

CHRIST DIDN'T SEND ME TO BAPTISE

Many Churches teach that people, even babies, need to be baptised in water in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit to get their sins forgiven and to be able to enter God's presence in Heaven should they die. Heaven is salvation from sin and evil.

Some Christians hold that baptism has no sacramental or magic power and so you will go to Heaven if you are right with God whether you are baptised or not.

The main man in the early Church, St Paul, the first Christian writer, stated that Jesus did not send him to baptise. But Jesus had told his disciples to go and baptise all nations. However, many feel that Paul was showing he did not regard baptism as essential. The Catholic doctrine is that baptism is necessary for forgiveness of sin and spending eternity in a relationship with God.

“Christ [the Messiah] sent me not to baptize but to evangelise by preaching the glad tidings” (1 Corinthians 1:17). A Catholic theologian would say, “This does not refute the Catholic doctrine. Though Jesus wants all baptised, Paul was not to baptise the Corinthians because it would be better left to others. Or perhaps Paul was not to baptise anybody for it would take him away from his task of preaching. Christians are not asked to do what they cannot do. It doesn't matter to Jesus who baptises as long as it is done if water baptism is necessary.” But yet Catholics believe Christ sent all Christians to baptise according to their interpretation of Matthew 28:19 where Jesus asks for all nations to be baptised. Paul could be read as if he was not sent to baptise anybody at all and therefore it should be read that way. If Paul had just meant he was not sent to baptise the Corinthians for it took too much time he would have said so. Paul wrote that he was glad he hadn't baptised many in Corinth because of the divisions they were creating (1 Corinthians 1:14) for some would say they were baptised in Paul's name not Jesus' in order to create schism.

Paul specified that he did not preach with great words or eloquence and so when he didn't prepare that much and could not have been preaching all the time he could have baptised more people. He would have had the time. This adds support to the idea that Paul did not think baptism was an essential. He only led a team of evangelists and did not do it on his own so he had the time to baptise like they had.

Paul wrote that he was thankful that he didn't baptise many in Corinth in case any would say they were baptised in Paul's name for Christ did not send him to baptise. This tells us two things, One – he knew that nobody would really claim to have been baptised in his name so that was sarcasm and not the reason for his thankfulness, Two – that the real reason was that Jesus had not sent him to baptise. He was reluctant to promote baptism because it led to trouble. That would be ridiculous if it did more good than bad. It gives the impression that the early Christians did not always baptise and when they did only bad came out of it. The Catholic perversion of baptism into a magical sacrament would repel him utterly.

Paul said in 1 Corinthians 1:16 that he was not sure how many he baptised. This indicates he was keeping no records meaning that if this means water baptism then water baptism was not an initiation rite and certainly not a sacrament that saves for he would have had to keep records and would have insisted that all baptising people do the same. The Roman Catholic Church keeps baptismal records because it believes that baptism saves the soul and makes you a member of the Church of God and a part of his family.

It is an error to argue that water baptism could not be a sacrament or necessary for salvation on the basis of 1 Corinthians 1:14. There Paul wrote, “I thank God that I did not baptize any of you except Crispus and Gaius”. Many allege that Paul would not have written this way if it were. But the next verse gives a reason for this attitude, “Lest anyone should say that I baptized in my own name”. Paul is only saying that he is glad that he baptised none of the Corinthians for they would use it as an excuse for saying that they were for him and not for the other apostles, and as an excuse for schism. It is perfectly possible for a priest to believe the Catholic doctrine of baptism and to be grateful that he did not baptise a child for some reason and that someone else did it without detriment to his belief or belittling this sacrament. This baptism Paul is thinking of might have been spirit baptism given by the laying on of hands. It appears that the Church was not baptising in the name of the Father Son and Holy Spirit in those days. When Paul could be accused of baptising in the name of Paul it suggests that some alien language was being used perhaps Hebrew or Aramaic. Or that nothing was said at all. Others say that it indicates that the converts were completely gullible or unintelligent and not much of an advertisement for the credibility of Christianity when they had set up the disciples of Jesus as new Jesuses. Others say that in the name of Paul doesn't mean that they think they were baptised with somebody saying, “I baptise you in Paul's name” over them. Baptism in the name of Paul means baptised under the authority of Paul.

So this verse doesn't seem to refute the idea that water baptism is needed for salvation. The previous one considered does. But think of the verse this way. Do you say, "Thank God I didn't save him by baptising him in water". That sounds totally evil. And blasphemous for God wants to save. If water baptism saves then Paul baptising was a good thing even if those he baptised got too attached to him. It wasn't the baptisms fault that they got too attached but their own. But did he mean, "I'm glad it wasn't me who was baptising them but somebody else." If so then he shouldn't have said, "Thank God." It doesn't look like he believed in anything strange about water baptism or even that it was a necessary good work.

Paul was keeping no record of baptisms which shows that there was no intention here of making baptism an initiation rite for an organised religion. If baptism was an essential rite for salvation and cannot be effaced or done a second time then it had to be recorded. Paul's cavalier attitude to it speaks volumes. It may even hint that his version of Jesus was never baptised!