

Rise Up And Build

"So They said, 'Let us rise up and build,' Then they set their hands to do this good work," Neh. 2:18

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Where Baptism Stands

In giving the Great Commission, Jesus said to His apostles, *"Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit"* (Matt. 28:19).

In view of the fact that baptism is involved in one becoming a disciple, that it was divinely designed to include people of *"all nations,"* bears the stamp and approval of, and is to be done *"in the name"* of all three members of the *"Godhead,"* then it would seem that baptism is exceedingly important. However, this **command** (cf. Acts 10:48) is one of the most controversial of all commands which appear in the Bible. Quite frankly, most denominational preachers vigorously deny that one has to be baptized in order to be saved. Yes, they generally stress that one must submit to something they call "baptism" in order to enter a particular denomination, but they take issue with the teaching that one **must** be baptized in order to go to heaven. On the very surface of the matter, it should be evident that baptism either **is** or is **not** necessary for salvation. Moreover, **if** it is a requirement for salvation, **then** knowing the truth on this issue (and acting accordingly) is a matter of upmost importance. With these thoughts in mind, using the Bible is our guide, let us give attention to the place divinely attributed to baptism in the scheme of redemption.

Baptism Stands Between:

1. The Sinner and Remission of Sins. To those who were accused of having *"taken by wicked hands"* and crucifying the Son of God, Peter commanded them, saying, *"Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ **for the remission of sins**"* (Acts 2:38. Inasmuch as sin separates man from God (Isa. 59:1,2), and inasmuch as *"the wages of sin is death"* (Rom. 6:23), it is most imperative that a sinner be forgiven of his sins, and the plan whereby this is accomplished includes

baptism.

2. The Sinner and the Death of Jesus Christ. To the saints at Rome the apostle Paul asked, “do you not know that as many of us as were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death” (Rom. 6:3)? Yes, they were “baptized into His death,” meaning that in baptism they received the benefits of His death. However, it was in His death that Jesus’ blood was shed (John 19:34), and we “*have redemption through His blood*” (Eph. 1:7). Also it is stated in Romans 5:10 that “we were reconciled to God through the **death of His Son...**” So we ask the question, **if** we are “baptized into His death,” and **if** it is in His death that we obtain redemption and reconciliation, **then** what does this imply as to the importance of the process (baptism) wherein we contact Christ’s death?

3. The Sinner and Entering into Jesus Christ. “For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ” (Gal. 3:27). In order to be “**in Christ**” one has to **enter** “into Christ,” and the means by which this is accomplished is through baptism. But **why** is it important to be “in Christ?” Because “**in Christ**” are “all spiritual blessings” (Eph. 1:3), “**in Christ**” is “redemption” (Eph. 1:7), “**in Christ**” is “forgiveness of sins” (Col. 1:14), and “**in Christ**” is “salvation” (2 Tim. 2:10). **If all** of these benefits are enjoyed “in Christ,” **then none** of these benefits are enjoyed out of Christ!

4. The Sinner and the Body of Christ. “For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body — whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves of free — and have all been made to drink into one Spirit” (I Cor. 12:13). Yes, “by one Spirit” (i.e. by, or according to the instructions of the “one Spirit”) we are “baptized into one body,” However, the Lord’s “church...is His body” (Eph. 1:22,23), and in the “one body” both Jews and Gentiles are reconciled unto God (Eph. 2:16). It is interesting to note that the same act of obedience (baptism) whereby one enters “into Christ” is that which grants a person entrance into the “one body.” However, **if** reconciliation is in the “one body,” or church (Eph. 2:16), and **if** the one body or church, was purchased with the blood of Christ (Acts 20:28), **then** what, we ask, is the spiritual state and fate of the person who has not been “baptized into” the one body?

5. The Sinner and Newness of Life. “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” (Rom. 6:4). In actuality, in Rom. 6:3-5 the apostle, by inspiration, set forth a comparison and showed the likeness between what happened to Jesus Christ and what happens when one becomes a Christian. Jesus was put to death on the cross; He was buried, and He rose again in fulness of life. By the same token, the sinner who is “**dead in trespasses and sins**” (Eph. 2:1) is buried in the watery grave of baptism, and from which he is raised to walk in “newness of life.” Baptism is the point when one becomes spiritually alive. And **if** one must be spiritually alive to go to heaven, **then** he must be baptized!

6. The Sinner and Salvation. It was Jesus Who said “He who believes and is baptized shall be saved...” (Mark 16:16). Based on this verse, we ask “who is the “he” that “shall be saved?” Jesus said “he **who believes and is baptized shall be saved.**” However, strangely enough, many modern denominational preachers say “baptism does

not save and has nothing to do with salvation!” This, they affirm, even though Jesus placed baptism between the sinner and salvation, and even though the apostle Peter said “*the like figure whereunto even **baptism** doth also now save us*” (I Peter 3:21)!

Conclusion:

More, much more, could be stated concerning “where baptism stands,” but surely enough already has been said which clearly sets forth the importance of scriptural baptism in the plan of salvation. In view of these Bible truths, why would any person argue against the necessity of baptism, or offer excuses for not being scripturally baptized?

*** -Bobby Witherington

What Baptism Cannot Do:

The book of Acts is an inspired history of the apostles heeding the Lord’s instructions to “*go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature*” (Mark 16:15; Luke 24:47; Acts 1:8). Multitudes were converted as a result of their preaching and in the book of Acts we read of numerous cases of conversion in which the Holy Spirit saw fit to record and preserve for our benefit. Of great significance is the fact that **every** example of conversion wherein is recorded (at least, in part) what sinners did in order to be saved, we read of the people being baptized. There are no exceptions. Yes, baptism must be very important. However, there are some things baptism cannot do. For example, baptism cannot:

1. Change the Heart. Speaking to the apostles and elders at Jerusalem, and with reference to the conversion of the Gentiles, Peter said God “*made no distinction between us (Jews) and them (Gentiles), purifying their **hearts** by faith*” (Acts 15:9).

2. Change the Conduct. This change is brought about by repentance, which is produced by “*godly sorrow*” (2 Cor. 7:10), and which has been defined as “a change of mind with reference to sin that produces a change of conduct.” It is therefore not surprising that John, seeing certain “*Pharisees and Sadducees coming to his baptism*” commanded them to “*bring fruits worthy of repentance*” (Matt. 3:8), and that the apostle Paul said that God “*now commands all men everywhere to repent,*” (Acts 17:30), meaning that the need to repent is as universal as is the existence of sin. And the Bible plainly declares that “*all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God*” (Rom. 3:23).

3. Remove temptation from our path. James, writing to “*brethren,*” said “each one is tempted when he is drawn away by his own desires and enticed” (Jas. 1:14). One’s “*own desires*” (or “*lusts*, KJV) are what causes one to be tempted.

4. Prevent Future Sin. Simon the sorcerer heard Philip preach; he “*believed and...was baptized,*” but later reached the point in which Peter described him as “*poisoned by bitterness and bound by iniquity*” (Acts 8:13,23).

Conclusion:

Baptism **is** necessary to salvation (Mark 16:16). However, baptism (like any other command) has its limitations. Baptism can not take the place of faith and repentance, nor can faith and repentance take the place of baptism. No more than eating can take the place of breathing, even though both eating and beathing are essential to physical life. Let us therefore preach and obey "*the whole counsel of God*" (Acts 20:27), and avoid the mistake of concluding that sinners can be saved by obedience to any one command "alone!"

—Bobby Witherington

"When a man starts throwing dirt, you can be sure he is losing ground."

"Both the fool and the wise man have foolish thoughts, but only the fool speaks his."