**THE BAPTISM MISCONCEPTION**

***Romans 6:1-6***

Sunday School Lesson 4

*Answers to Questions & Misconceptions About Salvation*

08/11/2019

**Introduction:** This week, we are going to tackle the challenging misconception that people have about baptism. There are two predominant errant views when it comes to this matter of baptism. The first is the view that salvation is received through baptism. This view is commonly held among people who were baptized as infants or as small children. Since they did not personally make the decision to be baptized, they lack an understanding of what it means. They incorrectly assume that their baptism means that they have a relationship with God and are accepted by Him. This is not a new challenge that we are only being presented with today. It seems that the Ethiopian eunuch was primarily interested in baptism. This is probably because he had heard of many others being baptized, and he assumed that it was what made someone a Christian. Philip had to explain to him that he had to believe first prior to being baptized. The second errant view is the belief that faith and baptism together are what saves a person. This view is generally held by those who are a part of one of the few denominations that teach that baptism is necessary for salvation. These people can be especially hard to speak to about the gospel, because they hold deeply rooted beliefs based on a misinterpretation of Scripture. In both instances, we can show them several Bible verses that help to prove the fallacy of their belief.

1. A PERSON MUST SEE THAT THE DOCTRINE OF SALVATION AND THE DOCTRINE OF BAPTISM ARE IDENTIFIED SEPARATELY IN SCRIPTURE.
2. **We can show them how Paul prioritized preaching the gospel over baptizing (1 Corinthians 1:11-18; Romans 1:16).** When Paul was speaking to the people in the church at Corinth, he had to address the contention that they had regarding baptism. They were arguing over who had baptized them, as if it were a matter of grave importance. In Paul’s response, he told them that he was thankful that he had baptized very few people. Further, he told them that his priority was to preach the gospel. He said that Christ had sent him to preach the gospel, not to baptize. If these two were one and the same, it would not make sense for Paul to separate these two out. Clearly, Paul did not believe that salvation came through baptism. We can further help them understand by showing them what the Gospel message is. Romans 1:16 speaks about the Gospel by describing it as the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth.
3. **We can show them clearly that the Bible separates the doctrine of faith and the doctrine of baptism (Hebrews 6:1-3; Ephesians 2:8-9).** In Hebrews 6, the Bible is encouraging us to grow past some of the most basic doctrines of following Christ. Verse 1 speaks of our faith in Christ independently from the doctrine of baptism that is found in verse 2. Of course, we can show them that Ephesians 2 tells us that our salvation is found only through faith. There is nothing that we can do to be saved apart from putting our faith in Jesus Christ. Consequently, if faith and baptism are separated out in Hebrews 6, we can reasonably understand that these two things cannot both be required in order for us to be saved. On the other hand, this does not diminish the need for a person to be baptized. Hebrews 6 confirms for us that baptism is a key doctrine that we should hold to, and it is one that should be understood as a very basic part of our obedience as a disciple of Jesus Christ. It is something that should be done as soon as possible after a person has made a profession of faith in Christ.
4. A PERSON CAN OBSERVE EXAMPLES IN THE BIBLE THAT ASSURE THEM THAT SALVATION IS NOT OBTAINED THROUGH BAPTISM.
5. **We can show them the most powerful Biblical example to prove the separation of salvation and baptism: the thief on the cross (Luke 23:39-43).** The one example that I have never seen anyone able to reason away is the thief on the cross. For those who believe in faith and baptism together for salvation, they either have to argue that the Lord made an exception or that the thief on the cross was not saved. Neither one of these arguments can withstand the Word of God. We hear stories today of people who have made deathbed professions of faith in Christ. While it is sad that it took them getting to death’s door in order for them to turn to Christ, we can rejoice that the person is able to still be saved. While we, for the sake of the lesson, do recognize that there are times where it is impossible for folks to be baptized, we should also note that it should also be very concerning if a person who professes Christ is not willing to be baptized. Such a resistance should call into question whether they ever truly put their faith in Christ.
