

- ***Read I Peter 3:13ff*** In a letter that focuses much on Christians understanding their identity, Paul inserts this section dealing with sufferings and how the Christian ought to respond. It is in this context that Peter seemingly takes a small detour to drop some all important knowledge on these recipients on the topic of baptism in **v.21**. The connection is the great flood and Noah, which we discussed this past Sunday evening. I told you that we would expound upon this passage, and we will do so this morning.
- As stated, baptism doesn't exactly fit into the flow of thought in this text, but that does not in way water down this all important teaching. The truth of the matter on this subject is that many in the world of Christianity do give every effort to minimize the necessity of baptism within the realm of salvation. The vast majority of those within Christianity hold to the idea baptism, while a command of God, is not something that is necessary for anything concerning salvation. **From the website gotquestions.org "The belief that baptism is necessary for salvation is also known as "baptismal regeneration."** **It is our contention that baptism is an important step of obedience for a Christian, but we adamantly reject baptism as being required for salvation. We strongly believe that each and every Christian should be water baptized by immersion."** Another website that deals with religious questions is carm.org. On their website they begin to answer the question about the necessity of baptism by saying this..."**One of the most nagging questions in Christianity is whether or not baptism is necessary for salvation. The answer is a simple, "No, water baptism is not necessary for salvation." But you might ask, "If the answer is no, then why are there verses that say things like ' . . . baptism that now saves you . . . ' (1 Pet. 3:21) and ' . . . Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins . . . ' (Acts 2:38)?"** These are good questions, and they deserve a good answer, so we will look at these verses later. **But for now, the reason baptism is not necessary for salvation is that we are justified by faith (Rom. 5:1, Eph. 2:8) and not by faith and a ceremony (Rom. 4:1-11). You see, a religious ceremony is a set of activities or forms performed by someone. In the Bible, circumcision was a ceremony where one person performed a religious rite on another person. Likewise, baptism is also a ceremony where one person performs a religious rite on another person, but, we are saved by faith alone, and anything else we do, including ceremonies, will not help.**
- These are just 2 of thousands and thousands of writings and teachings on the internet that teach against the Biblical view of baptism. You might scratch your head and wonder how someone could possibly misunderstand "baptism now saves you", but the sad reality is that many must explain away the Biblical teaching in order to stay consistent in their faith only salvation theology. This morning, I would like for us to divide **I Peter 3:21** into 3 sections and show how this verse means exactly what it means when we harmonize it with other verses on the same subject. Let's show from the Bible that baptism isn't just a bath, but that it is, in reality a holy command, from God that ought to be obeyed for the soul's salvation.

I. Baptism is a saving act of faith.

- A. Peter makes the point concerning baptism by drawing comparisons between Noah, his ark, and the flood and the sinner and baptism.
 1. "Corresponding to that". This phrase sets up how it is that baptism relates to Noah's situation, and that is the type/antitype construction. The former is the shadow and the substance is the latter. The Bible is full of OT subjects that fit the type/antitype pattern with something in the NT.
 2. In its simplest terms, there are numerous parallels that can be drawn between the great flood of Noah's day and what baptism does for the individual under the covenant of Christ. Mark Dunagan compiled a list of 4 in his commentary on I Peter.
 - a) The waters of the flood delivered Noah from a corrupt society to a new world---water baptism brings one into a state of newness of life **(Romans 6:3-5)**
 - b) Water delivered Noah from a condemned world---baptism delivers us from condemnation **(Mark 16:16)**.
 - c) The flood separated the saved from the lost---baptism is the line between lost and saved.
 - d) The flood wasn't the Savior, but the instrument or means of deliverance---water baptism isn't the Savior, rather it is the last condition prior to salvation.
 3. The parallels and similarities between the two are obvious, thus why Peter wanted the reader to grasp the connections between the two.

- B. But not only that, I would also suggest that Noah had to have the ark to survive and that parallels to the fact that we must submit to baptism if we want to be saved.
1. We discussed this briefly last Sunday night, but may I ask again...what would have happened if Noah had not either built the Ark or if he had not gotten on a completed ark? Would he have been saved? I think the obvious answer would be no.
 2. God had graciously warned Noah about the impending doom and gave him instructions as to how he could avoid dying in the flood.
 3. Noah had two choices at this point. He could either obey God, build the ark to His specifications, or he could disobey God and either not build at all or build contrary to how God had given commands.
 4. His obedience would lead to his salvation. If he obeyed God and built the ark and got on it then he would be saved, but if he failed to do so...he would die just like the rest of the world.
 5. Peter makes it abundantly clear: **Baptism. Now. Saves. You.** The flood and Noah's obedience saved him from the wickedness of the world and death, and baptism washes away our sins and saves us from God's wrath in the last day.

