

# Baptism Won't Do It

Baptism is an important part of God's plan. The law given through Moses for Israel contained ordinances for immersion. In the time of the gospels, He introduces another immersion—John's baptism (**Matthew 3:5-6**). The people were repenting and confessing their sins. Jesus was also baptized of John in the Jordan, not for the remission of sins, but to fulfill all righteousness (**Matthew 3:15**). Those who do not believe that baptism is essential to salvation can find no consolation in this passage, for as the baptism of Jesus by John was not *for* the remission of sins, neither was it *because of* remission of sins—Jesus had no sin.

In the days of His ministry Jesus taught people to be baptized. To Nicodemus He said, *“Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit he cannot enter into the kingdom of God”* (**John 3:5**). The next chapter in John tells us that Jesus was responsible for more baptisms than John the Baptist. *“Therefore when the Lord knew that the Pharisees had heard that Jesus was making and baptizing more disciples than John (although Jesus Himself was not baptizing, but His disciples were), He left Judea and went away again into Galilee”* (**John 4:1-3**). When Jesus, with all power in heaven and on earth, gave His commission to His followers, He set forth the conditions of salvation for lost man. To be saved man must believe the gospel, he must repent, and he must be baptized (**John 8:24; Luke 13:3-5; 24:46-47**). *“And He said to them, ‘Go into all the world and preach the gospel to all creation. He who has believed and has been baptized shall be saved; but he who has disbelieved shall be condemned’”* (**Mark 16:15-16**).

The apostles, carrying out this commission under the guidance of the Spirit, set forth the same conditions of salvation. On the day of Pentecost, following the ascension of Christ into heaven, Peter in answering the question, *“Brethren, what shall we do?”* said, *“Repent, and each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit”* (**Acts 2:37-38**). In every case of conversion recorded in the book of Acts—sometimes called the book of conversions—baptism is set forth as a condition of pardon from sin (**Acts 8:12-13,36-38; 10:46-47; 16:14-15,33-34; 18:8**). The conversion of Saul of Tarsus is further proof that baptism is essential to salvation, since after his experience on the Damascus road, Ananias said to him, *“Now why do you delay? Get up and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on His name”* (**Acts 22:16**). The importance of baptism in God's great scheme of redemption is further seen in the many references to it in the letters of the Bible. Over and over again passages remind Christians of the significance of baptism and show them how to conduct themselves because they have been baptized (**Romans 6:3-4; 1Corinthians 1:13-17; 12:13; Galatians 3:27; Ephesians 4:5; 5:26; Colossians 2:12; Titus 3:5; 1Peter 3:20-21**).

Though baptism is vitally important in God's plan, there are some things that baptism does not do:

***It does not change the heart.*** If one's heart, one's thinking, is evil when he goes into the water, it will be evil when he comes up out of the water. The water, or the action of baptism, will have done nothing to change the evil mind.

***It does not remove or destroy the possibility of temptation.*** The devil tempted Christ after He was baptized (**Matthew 4:1-10**). Simon was tempted after he was baptized (**Acts 8:13-22**). The

Corinthian Christians were baptized, but Paul pointed out that they were guilty of many departures from God's will (**Acts 18:8; 1Corinthians 1:13-17**).

***It does not make one sinlessly perfect.*** The Corinthians who had been baptized were guilty of division, carnality, litigation, adultery, misunderstanding of marriage, improper attitudes of the Lord's supper, of the resurrection, of spiritual gifts. Almost every chapter of the first Corinthian letter points out their transgressions and short-comings. Writing to Christians, John said, “*If we say that we have no sin, we are deceiving ourselves and the truth is not in us*” (**1John 1:8**). Further, Paul said, “*Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed that he does not fall*” (**1Corinthians 10:12**).

***It does not guarantee eternal life.*** Baptism is a birth, and the beginning of one's spiritual life in the family of God. Those who have been baptized are to seek the things above. “*Having been buried with Him in baptism, in which you were also raised up with Him through faith in the working of God, who raised Him from the dead ... Therefore if you have been raised up with Christ, keep seeking the things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Set your mind on the things above, not on the things that are on earth. For you have died and your life is hidden with Christ in God*” (**Colossians 2:12; 3:1-3**). Paul, writing to Titus, speaks of “*the hope of eternal life*” (**Titus 1:2**). John tells us that it is a promise which God has promised us (**1John 2:25**). This promise becomes reality when we are faithful throughout life. “*Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life*” (**Revelation 2:10**).