

Several years ago, I was told that baptism was necessary but not essential. As I have thought about that statement over the years, I have come to understand that people really wrestle with the concept of baptism in water for the remission of sins. As we discuss baptism with people, we often find those who believe that baptism is a good thing, but it is not essential to our salvation. They would teach that even if one is never baptized, they will still be saved as long as they believe Jesus is the Christ.

Along with the problems people have concerning baptism, there is another issue that people have. For some reason, to claim that you know something to be true is viewed by many to be arrogant on our part. To these people, there is no such thing as absolute truth and no one should claim to have the truth on any particular subject. Most religious people may hold a particular view, but will tell us that this is just their view on the subject. They are accepting of other teachings on the subject. So, if you want to believe baptism is essential to salvation, then that is good. But, if you want to believe baptism is not essential to salvation, then that is good also. They generally do not care what you believe as long as you do not claim to know it as absolute truth.

Recognized by many is that we need to have our sins taken care of and that Jesus came to make that possible. While we would all agree with this, the difference comes in what it takes to have this forgiveness of sins. And, the biggest disagreement is whether baptism is for the remission of sins.

The answer to whether baptism is essential is not found in the reasoning of man. Man has so many views on salvation that it is difficult to keep straight what each person or religion believes. The answer is found in the unchangeable word of God – His Holy Bible. Since God created us (Genesis 1,2) and it is God who sustains us (Acts 17:24-28), then we must listen to him (Matthew 17:5; Romans 1:16; Matthew 7:21). If God said it, then that settles the matter! So, what did God say on the subject of our discussion?

## I Can Know

“The one thing people KNOW absolutely is that you CANNOT KNOW absolutely!” This is really what people are saying when they teach you cannot know anything for sure. Although their view is contradictory (How can you know that you cannot know?), for sake of political correctness or their lack of willingness to offend anyone, they do not want to bind anything upon anyone.

However, a careful study of the Bible teaches us that not only can we know, but we must know God’s word. In 2 Timothy 2:15, we are taught to study to show ourselves approved unto God. How can we show ourselves approved unto God unless we know what God desires for us to do? Matthew 7:21 teaches us that the one who comes to God (or, will be saved) is the one who does the will of the Father. How can one do the will of the Father if one cannot know what his will is?

The word “know” appears in 275 verses in the King James Version of the Bible. From this, it is obvious that God wanted us to know that we can know. While these verses talk about various levels of knowledge, there are several things that the Bible teaches us we can know: False teachers (Matthew 7:16,20); the truth (John 8:32); Jesus (John 10:4,14); Jesus is Lord and Christ (Acts 2:36); whether we are serving sin or God (Romans 6:16); all things work together for good to those who love God (Romans 8:28); we are the temple of God (1 Corinthians 3:16; 6:19); unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God (1 Corinthians 6:9); our labor is not in vain in the Lord (1 Corinthians 15:58); and, Christ will come to judge the world (1 Thessalonians 5:2).

For our study, the Bible also teaches us that we can know that baptism is essential to our salvation (Romans 6:3,4). We are baptized into his death and rise to walk in newness of life. Later, we find that the old man of sin has been crucified (Romans 6:6).

## Baptism

While so many disagree with baptism being essential to our salvation, the Bible clearly teaches

about baptism. Jesus began the discussion in the Great Commission of Matthew 28:19 and Mark 16:16. In the first, we are taught to baptize in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. That is, we are to baptize by the authority of Christ. In the second passage, Jesus connects baptism to belief with the result being salvation. To Jesus, baptism was not an option. It is that which is commanded for our salvation (Acts 10:47,48).

In the book of Acts, Peter taught those on the day of Pentecost to be baptized (Acts 2:38), and in every conversion account in Acts baptism is mentioned. From this, we can understand that baptism is not an option to God.