II. Baptism gives the subject a clear conscience.

- A. Many would argue that baptism is simply a tradition that people do as a command from God.
1. You might remember from the internet comments on baptism that one page said this, "**But for now, the reason baptism is not necessary for salvation is that we are justified by faith (Rom. 5:1, Eph. 2:8) and not by faith and a ceremony (Rom. 4:1-11). You see, a religious ceremony is a set of activities or forms performed by someone. In the Bible, circumcision was a ceremony where one person performed a religious rite on another person. Likewise, baptism is also a ceremony where one person performs a religious rite on another person, but, we are saved by faith alone, and anything else we do, including ceremonies, will not help.**"
 2. Some would argue that baptism, because it is a "tradition or ceremony", cannot be something that is necessary for salvation. You'll notice that there is an emphasis on be justified by faith in this statement.
 3. Justification by faith truly is a Biblical concept (**Romans 5:1**), but those within denominational Christianity believe this to simply be an accepting of Jesus and commitment to His will. The overwhelming belief is that one is forgiven of sins upon ones belief in Jesus, and then baptism takes place as a showing of what has already happened within ones life. Another quote from gotquestions.org, "**Very simply, baptism is an outward testimony of the inward change in a believer's life. Christian baptism is an act of obedience to the Lord after salvation; although baptism is closely associated with salvation, it is not a requirement to be saved.**"
- B. This just simply isn't the truth. An individual submits to baptism in faith and at that point they call out to God for a clear conscience and a new heart and a new life.
1. There is not a single passage of Scripture that states that baptism is simply and outward testimony of an inward change. **Not a single one.**
 2. However, there are plenty of texts that teach us what happens when one is baptized. Obviously, our text here in **I Peter 3:21** is extremely clear, but i would also suggest that a great passage to go along with this one is **Acts 22:16**.
 3. Luke, again making it crystal clear, points out to us that Ananias encourages Paul to act on his faith, get up, and be baptized. He states that in doing so he would "wash away your sins", not simply take a bath. It seems very clear that this washing away of sins would be taking place at the point of baptism. At no point in this passage do we see where Ananias or Luke explains this baptism as a sign of something that has already taken place.
 4. Additionally, Luke also records that Ananias states that Paul should do so by calling on His name. I would suggest that this language harmonizes well with **I Peter 3:21** where Peter writes that in baptism there is an appeal to God for a clear conscience.
 5. The individual who submits to baptism in faith is in essence saying to God, "Lord I recognize my sin. I recognize my need for You and Your saving Grace. I believe in Jesus and I submit to baptism so that you might wash away my sins and give me a clear conscience." This lines up perfectly with what we see here in **Acts 22:16** and **I Peter 3:21**, but it also harmonizes with **Colossians 2:12** in the fact that we see the working of God to remove sins and to give clear consciences through faithful obedience to God's commands.

III. Baptism is a resurrection from the dead.

- A. The true power of baptism is found in the resurrection of Jesus Christ.
1. Peter finishes up this short interlude on baptism by affirming the fact that baptism has its power founded in the resurrection of Jesus Christ.
 2. The Apostle Paul makes a similar point in **I Corinthians 15** concerning the importance of the resurrection of Jesus. He points out that if Christ has not been raised then we are a people most pitiful and our faith (including our baptism) would be worthless. **(I Cor. 15:12-17)**
 3. Paul's point is this...if Christ was not truly raised from the dead then God doesn't have the power that He claims to have. If this is true, if God didn't truly raise Jesus from the dead then we shouldn't put our hope and trust in God to raise us from the dead in the last day or to spiritually raise us from the dead in baptism for baptism is a raising from the dead.
 4. But that fact is that Jesus did raise from the dead according to hundreds of witnesses and therefore we can have hope in our resurrection from the dead in this life and the next. **(I Cor. 15:3-9)**
- B. When we are baptized in faith, our old body of sin is buried and a brand new person is raised to a brand new life in Christ Jesus.
1. A great text to go to consider what baptism truly means is **Romans 6**. No greater text is there to show that it is at baptism that one dies with Christ than this chapter in **Romans**.
 2. Paul begins the chapter by establishing that those who have been baptized in faith are now dead to sin, and they ought not continue to sin as they did before. **(6:1,2)**
 3. He then goes on to make the point that those who have been baptized into Christ have been baptized into His death. **(6:3)** So those who have been baptized have died as Jesus died.
 4. But just like Jesus who didn't stay in the grave, we don't stay in the grave, but we are raised from the water and we walk in newness of life. **(6:4-11)**
 5. Simply taking what Paul says here in **Romans 6** and harmonizing it with **I Peter 3:21, Acts 22:16, Colossians 2:12, etc** should clearly show us that baptism is so much more than a bath, ritual or ceremony. Instead, the Bible teaches us that baptism is a saving act of faith, it gives us a good conscience through the forgiving of our sins, and it is given this power through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.

As with just about everything, there are some who would distort the Biblical truth concerning the role of baptism in Christianity. I'll be honest, I think it takes a lot more work and effort to change what the Bible says and make it mean something different than it does to simply accept the truth of the matter in God's Word. May we always respect the context and consider other texts when we strive to come to understand God's will on a particular subject. May God help us to be good stewards of His truth and teach others accurately concerning the salvation that is found in Jesus Christ.