

Why Water Baptism is not required for Salvation

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To teach that water baptism is necessary for Christian salvation is a major doctrinal error, for it adulterates the Gospel of Jesus Christ. The Lord pronounces judgment upon those who change the gospel (Galatians 1:6-9). Baptism is a human work albeit one pleasing to the Lord, and as such it cannot save. Read John 3:16, 5:24, Romans 4:1-8, and Ephesians 2:8-10, and you will see that baptism is not mentioned as a condition of salvation in the clearest texts speaking to salvation. One finds peace with God through believing upon Jesus Christ and trusting Him and His finished work for his or her eternal destiny. Baptism does and should follow salvation, as an external profession of an internal reality that has already taken place. Take a look at Acts 2:37-38. These people were saved in verse 37 but were told to repent--which is a continual process for the believer which begins at the point of salvation, and to be baptized in verse 38. The word translated "for" in verse 38 is conjunctive, and most scholars agree it should be translated "with a view to". In any case, the confusion is cleared up in Acts 10:34-43 and 16:30-33 in which belief clearly precedes baptism. Acts 22:16 standing alone may lead someone to believe that baptism is necessary for salvation, but the context of Acts 22:6-16 indicates that Saul's conversion had already taken place internally. Another verse that false teachers use to teach that water baptism is necessary for salvation is Mark 16:16. Read it carefully. The idea here is that obedient believers get baptized. However, in the second part of the verse, condemnation is not for failing to be baptized but rather for failing to believe. This interpretation is right in line with Jesus' words in John 3:18. Some false teachers appeal to 1 Peter 3:21, but conveniently ignore the context. Reading 1 Peter 3:20-21, we find that water is used symbolically. Just as floodwaters themselves did not save Noah, neither do baptismal waters themselves save New Testament believers. Finally, consider the criminal on the cross in Luke 23:43, who found himself in the presence of Christ that night even though he was not baptized. "The just shall live by faith" (Habakkuk 2:4; Romans 1:17) is the Bible truth that salvation is by faith alone in both the Old Testament and New Testament dispensations. Surely water baptism is not required for salvation.