“Corresponding to that, baptism now saves you—not the removal of of dirt from the flesh, but an appeal of a good conscience to God—through the resurrection of Jesus Christ” (1 Peter 3:21 LSB). The scripture plainly states that ‘baptism saves us’. However, the scripture is contradicted by some well-known groups , preachers, and individuals, who claim that ‘baptism doesn’t save us’. According to the scriptures, how does baptism save us?

WHAT DOES BAPTISM CORRESPOND TO?

Let’s see what the correspondence is by looking at the previous verse;

“When the patience of God was waiting in the days of Noah, during the construction of the ark, in which a few, that is, eight persons, were brought safely through the water” (1 Peter 3:20 LSB).

The NKJV is a little more literal based on the Greek text.

“There is also an antitype which now saves us — baptism” (1 Peter 3:21 NKJV). Christian baptism is an antitype of the type. What is the type, as explained in 1 Peter 3:20-21?

“”lit. ‘ . . . that is the antitype to, the reality prefigured by type . . . In this the type is the passing through the water by means of the ark”)NJB note on 1 Peter 3:21-22).

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The following Bible commentary is even more graphic in its explanation:

"'the antitype thereof', that is, the thing which corresponds not with the water, but with the ark. 'even baptism doth now save us' — Or, is the instrument of our safety and preservation, from the guilt, power and consequences, of sin, which overwhelms the world as a flood" (Benson Commentary).

Christian baptism is an antitype of the ark that saved eight people during the global flood of Noah's day.

HOW DOES BAPTISM SAVE US?

Baptism marks a person's entry into the Christian life of **"walking in the truth" (3 John 1:3).**

"You were buried with him in baptism, and in that baptism you were also raised to life with him through your faith in the active power of God, who raised hum from the dead" (Colossians 2:12 REB). *"The imagery of burial underscores the finality of the believer's separation from the old life of sin. Historically, baptism was a significant rite in the early Christian community, often performed in natural bodies of water or specially constructed baptisteries, symbolizing purification and initiation into the faith . . . highlights the believer's participation in Christ's resurrection. Just as Christ was raised from the dead, believers are spiritually resurrected to a new life. This transformation is not merely symbolic but is a real change in the believer's spiritual state, as emphasized in Ephesians 2:6." (Bible Hub Study Bible).*

WHY THE SCRIPTURAL COMMANDS TO BAPTIZE?

Matthew 28:19 – "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, and teaching

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them to observe all I have commanded you" (NAB). Why would Jesus command the baptism of believers, if it wasn't vital?

Acts 2:37-38 – "They were cut to the heart, and they asked Peter and the other apostles, 'What are we to of, my brothers?' Peter said to them, 'Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ, for the forgiveness of sins, and you will received the gift of the holy Spirit'" (NAB). When Jesus' apostles were asked, "What should we do?", they were told that all of them needed to be baptized. If baptism doesn't save us, why would Christ's apostles direct believers to be baptized? One reason is that baptism is required for our sins to be forgiven.

DOESN'T THE THIEF ON THE CROSS PROVE BAPTISM ISN'T NECESSARY?

One of the two thieves excused along with Jesus at last recognized the fact that, **"'we are receiving what we deserve for what we have done, but this man has done nothing wrong.' And he was saying, 'Jesus remember me when you come in Your kingdom.' And He said to him, ' . . . you shall be with Me in paradise'" (Luke 23:41-43 LSB).** Adherents of the "baptism doesn't save us" doctrine assert that Jesus statement here proves their case. However, there are some problems with that viewpoint.

One is that this repentant thief died before Jesus was resurrected and Christian baptism was implemented with the inauguration of the New Covenant in Acts 2 when Christ poured out the holy Spirit, so such baptism in the name of Jesus Christ for forgiveness of sins wan't even implemented yet. "In the forbearance of God, He passed over the sins previously committed" **(Romans 3:25 LSB).**

Although "John's baptism was a symbol of repentance" (Acts 19:6 NIV), was available prior to Jesus' death, it was not the baptism that saves us, as evidenced by Paul's encounter with believers in Ephesus (Acts 19:1-6).