6. **We can show them other examples to help them to better understand baptism (Matthew 9:2; Luke 7:50; Acts 8:34-38).** During Jesus’ earthly ministry, there are several people who came to Him in faith, and He sent them away, assuring them that they were saved. In each of these examples, there is no mention of baptism at all. This is not to say that they were not baptized. The Bible tells us that Jesus’ disciples baptized many people, so these believers may have been among those who were baptized. Yet, one would assume that if baptism was necessary for salvation, Jesus would not have sent these people away without even mentioning the need for baptism. Certainly, the Scriptures would have mentioned their baptisms to ensure we knew that that it was an essential element to salvation. The other example here mentioned is the Ethiopian eunuch who was referenced in the introduction. The eunuch was mostly concerned with baptism, but Philip was sure to show him that he first needed to profess his faith in Jesus Christ. At no point during the story, does Philip tell him that both a profession of faith and baptism were needed in order to be saved. The eunuch was the one who was focused on the baptism aspect.
7. A PERSON SHOULD STUDY THE WORD OF GOD TO UNDERSTAND WHAT THE TRUE MOTIVATION AND PURPOSE OF BAPTISM IS.
8. **We can show them that we are baptized to identify with Christ and to symbolize the new life that we have through His resurrection. (Romans 6:1-6; 1 Corinthians 1:13; Galatians 3:27; Colossians 2:12).** Part of helping people see the separation of salvation and baptism is helping them understand what the true meaning and purpose of baptism is. As we know, baptism is a symbolic activity that is done as a way for the believer to identify with Christ. It is also symbolic in showing the new life that we have through Jesus Christ. It shows how we have been cleansed of our sins and clothed with the righteousness of Christ. When we are submerged in the water, we are also publicly stating that we are dying to that old man. It is the first step in our life of obedience to the Lord. Galatians 3 tells us that we put on Christ when we are baptized. As stated before, the fact that baptism is not necessary for baptism does not minimize its importance. The most often analogy used is that of a wedding ring. A wedding ring does not make a person married. One can take the ring off, and it does not change anything at all. However, find a person who does not like to wear a wedding ring, and you have likely found a person who is not as committed to their marriage as they ought to be.
9. **We can show them a practical application from the Word of God that clearly speaks to the meaning of baptism (Acts 19:1-5; Matthew 3:11).** In Acts 19, we find some of John’s disciples who were carrying on with His ministry by proclaiming the name of Christ in the area of Corinth. As Paul meets them, he asks them whether they had received the Holy Spirit. They told him that they had not even heard of the Holy Spirit. He then asked them who had baptized them. They told him that they were baptized unto John’s baptism. During John the Baptist’s ministry, the Bible says that he baptized people unto repentance because of their sins against God. Jesus’ baptism was one that was done in the Holy Spirit and in the name of Christ. Consequently, Paul told them that they should be baptized again in the name of Jesus. This was not done to save them. This was done to ensure that they were properly identifying with Jesus Christ and were working under the work of the Holy Spirit of God.
10. A PERSON NEEDS TO UNDERSTAND THE PROPER CONTEXT OF VERSES THAT MIGHT SEEM TO INDICATE THAT BAPTISM IS A NECESSARY PART OF SALVATION.
11. **We must explain the passages that seem to indicate that believing, repenting, and being baptized are all collectively required for salvation (Mark 16:16; Acts 2:38).** In Mark 16:16, Jesus is giving the Great Commission to His disciples. He tells them to go and preach and teach. He summarizes by stating that He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved. If the statement were to stop there, it might clearly indicate a requirement of both for salvation. However, He finished His statement by stating that He that believeth not shall be damned. The Lord did not include baptism in His statement regarding damnation. We must remember that Jesus was training His disciples to make disciples. It is reasonable to expect that a disciple of Christ would have no problem identifying with Him in baptism. Regarding Acts 2:38, Peter never declared that baptism was necessary for salvation. The people listening asked him what they should do. Naturally, He told them that they needed to repent and be baptized. We would tell the same to someone today if they were to ask.
12. **We must explain the passage that seems to indicate that salvation is through baptism (1 Peter 3:21).** In conclusion, we must explain 1 Peter 3:21, which is probably the most difficult to explain. This isn’t because it is hard to understand. It’s because some have been taught a certain way with this verse, and they are resistant to anything else. Peter says that baptism saves us. Again, by itself, that might seem to indicate that baptism is required. Yet, he clarifies right after this by stating that it is not the physical act of baptism. It is what is represented in that baptism: the answer of a good conscience toward God. What is that answer? It is the answer of faith in Jesus Christ.