

## Darkness to Light

*In some church circles, salvation has been reduced to accepting Jesus into your heart for the forgiveness of sin through saying a simple prayer. There is however a lot more to Biblical salvation – it involves faith, repentance, submitting to Jesus as Lord, and baptism into his life. Baptism for salvation is consistent with how God has used water to rescue His people, through for example the Flood and the Exodus. Throughout the history of the early church, we read about the centrality of baptism in salvation, where baptism was only understood as full immersion in water (Greek “baptizo”). In the waters of baptism, we participate in the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus, coming out of the water as new creation in him.*

### **Darkness and Light**

#### **Col 1:13-14**

- What is the domain of darkness that disciples of Jesus have been saved from?
- What does it mean to be redeemed?

#### **1 Peter 2:9-10**

- This passage also makes it clear we are in one of two places spiritually: either in the darkness or in light.
- Is there a “grey area” between the darkness and light?
- What are important differences between being in the darkness vs in the light?
- Those who are in God’s Kingdom of light are a royal priesthood and a holy nation.
- What was the main role of a priesthood? What does it mean to be holy?
- Does this describe your life? Do you think you are in the light or the darkness?

### **Saved through Water and the Spirit**

#### **John 3:1-5**

- What is needed to become part of God’s Kingdom (vs 3)? How does this new birth take place?

#### **Rescued through Water**

God has consistently used water to save people to become His own. Noah and his family were rescued from the wickedness of the world by the water of the Flood. God rescued His people from slavery in Egypt through the water of the Red Sea, and later brought them through the Jordan River into the Promised Land. God’s use of water to save people and form them into a community that lives for Him continues in the practice of baptism.

### **Baptism and Death**

#### **1 John 1:7**

- How does the blood of Jesus cleanse us from our sin?

#### **Romans 6:1-8**

- When do we participate in the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus?

### **Baptism and Repentance**

#### **Acts 2:36-41**

- What is required for the forgiveness of sin and to receive the Holy Spirit?
- Is it possible to be properly baptised into the life of Christ without repentance?

### **Baptism and Faith**

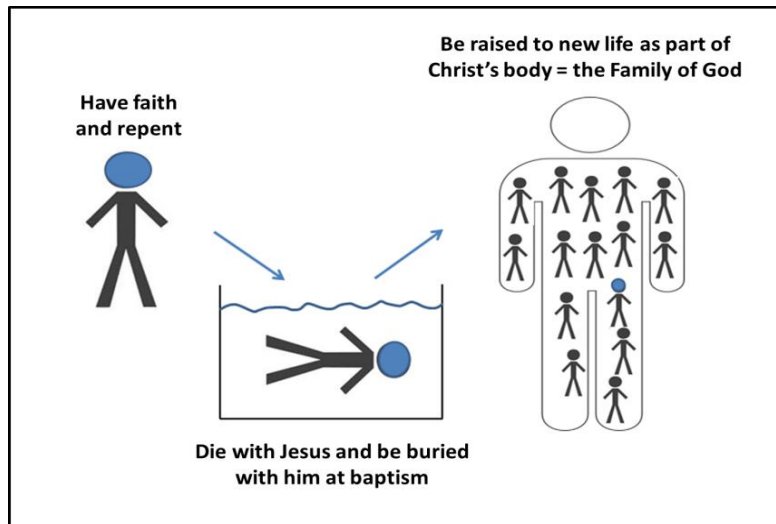
#### **Colossians 2:11-14**

- At baptism we are raised to new life in Christ, through faith. What is your understanding of faith?
- Is it possible to be properly baptised into Christ without having true Biblical faith?
- Whose work and power save us through baptism (vs 12)?
- How does this refute the argument that baptism is a work and therefore is not needed for salvation?

## **Baptism and Community**

### **1 Corinthians 12:12-14**

- What are we baptized into?
- What is the significance of baptism being a community creating event?



## **Baptism and the Flood**

### **1 Peter 3:20-21**

- What did the Flood in Noah's day achieve? How is baptism like the Flood?
- Does this passage say that baptism is symbolic and therefore not essential for salvation, as some people suggest?

## **Baptism in the Early Church**

### **Acts 8:12 & 36-38; 9:17-19**

- What are the common elements we see in these passages of how people responded to the Gospel in the first century church?

#### **REFLECTION**

- What have you learnt about salvation which was new to you?
- If you believe you have been saved, does your salvation line up with what the Bible says?
- If not, how urgent are you to be saved from darkness to light through faith, repentance and baptism into the life of Christ, as an act of God's grace?

**Appendix C** provides some early church teachings on baptism.

**Appendix D** provides some common false teachings about salvation and how a proper reading of the Bible refutes them.

## Appendix C: The Early Church on Baptism

### Barnabas c. 70-130 AD

*“Blessed are they who, placing their trust in the cross, have gone down into the water. We indeed descend into the water full of sins and defilement. However, we come up, bearing fruit in our heart, having the fear and trust in Jesus in our spirit.”*

### Hermas c. 80-150 AD

*“[T] here is no other repentance than that which takes place, when we descended into the water and received the remission of our former sins”.*

*“They descend into the water dead, and they arise alive.”*

### Justin Martyr, c. 160 AD

*“But [we] may become the children of choice and knowledge, and may obtain in the water the remission of sins formerly committed”*

