

THE PLACE OF WATER BAPTISM

Water baptism is an initial act of obedience that testifies of saving faith.

Christ said to go and “make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son of the Holy Spirit” (Mt. 28:19). We are not saved by following, but a true faith follows. One of the first evidences that a person has a sincere faith is that they get baptized as Christ commanded.

This is one of the first evidences that they have a faith that **FOLLOWS**. The evidence that one has made a true disciple is shown in baptism. Baptism does not save, but it is evidence that one has been saved.

The converted thief on the cross once and forever proves that no works or rituals are involved in saving faith. He simply looked to Jesus in faith and Jesus said to him, “Assuredly, I say to you, today you will be with Me in Paradise” (Lk. 23:43). God shows no partiality (Acts 10:34). There is total consistency with God. No one is ever saved by any human works, including the work of baptism.

However, true faith does manifest itself in works. The root is faith, the fruit is works. And one of the first evidences of true saving faith is the fruit of obedience as seen in the command to be baptized. After the start of the Church Age (Acts 2), there is no record of any unbaptized believers who came to saving faith. Routinely, they came to faith and then were baptized. There is no exception to this pattern.

“Though an important Christian ordinance, baptism is not a part of the Gospel. To include it in the Gospel is to add a work to the grace of God. ... Unquestionably baptism was a clear proof in New Testament times of conversion... To refuse to be baptized raised a legitimate doubt as to the sincerity of the profession.” – **Charles Ryrie** in Basic Theology, p. 336

When John the Baptist saw “many of the Pharisees and Sadducees coming to his baptism” he told them to “bear fruits worthy of repentance” (Matt. 3:7-8). They were all about the ritual but not about what the ritual of John the Baptist’s baptism signified – namely, **REPENTANCE**. For this reason, Luke 7:30 says, “But the Pharisees and lawyers rejected the will of God for themselves, not having been baptized by him.” In rejecting John’s baptism, they were in effect rejecting the message of repentance that his baptism signified, and in so doing, they were rejecting the will of God. God’s will was for the people to come to repentance and to identify with that reality in the act of baptism. This they refused to do.

On the Day of Pentecost when Peter preached the gospel, “those who gladly received his word were baptized” (Acts 2:41). In Acts 8:12 when they believed, “both men and women were baptized.” In Acts 10 as Peter told the Gentiles “whoever believes in Him will receive remission of sins” suddenly the Spirit fell on these people and they began to speak with tongues which clearly showed they had believed (Acts 11:17). Peter then “commanded them to be baptized in the name of the Lord.” (Acts 10:48).

After the Lord opened Lydia’s heart to the truth she was baptized and then said, “If you have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come to my house and stay.” (Acts 16:14-15).

The only way they could judge her to be faithful was in her faithfulness in being baptized. After saving faith, it is the initial act of obedience that shows a person to be faithful.

The Philippians jailer asked, “Sirs, what must I do to be saved” and the answer came back, “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved” (Acts 16:30-31). The text then goes on to say, “they spoke the word of the Lord to him and to all who were in his house” (Acts 16:32). Then “immediately he and all his family were baptized...having believed in God with all his household” (Acts 16:33-34).

Consistently in the New Testament, the pattern is that water baptism is an initial act of obedience that testifies of saving faith.

Water baptism doesn’t save, but the saved get baptized!