

# The “Thief On The Cross”

In trying to negate the Bible’s direct teaching that baptism is necessary to salvation, many turn to the "Thief On The Cross" as an example of someone who was saved without being baptized in water. Their reasoning is – if the thief can be saved that way, why can’t we? There are a number of things wrong with this argument. Let’s examine it ...

First, we do not know the thief was never baptized. He could have been baptized with John the Baptist’s baptism before he was put up on the cross. The scriptures are silent on this point. It would be improper to assume either way.

Second, consider Hebrews 9:15-17: “And for this cause he is the mediator of the new testament ... For where a testament is, there must also of necessity be the death of the testator. For a testament is of force after men are dead: otherwise it is of no strength at all while the testator liveth.” Jesus and the thief did not live under the new testament law which requires baptism. They both lived under the old testament law. The thief was not required to be baptized as you and I are.

Consider also Romans 10:9 which reads, “That if thou shall ... believe ... that God hath raised Him (Jesus) from the dead, thou shalt be saved. The thief didn’t believe in the resurrection of Christ as an accomplished fact – so obviously he lived under a different covenant than we do (since he couldn’t meet the new covenant requirements of Romans 10:9 in order to be saved).

The thief on the cross didn’t need to be baptized for basically the same reason that Moses and a host of other Old Testament children of God were not baptized; that is, the New Testament law had not come into effect yet.

Remember these facts:

- The thief on the cross was forgiven before Jesus died.
- The thief died before the “great commission” of Mark 16:16 was ever given.
- Luke 24:47 – new covenant preaching and remission were to begin “at Jerusalem.”
- The new covenant did not go into effect until sometime “after” Jesus died (Hebrews 9:17).

The Scriptures are clear that baptism is a condition that a sinner must meet in order to be forgiven by the blood of Christ (Mark 16:16, Acts 2:38, Acts 22:16, Galatians 3:26-27, I Peter 3:21). What does one have to gain by fighting against what God says? Instead, why not love God and obey Him (John 14:15)?