

The BEACON

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God's End Of The Stick by Robert F. Turner

Recently a lady asked what she should tell a friend who had proposed the old "died-on-way-to-baptistry" question. I answered, "Don't tell her the subject is lost." She looked a bit surprised, but I was not finished. "And don't tell her the subject is saved." Now she was even more puzzled so I added, "We have no right to whittle on God's end of the stick!"

Truth is, God promised remission of sins at the point of genuine submission to Christ in baptism (**Mk. 16: 16, Acts 2:38, 22:16, Rom. 6:4-f**). We have no part in setting up the rules, nor in making final judgments. That is God's end of the stick. All we can do is teach what God's word says; and trust the Holy Spirit, through that instrument, to generate in the hearer an obedient faith. It is rank presumption to suppose man can make exceptions, or do a better job of judging than can God. We are completely "out of our league" in such matters.

If we say the subject is lost we often play into the hands of a prejudiced querist who wanted such a reply as justification for rejecting "those Campbellites who play God." If we say the subject is saved the same prejudiced person may think this is justification for "faith only" or the like. Far

better we take the discussion back into the scriptures, and make it clear that this is all we, or anyone, can know about God's business.

Exactly the same attitude must be taken toward questions about sinning, and dying before one can recognize, repent, and ask forgiveness for sins. Our end of the stick calls for a present active walking in the light, involving a present active confessing of our sins (**1 Jn. 1:7-9**). The grammatical construction, as well as the general context, point to a habitual course of conduct; as in **1 Jn. 3:5-9**. Contingent upon this, God promises the blood of Christ "cleanseth (present active) us from all sin." This is what **God's** word says, and I teach it. But God must judge the validity of one's baptism, and **God** must judge the validity of one's life. I must not try to whittle on His end of the stick. It seems significant that in the very middle of these inspired statements John says, "If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us."

There are times when, on the basis of "fruits," we must judge one's baptism and life — to determine those with whom we can have the kind of fellowship inherent in

congregational activities (**Acts 19:1-5, 1 Cor. 5:1-f**). There is no way, nor reason, to avoid such judgments. But there is every reason to strive for righteous judgments (**Jn. 7:24**); and, to realize **our** judgments are not infallible. We may reject one whom God receives, or receive one whom God rejects. Final and irrevocable judgment is God's end of the stick, and we must not try to whittle on that end. Remembering this should keep us humble while rendering such judgments as are necessary.

There is nothing more foolish than for brethren to try to shape God's end of the stick — unless it is for brethren to make a "brotherhood issue" over the shape we should give it. Little children, grow up!!

DOES GOD THINK BAPTISM IS NECESSARY?

Despite having received the baptism of the Holy Spirit, Peter commanded Cornelius and his household to be baptized - **Acts 10:48**

- All, including Paul, were baptized into Jesus and into Jesus' death - **Romans 6:3**
- They were baptized in order to be able to walk in newness of life - **Romans 6:4**
- They were baptized so they could share in Christ's resurrection - **Romans 6:5**
- They were baptized so that old, sinful ways might be done away with - **Romans 6:6**
- They were baptized so that they would no longer be slaves to sin - **Romans 6:6-7**
- We are circumcised with a circumcision done without hands, removing sins, by being buried with Jesus in baptism -

Colossians 2:11-12

- That baptism made us alive together with Jesus - **Colossians 2:13**
- That baptism allowed us forgiveness of all our trespasses - **Colossians 2:13**
- Baptism when joined with repentance is for the forgiveness of our sins - **Acts 2:38**
- Baptism when joined with repentance is needed to receive the gift of the Holy Spirit (see **Ephesians 1:13-14**).
- We are cleansed and sanctified with water - **Ephesians 5:26**
- Baptism immediately saves - **1 Peter 3:21**
- Baptism when joined with belief saves - **Mark 16:16**
- Baptism washes away sins - **Acts 22:16**
- Baptism puts us into Christ - **Galatians 3:27-29**
- Baptism makes us Abraham's descendants and heirs to the promise - **Galatians 3:26-29**
- Baptism puts us into the church - **1 Corinthians 12:13**
- Rejoicing came after baptism - **Acts 8:38-39**
- Baptism is called a washing of regeneration (new birth) - **Titus 3:5**
- Jesus commanded baptism - **Matthew 28:19**
- Jesus and his disciples baptized while on earth - **John 3:26**
- Jesus baptized more disciples than John - **John 4:1-2**
- Those who heard Peter's sermon were baptized - **Acts 2:41**
- Those who heard Philip's message were baptized - **Acts 8:12-13**

- The Ethiopian eunuch was baptized - **Acts 8:36-39**
- Lydia was baptized - **Acts 16:15**
- The Philippian was baptized - **Acts 16:33**
- Crispus and many in Corinth were baptized - **Acts 18:8**
- John's disciples in Ephesus were baptized - **Acts 19:4-5**
- Paul was baptized **Acts 22:16**
- Paul had baptized Crispus, Gaius, and the household of Stephanas - **I Corinthians 1:13-16**
- There is one baptism - **Ephesians 4:5**

You answer the question! From these passages of Scripture do you think GOD thought baptism was necessary in the New Testament? (JC)

Via <http://lavistachurchofchrist.org>

HOW IMPORTANT IS BAPTISM TO ONE'S SALVATION?

