

# An Inconvenient Truth

## Introduction

- A. I remember many years ago having lunch with one of my co-workers, Mark. Mark was a very religious guy and loved to talk about spiritual things, so as we ate our lunch we talked about the Bible.
1. On this particular day we were talking about salvation and over the course of the conversation found our way to the subject of baptism.
    - a. I asked him what he believed about baptism and how it related to salvation. He said, "Let me answer your question with four simple words, 'Nice, but not necessary.'"
    - b. He went on to explain that he believed that to be baptized was sort of a neat thing to do. It was a nice ceremony that served as this outward demonstration that you had decided to serve Jesus.
    - c. But he went on to emphasize that it was really up to each person to decide if they wanted to have this experience ("You do not have to be baptized," he said); and, it certainly was not something you had to do to be saved.
  2. Have you ever had a conversation with a friend that sounded something like that? Mark's view of baptism is hardly unusual. I think we are going to encounter a lot of people who have a similar view.
  3. One of the things that troubled me about my conversation with Mark was his attitude as we talked. He just seemed so indifferent about baptism...like the whole subject just really wasn't very important.
- B. My conversation with Mark that day over lunch really disturbed me. What he was saying (in fact, his whole attitude toward baptism) just stood in sharp contrast to what we find in scripture.
1. It's interesting to listen to people try explain what baptism is for, when they are unwilling to believe that it is for salvation.
    - a. The website for one church claimed that "Baptism provides an opportunity for believers to make a formal profession of their faith before the church" (similar to Mark's view), but they offered no scripture for this point.
    - b. This is no surprise since the Bible never says that.
  2. The Bible does talk about the purpose of baptism.
    - a. Acts 2:38 for the forgiveness of sins
    - b. Acts 22:16 washes away sin
    - c. I Corinthians 12:13 puts us into the body of Christ
    - d. I Peter 3:21 saves us
  3. Reading passages like these FROM THE BIBLE, we are not left with the impression that baptism is an insignificant matter - that it's merely some simple ceremony we can go through if we want to. In fact, these passages teach plainly that it is something we MUST DO if we want to be saved.
- C. I suspect many of you are already familiar with passages like these and have shared these with your friends. But there is something else I want you to notice that maybe we don't talk about very often.
1. I want us to examine in our study not just WHAT the Bible says about baptism, but WHERE baptism appears in scripture.
  2. I want to suggest that those who try to trivialize baptize have a problem. This subject they consider to be unimportant keeps popping in some really important places in the Bible, inconvenient places for those who want to convince us that baptism is no big deal.
  3. So let's take a look at some of the places in the Bible that talk about baptism.

## Mark 16:16

- A. Do you recognize this text?
1. This is often a passage we cite to discuss the purpose of baptism.
  2. And it is a powerful passage! Jesus says that, to be saved, you must believe and you must be baptized.
  3. How can the purpose of baptism be stated with any greater clarity? If Jesus is not saying that we must be baptized to be saved - that it is part of the process, then what is this verse saying?
- B. But typically, when we cite this text we only mention this one verse. For a moment, I want you to step back with me and appreciate the larger context. What's happening here?
1. This statement comes just after the great mission of Jesus has been accomplished.
    - a. In Mark 15 we are told how Jesus laid down His life and became the sacrifice for our sins.
    - b. Chapter 16 begins by telling us the story of His resurrection from the dead.
  2. But what would happen next? In closing words of this book Jesus answers that question (vs. 14-15).
    - a. This story of what was accomplished at Calvary was to be told to the world and it was His disciples who would tell it.
    - b. Jesus was giving His disciples their marching orders. This is our mission - to spread the good news of salvation that can be found in Jesus Christ.
  3. I don't like to elevate one Bible passage above another and say it's more important, but can we agree that this is a pretty important moment?
    - a. Jesus is giving us our mission; the most important mission ever given. We are to spread the gospel to a lost and dying world. And what are we to tell them...? Believe and be baptized so that you can be saved.
    - b. If baptism is just a trivial matter - nice, but not necessary - then why does it appear here, as a key part of this vital mission?
    - c. It is interesting that in Matthew's gospel Jesus says the same thing (**Matthew 28:18-20**). There it is again...BAPTISM!
    - d. For those who would treat baptism as a trivial matter, this is a very inconvenient spot to find it.