To take baptism out of the picture is to do a great disservice to the word of God. God put it in such a prominent position, yet man wants to remove it from God’s plan. Whom should we believe – man or God? Peter helped us to understand this in Acts 4:19,20 – “... *Whether it be right in the sight of God to hearken unto you more than unto God, judge ye. For we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard.*”

## For The Remission Of Sins

Jesus came to seek and save the lost (Luke 19:10). God sent his son to die on the cross that we might have salvation (John 3:16). It is God’s desire that all men come to repentance and do not die in their sins (Acts 17:30). From the very beginning (Genesis 3:15), God prophesied of the Messiah who would come to save the world from their sins. And, Ephesians 3:10,11 helps us to understand that this was always in the mind of God.

In the Bible, we find that God has provided the means of our salvation. His word is our guide to salvation (Psalms 119:105; Romans 1:16). Jesus was the once for all sacrifice for the sins of mankind (Hebrews 10:10). In his church is the place of salvation (Ephesians 5:23). Thus, God has given us all we need to be saved!

So, where does baptism fit into this scheme of God? Is baptism just a mere testimony of our salvation or is it something that must be done in order to have this

salvation which God so wants man to have? To most religious people, baptism is an outward expression of the inward man. It is something we do because we have already been saved. Is this what the Bible teaches us about baptism?

We want to take some time to notice what the Bible says about salvation and analyze these passages. In doing so, we want to see what God says about the essentiality of baptism.

When the people on the Day of Pentecost in Acts 2 asked what they needed to do to be saved (verse 37), Peter's answer was that they should repent and be baptized "*for the remission of sins*" (verse 38). There was no question in Peter's mind because this is what Jesus taught in Mark 16:16. The people on the Day of Pentecost who understood the teaching did not question the answer and they submitted to being baptized into Christ (verse 41).

In 1 Peter 3:21, when using the example of those saved in the Ark, the inspired writer makes this statement, "*the like figure whereunto even baptism doth also now save us*". In this, we are being taught the essential nature of baptism. Baptism is not something we do because we are saved, but is something we do because we want to be saved.

Acts 22:16 is about as clear as one can get on what baptism does. Paul was told to arise and be baptized "*and wash away thy sins*". What does baptism do? It washes away sins. It is for the remission of sins!

Since the church is the place where God adds the saved (Acts 20:7), and is the body Jesus saves (Ephesians 5:23), then how do we get into the church? Again, baptism is important here as the Bible teaches us that we are baptized into one body, the church (1 Corinthians 12:13; Ephesians 1:22,23).

To leave baptism out of God's plan for salvation is to be unfaithful to the word of God and is to mislead people. While the Bible teaches us that we need to believe to be saved (Mark 16:16; Romans 10:17; Acts 16:30), it also teaches us that we need to repent (Luke 13:3,5) and confess Christ (Romans 10:9,10) in order to be saved. And most religious people would agree with this – believe, repent and confess. In fact, I have been told that if one believes

they will change their lives as a result of this belief. So to some extent, the teaching of salvation will end at some point in this line – believe, repent, confess. For some, salvation comes after belief; for others, salvation comes after all three.

However, is this where the Bible ends in its teaching on salvation? Have we taught enough when we stop at belief or repentance or confession? Or, is there more that we need to teach? Is there something we have left out of the formula? I believe we can safely say that we must also include what God taught concerning baptism, since it is God who taught us that our salvation comes AFTER we are baptized (see the verses above).

I realize that this teaching is different than most religious groups, but as clearly as one can know that we need to believe, repent, and confess, we can know that we must be baptized for the remission of sins. This complete knowledge of God's plan is what will give us the opportunity to be saved and if we obey the complete plan of God we can know that we are saved (1 John 5:13).

To leave baptism out of God's plan is like trying to follow the directions to a particular place but the directions are missing one of the sections of information necessary to find the place. You can travel the road and follow what directions you have, but you will never arrive at your destination until you get the rest of the information. If a person has followed most of the information on what to do to be saved, but has not been baptized into Christ for the remission of sins, they are lost!

I know that baptism is for the remission of sins because the God who cannot lie (Hebrews 6:18) has told me so! Obedience to this knowledge will set us free from sin (Romans 8:1,2).

This tract is condensed from a lesson presented at the  
30th Annual Mid-West Lectures,  
"I Know"

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# I Know...

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by  
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International Bible Studies  
Tract Series