*“Accordingly, we have believed and testify that the very baptism which he announced is alone able to purify those who have repented. And this is the water of life ...”*

*“Christ has redeemed us by being crucified on the tree and purifying us with water.”*

### Theophilus, c. 180 AD

*“The things proceeding from the waters were blessed by God, that this also could be a sign of men being destined to receive repentance and remission for sins, through the water and bath of regeneration - as many as come to the truth and are born again.”*

### Irenaeus, c. 180 AD

*“For the baptism instituted by the visible Jesus was for the remission of sins.”*

*“This class of men [the Gnostics] has been instigated by Satan to a denial of that baptism which is regeneration to God.”*

### Clement of Alexandria, c. 195 AD

*“Being baptized, we are illuminated. Illuminated, we become sons ... This work is variously called grace, illumination, perfection, and washing. Washing, by which we cleanse away our sins.”*

*“In the same way, therefore, we also repent of our sins, renounce our iniquities, and are purified by baptism. Thereby, we speed back to the eternal light as children of the Father.”*

### Tertullian, c. 198 AD

*“I do not deny that the divine benefit (that is, the putting away of sins) is in every way certain to those who are about to enter the water ... However, some think that God is under a necessity of bestowing what He has promised even on the unworthy. So they turn His liberality into His slavery ... For do not many afterwards fall out of grace? Is not this gift taken away from many?”*

## Appendix D: False Salvation Teachings

### Teaching: Accepting Jesus into your heart

Verse Cited: Revelation 3:20

**Explained:** This verse, rich in imagery, was written to an existing church (those already in Christ) about their need to repent. The context of this verse has nothing to do with how to enter into Christ and be saved.

Verse Cited: Romans 10:8-9

**Explained:** This does not mean that all we have to do is believe in Jesus and confess him as Lord to be saved. Faith is more than belief, it involves living in allegiance to Jesus as our King, after counting the cost involved (**Luke 14: 25-32**). In the first century, people confessed Jesus as Lord at their baptism - the early Christians did not separate faith and baptism into Christ as separate events. **Romans 10:13** talks of “calling on the name of the Lord” which is what being baptized into Christ involves – at baptism we trust in (call on) his life (= his name) as we lay down our own lives (**Acts 22:16**).

### Teaching: Infant baptism

Verses Cited: None

**Explained:** There are no examples of babies or small children being baptized in the New Testament. Babies cannot repent, die to self, count the cost involved or have faith. **Hebrews 11:6** teaches that without faith it is impossible to please the Lord. A baptism into Christ that does not include faith on the part of the one being baptized is not valid.

### Teaching: We are saved by faith alone without baptism

Verses Cited: John 3:16; Ephesians 2:8

**Explained:** **John 3:16** does indeed demand faith in God’s Son and in his life to be saved, but verse 17 more fully explains that we are saved “through” (by entering into) Christ, which is realized at baptism. **Ephesians 2:8** teaches salvation by faith, but **Colossians 2:12** and **Galatians 3:26-27** explain more fully that we are saved by God through faith at baptism.

### Teaching: Baptism does not save anyone

Verse Cited: Ephesians 2:8

**Explained:** **1 Peter 3:21** demonstrates that we are saved through baptism by entering into the life of Jesus Christ. We are saved through the resurrection of Christ (**Romans 6:1-10**). Entering into the life of Christ is the only way that we are saved and **Romans 6:1-10**, **Galatians 3:26-27** and **Colossians 3:1-3** all confirm that we enter into Christ when we are buried and raised with him through baptism. Only by being baptized into Christ are our sins forgiven (**Acts 2:38**).

### Teaching: Baptism is merely an outward sign of inward grace

Verse Cited: None

**Explained:** **Romans 6:2-4** makes clear that we are baptized into Christ in an actual participation in his death, burial, and resurrection life. Nowhere does this passage even hint that this is merely a symbol. **1 Peter 3:21** says that baptism corresponds to the waters of Noah’s Flood, referring to its power to destroy wickedness/sin. The NIV Bible refers to the Flood symbolizing baptism, not the other way around. Peter clearly teaches that baptism saves us - it is not merely a sign or symbol.

### **Teaching: Paul didn't think baptism was important**

**Verse Cited: 1 Corinthians 1:17**

**Explained:** When read in context, we see that Paul was criticizing factions that were being built based on who baptized them. In **1 Corinthians 1:13-16** Paul explains that no-one apart from Christ died for them, and that the life they are baptized into is what counted, not the one who baptized them. Paul himself was baptized (**Acts 9:18**) and he baptized others.

### **Teaching: The thief on the cross was not baptized**

**Verses Cited: Luke 23:40-43**

**Explained:** Jesus had not yet died so the thief could not be baptized into his death and resurrection life. While on earth, Jesus had the power to forgive sins (**Matthew 9:2-6**) so what we have here is an example of someone being saved under the Old Covenant.

### **Teaching: Any baptism counts even if you don't understand it**

**Verse Cited: None**

**Explained:** In **Acts 19:1-6** we read about some men who had been baptized by John the Baptist as a sign of repentance. But when they hear the good news about Jesus Christ, they get baptised into his life and experience forgiveness and receive the Holy Spirit. Similarly, many people nowadays who were previously baptized without understanding its role in salvation, have decided to be re-baptized into the life of Christ for the forgiveness of sin. An adequate understanding of and preparation for baptism is essential for salvation.