

WATER BAPTISM SAVES YOU FROM SIN AND HELL? WHAT DOES THE BIBLE SAY?

THE ULTIMATE PROOF TEXT?

Not all agree with the Catholic doctrine that you are destined to live without God and without loving him properly unless you are baptised in water and Jesus supposedly set this up.

John 3:5. When having a chat with Nicodemus, Jesus claimed that only a person born of water and the Holy Spirit could go to Heaven, “Unless a man is born of water and [even] the Spirit, he cannot [ever] enter the Kingdom of God”. The water need not be real water - but water as in a symbol of washing from sin for the word Spirit may be really wind in the original Greek. The “Spirit” translation is just a guess (page 135, All One Body – Why Don’t We Agree? Or read the notes in the New American Bible for this passage. In its dictionary – look up SPIRIT – it says that the word pneuma means spirit and several other things.) Water and wind are emblems of the Holy Spirit so Jesus may be saying that we should be born of the Spirit and not of literal water plus the Spirit.

In the First Epistle of John we read that Jesus Christ came by water and blood. This is an assertion of his human nature intended to oppose those who thought his humanity was an illusion. The water is commonly thought to mean the water of baptism in the Jordan when Jesus was baptised. But John never says that Jesus was baptised. The blood is thought to be the blood of the cross. The water and the blood probably refer to the water and blood of childbirth. Jesus being baptised in water would not prove that he was a man and not an illusion. We read that he came by the blood. That does not read like it refers to the blood shed on the cross.

Thus we see that John used water as an emblem for birth.

NOT ESSENTIAL FOR SALVATION

The Anglo-Catholics, Roman Catholics, Orthodox Catholics, Christadelphians, Mormons, Church of Christ and Jehovah’s Witnesses all blackmail people into the baptismal waters. Their tenet is that baptism is necessary for salvation. Baptism makes a person a member which is why they so eager to threaten.

Some of these groups regard baptism as a non-sacramental rite that God requires as a qualification for entry into Heaven or Paradise. So, one does not have to suppose that baptism has the power to magically change people to believe that it is the only way to God. Their doctrine of the necessity of baptism comes from Mark 16:16, John 3:5 and 1 Peter 3:21. The other verses on baptism speak of its benefits but that does not mean it is necessary for eternal happiness.

Mark 16:16. Here Jesus says that whoever believes “and is baptized” will be saved but whoever does not believe will not. This no more proves that baptism is essential for salvation than, “Get on your bicycle and put on your helmet and you will be in town by six o clock”, proves that wearing a helmet is necessary for getting to town. If the saved person will go to be baptised if they are really saved then that could be the reason why Jesus said those who believe and are baptised will be saved.

It is probable that Mark’s gospel does not intend to mean that Jesus asked for people to accept water baptism at all. The only baptism Jesus commanded in this gospel was baptism with the Holy Ghost. If the author really meant to say that baptism was required for salvation then he may have meant this baptism which John the Baptist said was different from baptism in water (Mark 1:8).

When Jesus added that whoever does not believe will not be saved instead of saying that whoever does not believe and is not baptised it shows that belief was his chief thought. Baptism as a statement of belief was related to belief which was why it was mentioned.

Jesus said he who does not believe will be condemned. There was no need for Jesus to say that he who does not believe and is not baptised will be condemned because he who does not believe will not be baptised anyway.

1 Peter 3:21. Just as eight people were saved by water, baptism “which is a figure [of their deliverance, does now also save you]” but “not by the removing of outward body filth [bathing], but by [providing you with] the answer of a good and clear conscience” in the sight of the Lord. The key to understanding what this means is in the assertion that baptism is a symbol of the preservation of the eight from evil by the waters which destroyed all that could corrupt them. Baptism saves from sin

because it appeals to God for pardon and deliverance from sin and begs the Church to function as a barrier against for you for you are a serious Christian and to provide moral support in the face of temptation. Baptism is not said to save from sin in any other sense. The notion that it actually forgives sin is absent. Peter is speaking of those adults who receive baptism with the proper motives, repentance and trust and faith for even sacramentalists agree that without these baptism is invalid though they make an exception of infants. He says that valid baptism saves for it appeals to God for a pure conscience. This might mean that it saves in the same way prayer for pardon saves for it is a prayer for pardon. The words do not save nor does the rite but what is expressed by them does if it is sincere. Prayer is an attitude expressed by words but not the words which is why saying prayers while thinking of something else is no good. Baptism has no power in itself. It is the repentance it expresses that saves not it.

Paul wrote that baptism saves BY the resurrection of Jesus meaning that it is a cry to God for salvation to a new life with the risen Jesus and for him to resurrect the candidate to a new life of holiness.

If infant water baptism were allowed the verse would not say the rite is for making the person beg for a clean conscience.

The Peter verse tells us that like Noah and his mates were saved by the flood from evil for the flood wiped out evil on earth we are saved by a baptismal bath that does not remove physical stain but cleans the soul for it involves repenting. The people were not baptised in the flood for they were in the ark and Peter says the same thing happens with this other bath. He goes on to say that this other bath does not remove physical stain so it is not a bath of water but a bath in the cleansing power of the Holy Spirit.

Some say that when Peter said baptism saves not by washing physical dirt away that he didn't have water baptism in mind at all. He could speak that way whether he had water baptism in his mind or baptism in the spirit.

When Peter was asked by his converts what they should do he told them to repent and be baptised in water (Acts 2:37). They queried because "they were stung (cut) to the heart". They desired to be put right with God as Peter's answer proves. He would not have baptised them if he suspected that they did not.

Peter instructed them to repent and be baptised to show it for salvation. But when baptism expresses repentance it can save just like kissing a relic to express sorrow can. Peter is not necessarily saying that baptism is magic and can wash away sins. It is repentance and God that do that. How could Peter see baptism as necessary for salvation when in Acts 16:31 Paul and Silas told the jailer to believe in Jesus when he asked them what he must do to be saved and never mentioned baptism? Believe means have faith and faith as understood by the people includes repentance. The jailer was baptised in that same hour but that proves nothing. If baptism was necessary for salvation and they could do it fast then why did they not tell him to believe and be baptised to be saved? It would be like telling a man to use the gun without telling him to load it first when he seeks your permission to shoot and have the bullets at your fingertips. You wouldn't do that unless you had no bullets. Similarly Peter would not have spoken the way he did unless baptism were just optional.

But if baptism is nothing but a way of showing you are changing your life then why did Peter command it instead of leaving the expression optional? Because baptism was popular among the Jews. He wanted the pagans he converted to undergo the same rite for that and because it was making a public statement for Christ.

Religions which teach that obedience is required for salvation will have to hold that baptism is necessary for they say God commands it. But then the New Testament never says that obedience is a condition for salvation. It never specifically says that we must be baptised in water. It can be subjectively necessary for salvation but it can never be objectively necessary though the Catholic Church vehemently denies that.

In Bible Christian theology which supposes that water baptism is commanded by God, water baptism is necessary for salvation only in the following sense. God commands baptism. If you are saved you will obey God and be baptised for being saved results in good works. It is indirectly necessary but not directly necessary. It is really obedience to God that saves rather than baptism.

If baptism saved the Bible would command it. Even if the verses that the Church says refers to water baptism, did actually do so, we still don't see any command in them. They might be simply recommendations.

The doctrine of baptism being a sacrament cannot be traced in the Bible. The Bible claims to be the only religious authority for Christians so it is un-Christian to teach that it is a sacrament.



