

THE
THIEF
LUKE 23:39-43



CRUCIAL QUESTIONS

1. Does Luke 23:43 imply that the thief was **saved**?

2. If so, was he saved **without baptism**?

3. If so, does this mean that **people living today can be saved without baptism** in the name of Jesus?
 - ***What does the Bible teach?***
 - ***What does the law of Christ teach?***



FUNDAMENTAL FACTS

1. The thief was a **sinner**.
2. He first joined in **reproaching** Jesus (Mt. 27:44).
3. He later **repented** of it (Lk. 23:40).
4. He **discerned right and wrong**, and even *acknowledged his own wrongness* (41).
5. He **believed Jesus would "come in [His] kingdom,"** though He would soon be dead (42).
6. He asked Jesus to "**remember" him** then (42).
7. In reply, Jesus told him, "Today **you shall be with me in paradise**" (43).



PONDEROUS POSSIBILITIES

1. Is it reasonable to conclude that this thief gained all this theological information in such a *short time*, and *under such traumatic circumstances*?

2. Is it possible that the thief had heard of Jesus and the kingdom of God *before* he was hanging next to Jesus at Golgotha?

3. If so, is it altogether *impossible* that this thief had **previously been baptized** by John, or even by Jesus' own disciples?



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OUR MAIN QUESTION

Does the fact that *the thief on the cross* was saved without being baptized *via* Christian baptism mean that *men and women living today* can be saved without being baptized *via* Christian baptism?



PRINCIPAL POINTS

1. That the thief was never baptized “unto the remission of [his] sins” is a mere **assumption**.

- ➔ He very well could have been among those mentioned in **Mark 1:5**.
 - ▶ No one can say with certainty that he *was* baptized earlier in his life;
 - ▶ No one can say with certainty that he **NOT** baptized earlier in his life.



2. Just as with his baptism, there is no record of the thief **repenting of past sins**, or being told to do so!

➔ This is important because those who use the thief's [alleged] lack of baptism to argue against the necessity of baptism still profess that men today **must repent of their sins** in order to be saved!

▶ Acknowledging Some Sins ≠
Repenting of All Sin



PRINCIPAL POINTS

3. While on the earth, Jesus inherently had the **authority to forgive sins** (cf. **Matt. 2:5; 9:6; Mk. 2:10; Lk. 5:24**).
- ➔ As God, Jesus was able—when He so desired—to **see what was within man** (John 2:24,25; cf. Matt. 9:4; 12:25; Lk. 5:22; 6:8; 11:17; 20:23; *et al.*).
 - ➔ Jesus could forgive one's sins on grounds of *nothing* but **His own authority** and based on *nothing* but **His own wisdom**.



4. The thief **lived and died before the law of Christ went into effect.**

- ➔ Throughout time, there have been **different historical periods**, each with **different religious requirements.**
 - ▶ Thus, *Noah* was saved without baptism;
 - ▶ *Abraham* was saved without baptism;
 - ▶ *Moses* was saved with baptism;
 - ▶ *David* was saved without baptism; etc.



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HEBREWS 9:15-17

“Therefore [Jesus] is the mediator of *a new covenant*, so that those who are called may receive the promised eternal inheritance, *since a death has occurred* that redeems them from the transgressions committed under the *first* covenant...



PRINCIPAL POINTS

4. The thief **lived and died before the law of Christ went into effect.**

HEBREWS 9:15-17

"For where a *will* is involved, the death of the one who made it must be established. For a will takes effect only at death, since it is **not in force as long as the one who made it is alive."**



4. The thief **lived and died before the law of Christ went into effect.**
- ➔ For the same reasons *those OT men* were able to be saved without Christian baptism, *the thief* was able to be saved without Christian baptism.
 - ➔ For the same reasons why *those* characters' lack of Christian baptism has no bearing on whether men *today* must be baptized, the *thief's* lack of Christian baptism has **no bearing on whether men today must be baptized!**

