

Crossroads Baptist Church  
February 18, 2007 10:00  
Romans 4: 9-16  
Romans #20

## “Is Baptism Required for Salvation?”

The message this morning is not so much a message on the doctrine of baptism as it is on the doctrine of salvation. When we get to Romans 6 we will talk more about the meaning of baptism. But this morning I ask, “Is Baptism required for salvation?”

So I can be as confusing as possible, let me immediately answer “yes” and “no.” Yes, baptism is required for salvation if you understand that there are three elements of salvation. I have been saved, I am being saved, and I shall be saved. There is a past reality, a present experience and a future expectation. We also talk about it as justification, sanctification and glorification.

For a person to be sanctified and totally yielding to Christ for complete salvation, then he will eventually be baptized after he has initially been saved. In fact I believe, that a person will not grow effectively until he is baptized after his salvation experience. So in order to be grow, one must be obedient to Christ in all things and baptism is first area of obedience.

But the question that most of us ask is concerning our initial experience of salvation. Is baptism required as a part of the initial segment of salvation? To put it another way, can a person go to Heaven without baptism?

The answer to that is yes.

From our study of Romans 4, we want to learn this lesson from the rite of circumcision mentioned here.

### **I. Circumcision was eventually viewed by the Jews as essential for Heaven.**

Circumcision was the means by which a person became acceptable to God. The Jewish apocryphal *Book of Jubilees* declares:

“This law is for all generations for ever, ..And every one that is born .... And not circumcised on the eight day belongs to the children of destruction; nor is there moreover any sign on him that he is the Lord’s but he is destined to be destroyed and slain from the earth.” (15:25ff)

It was a security to them. In his commentary on the *Book of Moses*, Rabbi Menachem wrote, “Our Rabbins have said that no circumcised man will ever see hell.” (fol. 43, col. 3)

Midrash Millim said that “God swore to Abraham that no one who was circumcised should be sent to hell.” (for. 7, col. 2). The book *Akedath Jizehak* taught that “Abraham sits before the gate of hell, and does not allow that any circumcised Israelite should enter there.” (fol. 54, col. 2).

This belief was so strong that in the early church of Acts great dispute arose over those won to Christ whether they should be circumcised or not. A special council was called in Jerusalem of the apostles and elders and the unanimous decision was that obedience to Mosaic ritual, including circumcision, was not necessary for salvation (Acts 15: 19-29).

### **II. Circumcision was not what approved men before God.**

#### **A. Abraham was not approved before God with circumcision.**

Here in Romans 4, Paul reminds us that Abraham had already believed God and it was accounted to him for righteousness (Genesis 15:6) some fourteen years before the rite of circumcision was given (Genesis 17: 10-14). Abraham was not made righteous before God by his circumcision but that when he was given the command of circumcision he had already been declared righteous.

#### **B. Paul preached that circumcision did not approve men before God.**

Paul, who himself was “circumcised the eighth day...” (Phil. 3:5) saw by the teaching of the Holy Spirit that circumcision was nothing except a stumbling block.

Paul went as far as to say that anyone who trusts in circumcision, or in any other ceremony or work, nullifies the work of Christ on his behalf.

“It was for freedom that Christ set us free; therefore, keep standing firm and do not be subject again to a yoke of slavery. Behold, I Paul, say to you that if you receive circumcision, Christ will be of no benefit to you. And I testify again to every man who receives circumcision that he is under obligation to keep the whole Law.” Galatians 5: 1-4

### **III. Circumcision as a religious rite is likened to baptism.**

Romans 4:11 says “he received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness of faith...”

Circumcision is a sign and a seal. Both of these also point to baptism and the Lord's Supper, but that will be for a discussion for another day.

A. Circumcision and baptism as a sign

Circumcision was a sign is a physical, racial mark of identity of His people.

B. Circumcision and baptism as a seal.

Circumcision was a seal. Every time circumcision was performed by God's people it was to be a reminder to them of God's righteousness that Abraham had, and all other believers have, through faith, completely apart from circumcisions.

A sign points to something.  
A seal guarantees it.

Baptism is a sign pointing to the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Baptism is a seal showing something authentic on the outside to vindicate what is inside.

An official seal was stamped on a letter or document to prove its authenticity was guaranteed. A seal does not make the letter or document; it only verified the fact or authenticity of it.

Circumcision was never to be about an outward sign, instead it was to vindicate the faith inside. In Deut. 30:6, Jeremiah 4:3-4 and 9:24-26, God proves he wanted to write on their heart. He stressed to them that it was the heart that needed spiritual circumcision.

Baptism as a seal is to be the first sign of obedience that a change has happened inside of you.

**IV. What about infant baptism?**

Many believe that due to circumcision being administered on the eighth day that infant baptism is suppose to be performed.

While we understand how people could surmise to that, the point rings clear that circumcision was never meant to be a ritual without a right experience. It was to be an expression of what had happened in the heart.

How can an infant trust in their heart in God?

That's why we believe strongly that baptism is for believers only.

**V. Is there a direct connection between repentance and baptism?  
What about Acts 2:38**

Acts 2:38 "Then Peter said to them, "Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit."

The connection of baptism with the forgiveness of sins in this verse has often been a matter of controversy. But the problem is not as bad as it seems.

The whole issue in verse 38 is a preposition in Greek *eis* which is translated "for" in the above verse. The disputed word can indicate purpose and thus be taken to mean that baptism is the prerequisite for the forgiveness of sins. There is ample evidence in the New Testament, however, that *eis* can also mean on the ground of, on the basis of, which would indicate the opposite relationship – that the forgiveness of sins is the basis, the grounds for being baptized.

You say, "Then pastor those who believe baptism is essential to salvation has just as much right to believe that as we do otherwise." My response is a loud NO.

No where else in the Luke-Acts writings are repentance and baptism linked.

Luke 24: 47 "... and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name to all nations...."

Acts 3:19 "Repent therefore and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out...."

Acts 5:31 "...to give repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins."

No other place in Acts is baptism presented as bring about forgiveness of sins. If not linked with repentance, forgiveness is connected with faith (Acts 10:43; 13:38ff; 26:18).

Acts 10:43 "...through His name whoever believes in Him will receive remission of sins."

In fact, when new groups of people are saved in Acts, the order of preaching, them receiving the Holy Spirit and being baptized is not even in the same order (Acts 8:4-8, Acts 10: 44-48, Acts 19:4-6 there is no order of events happening:

Acts 8 – the Samaritans – preaching, signs, baptism in water, received the Holy Spirit with no tongues mentioned.

Acts 10 – the Gentiles – preaching, Holy Spirit falls, they speak in tongues, then they were baptized in water.

Acts 19 – Disciples of John – preaching, baptism in water, they receive the Holy Spirit, they speak in tongues.

The point I am making is that if baptism was essential, it would only make sense that God would have made it perfectly clear in Acts 2:38 and in other places as well.

But God has made clear that man is saved by faith alone.

Ephesians 2: 8-9 “For by grace are you saved through faith.” It is a gift, freely given.

Acts 16:30-31 “what must I do to be saved? Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved....”