

## Saying What God Says about Baptism

**John 3:16**, the most well-known verse in the Bible, explains that Jesus died so we wouldn't have to. However, it doesn't teach that simply because Jesus died, no one will. It says only those who believe in Him will have eternal life. That is pretty profound. Jesus didn't teach universal salvation. He taught that only those who had faith in Him, who trusted Him, who surrendered to Him would be saved.

This is not simply a mental assent to the facts of Jesus; this is a surrender to the will of the One we say we believe.

**Galatians 2:20** describes what this faith is like: "I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me" (ESV). Having faith in Jesus is more than agreeing; it is surrendering. It is putting ourselves and our will to death. It is submitting to what Jesus taught.

How does this start? **Romans 6:3-6** says:

"Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life. For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we shall certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his. We know that our old self was crucified with him in order that the body of sin might be brought to nothing, so that we would no longer be enslaved to sin" (ESV).

If living by faith means crucifying ourselves with Jesus, when does that happen? According to **Romans 6:3-6**, it happens when we are baptized into Christ. It doesn't happen any other time. There is no amount of prayer that will accomplish that. There is no amount of "going to church" that will accomplish that. There is no amount of giving money to the church or to those in need that will accomplish that. There is no amount of ignoring temptation that will accomplish that. Only being baptized into Christ will accomplish that.

Further, remember that **John 3:16** says Jesus died so we don't have to. But that death doesn't just cover everyone. How do we get into that death? **Romans 6:3-6** says when we are baptized into Christ, we are baptized into His death. It is not when we have simply agreed that Jesus died for our sins that we enter His saving death. It is not when we've told others about His saving death. It is only when we have been baptized into Christ that we enter His saving death.

Sadly, I hear of more and more Christians who once had so much faith in this teaching from Christ that they submitted to baptism in the name of Jesus for the remission of their sins who are not passing this teaching on to others. Because the majority of the religious world doesn't accept it, they have started backing off. Maybe people can be saved simply by agreeing that Jesus died for them, they say. Maybe people can be saved because they are leading pretty good lives, in sincerity toward God. Maybe people can be saved because they said a prayer. Maybe they can be saved even though they weren't baptized into Christ, but were baptized to show something else. This is what we are told.

Who are we to say how God can save people? That is what we are asked. My response? We aren't anyone to say how God can save people. That is why we must say only what Jesus said. Jesus said, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God" (**John 3:5**). You see, when we say a person must be born of the water and the Spirit, that is, must be baptized, we aren't telling God how He must save people. We are only telling people what God said about how He would save people. Actually, we are thinking too highly of ourselves and telling God how to save people when we teach that God will save people in some way other than how He said.

**Romans 6:3-6** is pretty clear. If you want to be in Christ, you have to be baptized into Him. If you want to be in His saving death, you have to be baptized into it. If you want to be crucified with Christ, you have to be baptized into it. Let's just say what God says about it and leave it at that.