**Acts 2:38**

- A. Do you recognize this text?
1. This is another text we often cite to explain the purpose of baptism.
  2. It's a powerful passage too. Again, this is one of those passages that plainly explains what baptism is for (v. 38).
  3. It's hard to imagine how anyone could ever say that baptism is not necessary for salvation when you have a Bible statement like this.
- B. But have you thought about the context in which this statement is made?
1. Some have called Acts 2 the hub of the Bible story. They say this because everything prior to Acts 2 was looking forward to this moment.
    - a. In fact, after the noise from heaven (v. 2) and the tongues of fire (v. 3) and the Holy Spirit empowering the apostles to speak with tongues (v. 4), Peter stands up and points back to the prophet Joel. He argues that this moment was foretold by Joel.
    - b. The Old Testament prophets said that a Savior would be coming to rescue men from their sins. Now Peter is announcing that Jesus is that Savior and whoever calls on Him can be saved from their sins (v. 21).
    - c. It is difficult to imagine a more important moment in the Bible story. Everything from Genesis had been building to this moment.
  2. Everything after would look back to it. This message Peter preached here in Acts 2 is the same message that was carried throughout the world...the same message of salvation that we preach today.
  3. Again, can we agree that this is a pretty big moment? And yet, what do we find here?
    - a. When those who heard Peter's sermon asked what they had to do to be saved, what were they told (vs. 37-38)? For those who would treat baptism as a trivial matter, this is a very inconvenient place to find it. Why mention it now, at this grand moment, if it's really no big deal?
    - b. And how do you account for what He says about...baptism for the forgiveness of sins.
    - c. If baptism is a trivial matter, it seems odd that it would keep popping up at such key moments in the Bible story.

**Romans 6:1-7**

- A. We may not hear this passage cited as frequently when discussing the purpose of baptism, but it presents one of the most convincing arguments for the necessity of baptism.
1. Let's begin in verse 7. This is what all of us want - to be freed from our sins. But how do we do that - get free from sin? Paul says that we must die - correct?
  2. This raises another, critical question: what is this death Paul speaks of? Or, how do I die? Go back to verse 1 (vs. 1-6). Paul tells us how we die.
    - v. 3, "baptized into His death"
    - v. 4, "buried with Him through baptism into death"
  23. Paul makes very clear that there is a death that takes place at baptism (v. 6). A sinful man goes down into that "watery grave" and is raised to a new life in Christ.
  24. Keep in mind that there is nothing magical about the water. It is God who is at work here. Baptism is how we appeal to God to cleanse us from our sins.
  25. Paul says that the only way to be free from sin is to die (v. 7). Paul tells us how that happens; we are "baptized into His death" (v. 3). It is an "ungetoverable" line of reasoning.
- B. But for those who deny that baptism is necessary for salvation, this teaching by Paul appears in a very inconvenient place - the book of Romans.
1. Many of our religious friends teach that Romans is the place to go to prove we are saved by faith alone (without baptism). Some even use a little memory device called the Romans Road to Salvation. They argue that you can find the plan of salvation just by reading through Romans. It goes like this:
    - a. Romans 3:23, we are all sinners and need salvation.
    - b. Romans 5:8, God loves us and sent Christ to die for us.
    - c. Romans 6:23, the wages of sin is death, but salvation is God's free gift.
    - d. Romans 10:9-10, believe and confess and you will be saved
    - e. Romans 10:13, call on the name of the Lord - say the sinners prayer
  2. You may have noticed that this Roman Road missed some of the exits.
    - a. It is odd that this text in Romans 6 that speaks so plainly about how men are made free from sin would be completely ignored by those who teach this version of the Roman Road.
    - b. Actually, it's not really a surprise. Romans 6 is in conflict with the doctrine of salvation by faith alone; it creates a terrible problem for those who deny the necessity of baptism.
    - c. For this crowd, it's a really inconvenient truth to find right here in the middle of the Roman Road. But it's here!

**Conclusion: But why do we find it here...**

- A. Why do we find these references to baptism at so many key points of the gospel story?
1. The answer is simple. It is not the irrelevant detail that most of our religious world makes it out to be. It is an integral part of the plan! I'm not saying that baptism is the only thing that matters, but I am say that it does matter.
  2. To be saved from sin, the Bible teaches that we must believe in the Savior (Mark 16:16); we must turn from our sins (Acts 2:38); and we must be baptized (Mark 16:16, Acts 2:38).
- B. There is only one question that remains to be answered...have I done this?

