



A Thought about Baptism (the Thief on the Cross)

Tim Canup

It has often been suggested that the thief on the cross is an example of one who was saved without being baptized. In Luke 23:43, Jesus said to one of the thieves on the cross with

Him, “Verily I say unto thee, Today shalt thou be with me in paradise.” It is true this thief was saved; however, let us honestly consider the account of the thief and see if truly it is an “example” of salvation without baptism for us.

Although the thief was assured of being in Paradise with Christ, we cannot assume that he was not baptized; the Bible simply does not mention anywhere whether or not he was. John the Immerser preached a baptism of repentance (compare Mark 1:4). He could very well have been among the multitudes that came to John at the Jordan River to be baptized in Matthew 3:5-6, we simply do not know.

There is a more important aspect to consider. When the thief died on the cross, he had lived and died under the Old Testament law. Jesus had not yet entered into Heaven (the Holiest of All) and sprinkled His blood on the mercy seat (Hebrews 9:6-15). If the thief was saved without baptism, then consider he was also saved without the blood of Christ. You see, the New Covenant (or Testament) had not yet been put into force. In fact, Jesus had not even met with His apostles to command them to baptize people for the remission of their sins (Mark 16:16, Matthew 28:19-20). John had been preaching the baptism of repentance (Matthew 3:2) and after the first day of Pentecost after the resurrection of Jesus the Christ (Acts 2), John’s baptism was no longer valid or in effect (compare Acts 19:1-7). The thief simply was not subject to baptism for the remission of his sins as taught in the New Covenant.

Many have attempted to use Romans 10:9 to support their claim that baptism is not necessary to salvation. Paul wrote, “That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus,

and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved.”

Dear friends, not only was this thief saved without the great commission baptism of Mark 16:16, but he also was saved without faith. Notice Paul said that if a person “...believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved.” Jesus was still hanging on the cross when He promised this thief Paradise; He had not even yet been raised.

Jesus commanded all people everywhere who have faith in Him as the Christ (John 8:24) and by that faith to repent of their sins (Luke 13:3), confess Him as the Christ Matthew 10:32-33) and to be baptized in order to be saved (Mark 16:16). Baptism is a command and Jesus did not give any non-essential commands. If you would like to know more about what to do to become a Christian, or if you would like to enroll in a correspondence course by mail (no cost or obligation to you), please return this coupon to: Back To The Bible; 221 Barnett Street; West Jefferson, NC 28694 or visit us online at: www.wjchurchofchrist.org.

Yes, I am interested in a correspondence course by mail.
 Yes, I am interested in an in-home Bible study.
 Yes, I would like a free copy of the *Searching For Truth* DVD

Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Phone: (_____) _____ - _____