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Another factor is the scriptures are clear that, “the judge of all the world” will “do what is just” (Genesis 18:25 NAB), in his judgment of every person who has ever lived. He knows what people would have done if they had the opportunity.

Jesus’ promise to the thief on the cross doesn’t abrogate the scriptural truth that ‘baptism saves us’.

WHY WAS JESUS BAPTIZED?

“Then Jesus . . . came to be baptized by John. But John tried to deter him . . . Jesus replied, ‘Let be so now; it is proper for us to do this to fulfill all righteousness'” (Matthew 3::13-15 NIV). Since “John’s baptism was a symbol of repentance” (Acts 19:6 NIV), and Jesus had “committed no sin” (1 Peter 2:22 NIV), why did he get baptized? *“To fulfill all righteousness is to submit to the plan of God for the salvation of the human race. This involves Jesus’ identification with sinners, hence the propriety of his accepting John’s baptism” (NAB note),* “leaving you a model” (1 Peter 2:21 Darby). Since all humans are sinners, we need to follow the “model” Jesus set for us!

WHY DO BELIEVERS NEED TO BE BAPTIZED AS CHRISTIANS?

“When they believed Philip proclaiming the good news about the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, they were being baptized, both men and women” (Acts 8:12 LSB). Was their belief sufficient? – No! They were baptized!

“The God of our forefathers has chosen you to know his will and to see the Righteous One and to hear words from his mouth. You will be his witness to all people of what you have seen and heard” (Acts 22:14-15 NIV). Since what Saul going to do as a Christian was already decided by God, why would Saul need to be baptized?

“And now what are you waiting for? Get up, be baptized and wash your sins away,

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calling on his name" (Acts 22:16 NIV). Why was Saul told to get baptized? To 'have his sins washed away.'

What did Saul do with this direction? **"He got up and was baptized" (Acts 9:18 NIV).**

"They could hear them speaking in tongues and glorifying God. Then Peter responded, 'Can anyone forbid water for baptizing these people, who have received the holy Spirit even as we have.' He ordered them to be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ" (Acts 10:46-48 NAB). Was their receiving "the gift of the holy Spirit" (Acts 10:45 NAB) sufficient for their salvation? – No, they needed to be baptized, and they were.

"A woman named Lydia . . . was a worshipper of God. The Lord opened her heart to respond to Paul's message . . . she and all her household were baptized" (Acts 16:14-15 NIV). 'Lydia, a worshipper of God', had her heart opened by the Lord to respond to the Christian message. What further action did she and her household need to take? – They got baptized.

"'Sirs, what must I do to be saved?' And they said, 'Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved, you and your house.' And they spoke the word of the Lord to him together with all who were in his household . . . and immediately he was baptized, he and all his household" (Acts 16:30-33 LSB). They were told to 'believe in the Lord Jesus' to be saved. But, is that all there was to it? – No! They were baptized immediately!

"When they heard this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus" (Acts 19:5 LSB; NAB). Once the believers in Ephesus understood that they needed to be "baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus", they took appropriate action, and were baptized as Christians.

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“All of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ” (Galatians 3:27 NAB). One implication of this is that in order to clothe ourself with Christ, one must be baptized.

DOES BAPTISM GUARANTEE SALVATION?

No, it doesn’t, according to the scriptures.

“The one who endures to the end, he will be saved” (Matthew 24:13 LSB). We must endure in our Christian walk with God to be finally saved, because we are sternly warned, **“it is impossible in the case of those who have once been enlightened . . . and shared in the holy Spirit . . . and then have fallen away, to bring them to repentance again” (Hebrews 6:4-6 NAB).**

CONCLUSION

Does baptism save us? Yes, baptism does save us, according to the scriptures, if we live up to it.

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