see the faithful acts of people such as Abel, Noah, Abraham, Moses, and many others.

For time's sake, I'm not going to read the whole chapter. But instead, we're going to focus on the examples of Abraham.

So again, in Hebrews 11, if we start in verse eight, it says "By faith Abraham obeyed when he was called to go to the place which he would receive as an inheritance; and he went out not knowing where he was going."

Then, let's skip down and read beginning in verse 17. "By faith Abraham, when he was tested, offered up Isaac, and he who had received the promises offered up his only begotten son; of whom it was said, 'in Isaac, your seed shall be called.' He concluded that God was able to raise him up even from the dead, from which he also received him in a figurative sense."

Now, the point of going to this chapter is to see that belief is considered faith only when it results in action, notice that when Abraham did these things, he did so not because it was his own idea, but because God commanded him to do so.

So, here's a question.

Would Abraham be considered faithful if he hadn't left his homeland to go to the land that God promised to him? Would he be considered faithful if he had never actually left?

A second question is, what if Abraham didn't obey God when he was commanded to sacrifice His son. Would he still be considered faithful?

And the obvious answer to these questions is that he would not.

In every generation, God has commanded those who seek him to do certain things.

Since the day of Pentecost, when the Church was first "opened," baptism has been a necessary work commanded by God. It was commanded so that we would be able to be saved.

Baptism is a God ordained work.

As well as baptism, there is another work commanded by God.

And that is belief. Turn with me to John chapter six, starting in verse 28.

Again, that's John chapter six.

In verse 28, a crowd of people asked Jesus, "What shall we do, that we may work the works of God? Jesus answered and said to them, "This is the work of God, that you believe in Him whom He has sent."

So, the scripture is clear. Belief is a work commanded by God.

Repentance is a work. Confession is a work. And baptism is a work.

All are works commanded by God.

What makes these works different from the works of men, is that we are submitting to what God has commanded us to do.

We're not trying to earn God's favor. We're simply doing what he has told us to do in order to obtain salvation.

And this is what makes salvation possible and what makes faith real faith.

So, finally we see that "grace through faith argument" includes baptism.

And I'd like to conclude this lesson with one of Jesus' most compelling statements.

Let's turn to Matthew chapter seven and verse 21. Again, that's Matthew chapter seven verse 21.

Jesus says that "not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of my Father in heaven will enter."

So, to conclude, it's extremely important that we do what God commanded us to do in our time.

So that just like all the people in Hebrews chapter 11, we too can be considered faithful.

And this concludes our lesson.

Of course, there are many more objections baptism that people have come up with.

Perhaps in the future we can examine them.

But thank you so much for your kind attention.