A few references from the writings of the Anti-Nicene writers. Note the proximity to the 1st Century church and to the apostles of Christ!

The First Apology of Justin [A.D. 110-165]

Note here: Justin writing concerning baptism, here about half through the chapter. And for this [rite] we have learned from the apostles this reason. Since at our birth we were born without our own knowledge or choice, by our parents coming together, and were brought

up in bad habits and wicked training; in order that we may not remain the children of necessity and of ignorance, but may become children of choice and knowledge, and may obtain in the water remission of sins formerly committed, there is pronounced over him who chooses to be born again, and has repented of his sins, the name of God the Father and Lord of the universe; he who leads to the laver the person that is to be washed calling him by his name alone. For no one can utter the name of the ineffable God; and if any one dare to say that there is a name, he raves with a hopeless madness. And this washing is illumination, because they who learn these things are illuminated in their understanding. And in the name of Jesus Christ, who was crucified under Pontius Pilate, and in the name of the Holy Ghost, who through the prophets foretold all things about Jesus, he who is illuminated is washed.

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The First Apology of Justin [A.D. 110-165]

Note here: Justin writing concerning the Eucharist (Lord's Supper). And this food is called among us Eucaristia [the Eucharist], of which no one is allowed to partake but the man who believes that the

things which we teach are true, and who has been washed with the washing that is for the remission of sins, and unto regeneration, and who is so living as Christ enjoined.

(Edited by Alexander Roberts, James Donaldson; Revised and arranged with notes A. Cleveland Coxe, Ante-Nicene Fathers; Volume 1; The Apostolic Fathers, Justin Martyre, Irenaeus; Peabody, Massachusetts: Hendrickson Publishing, Inc., 1994; p. 185)

Tertullian; Chap. XII Of the Necessity of Baptism to Salvation [A.D. 145-220]

When, however, the prescript is laid down that "without baptism, salvation is attainable by none" (chiefly on the ground of that declaration of the Lord, who says, "Unless one be born of water, he hath not life"), . . .

(Edited by Alexander Roberts, James Donaldson; Revised and arranged with notes A. Cleveland Coxe, Ante-Nicene Fathers; Volume 3; Latin Christianity: Its Founder, Tertullian I. Apologetic; II. Anti-Marcion; III. Ethical; Peabody, Massachusetts: Hendrickson Publishing, Inc., 1994; p. 674-5)

Tertullian, On Baptism [A.D. 145-220]

1. Happy is our sacred mystery of water. For by washing away the sins of our early blindness, we are set free and admitted into eternal life. An essay on this subject is worthwhile. First, it will instruct those who are new in the faith. Secondly, it will teach those who have been content with merely believing. Because of their ignorance, they have a probable faith that is untried. They

have not made a full examination of the [Christian] traditions. As a consequence, a viper of the Cainite heresy, having recently become familiar in this region, has carried away a great number with her venomous doctrine. She has made it her first aim to destroy baptism. This is quite fitting, because vipers, snakes, and lizards are generally attracted to arid and waterless places. However, we little fishes are born in water, after the example of our Ichthys Jesus Christ. And we have safety in no other way than by permanently abiding in water. So that monstrous creature, who had no right to teach even sound doctrine, knew very well how to kill the little fishes - by taking them away from the water!

Footnote: The Greek word ichthys (fish) was an acrostic for "Jesus Christ, the Son of God, the Savior."

Origen [A.D. 185-255]: An Exhortation To Martyrdom XXX.

Let us also remember the sins we have committed, and that it is impossible to receive forgiveness of sins apart from baptism, that it is impossible according to the laws of the Gospels to be baptized again with water and the Spirit for the forgiveness of sins, and that baptism of martyrdom has been given to us. This is what it is called, as is evident from the fact that "Are you able to drink the cup that I drink?" is followed by "or to be baptized with the baptism with which I am baptized?" (Mk. 10:38).

(Origen, translation by Rowan A. Greer, Origen; New York, NY: The Missionary Society of St. Paul the Apostle in the State of New York., 1989; p. 61)