

## Naaman Answers Objections On Baptism by Hendrik Joubert

It is through Peter that the Lord directly states: ***baptism now saves you.*** (1Peter 3:21) This is one of many confirmations of what the Lord personally announced: ***"He who has believed and has been baptized shall be saved; but he who has disbelieved shall be condemned.*** (Mark 16:16) When those who heard the gospel for the first time demonstrated their faith by asking what they needed to do in order to be forgiven, they were told: ***"Repent, and each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit."*** (Act 2:38)

Saul, who became the apostle Paul, were told to ***Get up and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on His name.*** (Acts 22:16) What Saul did to ***call on His name*** is explained through Peter: ***Corresponding to that, baptism now saves you--not the removal of dirt from the flesh, but an appeal to God for a good conscience--through the resurrection of Jesus Christ,...*** (1Peter 3:21)

Baptism is the way in which the Lord determined that we are to ask Him (***call on His name***) for a ***good conscience***. Through the writer of Hebrews God teaches that the blood of the sacrifices of the Old Testament (covenant) ***sanctify for the cleansing of the flesh***, but that the blood of Christ ***cleanses your conscience from dead works to serve the living God.*** (Hebrews 9:13-14) Now notice again the explanation through Peter; baptism does not serve the purpose of cleaning the flesh, but rather the conscience – it is ***an appeal to God for a good conscience***. In the next chapter the relationship between baptism and the cleansing of the conscience is explained: ***...let us draw near with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water.*** (Hebrews 10:22)

In spite of the clear teaching few accept the role of baptism in the scheme of redemption. The most common objection is that ***nothing but the blood of Christ removes sin***. This fact is not in doubt. How God instructs us to ***appeal***, or ***ask*** for the blood of Jesus is the issue. Jesus announced it, and through Peter confirmed that through the simple act of baptism believers are to ***call upon the Lord's name*** for His blood.

Another objection is that this would mean that one has to ***work*** in order to ***earn*** salvation, and therefore not receive it ***by grace***. This is based upon statements such as is found in ***Romans 11:6: But if it is by grace, it is no longer on the basis of works, otherwise grace is no longer grace.*** In almost every letter written by the apostle Paul he deals with the difference between the Old and the New Covenants – because the Jews thought that they are saved through it. (***Acts 15***) It is because of this teaching that some concluded that James and Paul contradicts one another on the issue of salvation and works. Through the following statement we not only learn which works Paul refers to, but also what the purpose of the law of the Lord given through Moses was: ...

***because by the works of the Law no flesh will be justified in His sight; for through the Law comes the knowledge of sin. (Romans 3:20)***

Because of the promise made to Abraham, that in his seed all the nations of the earth will be blessed, Israel thought they would be the source of blessing for the nations of the world. The law was added 430 years later to teach them that they also were sinners, and in this way lead them to Christ. (**Galatians 3**) The works James refers to are those we do in *reaction* to the word of the Lord, because we *believe* Him. These acts are not meritorious and serve no other purpose than to *illustrate* faith *in* God and in His word. In **Hebrews 11** we find a long list of *actions* which demonstrated the *faith* those individuals had in God.

Baptism is an action during which the person being baptized is mostly inactive. To suggest that by this act of obedience to the words of Christ in **Mark 16:16** one could *deserve* salvation is simply foolish. Paul concludes his inspired lesson on the inability of the (works of the) Old Covenant to save with the following words: ***For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus. <sup>27</sup> For all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. (Galatians 3:26-27)*** They are sons of God *through faith* because they were *baptized into Christ*. Notice the relationship between faith and baptism as it was announced in **Mark 16:16**.

Consider the case of Naaman the leper as recorded in **2 Kings 5**. He was infected with leprosy in the same way as every man is infected with sin. (**Romans 3:23**) He expected some complicated process by which he would be recognized. Instead a messenger was sent to tell him to *wash* himself seven times in the Jordan and he would ***be clean***. (**v10**) This aggravated him and he walked away complaining – until his servants points out the simplicity of what was needed for him to be cleansed of this most serious condition: ***"My father, had the prophet told you to do some great thing, would you not have done it? How much more then, when he says to you, 'Wash, and be clean'?"*** (**v13**)

Did Naaman work for and deserve his cleansing because he had to wash *himself* – *seven* times in the Jordan? Or did he receive this cleansing by God's grace? Could he go wash seven times in each of the rivers of his country, which he considered superior? (**v12**) Was the healing power in the water of the Jordan? Consider every objection to the role of baptism as announced by the Lord, and confirmed through His apostles and other believers, and test it by applying it to Naaman's situation.

Naaman was instructed to call upon the name of the Lord (to make an appeal to God for a clean flesh) in this peculiar manner. There is no logical relationship between his actions and the results accomplished, and therefore required *faith* in what God said, and therefore faith in God. Reasoning away the simple instructions given by God would not have demonstrated faith in, and submission to God's instructions. How much simpler could it be than to having someone immerse you in water so you may ask for the blood of Christ? The power is in the words of God and in simple obedience.