

## Baptism: Exception and Conclusion

The scolding might sound something like this: “Are you telling me that just because my papa wasn’t dunked in a pool of water he won’t be with God in heaven!?”

The question trivializes baptism and minimizes its meaning as found in scripture. It virtually turns the question of baptism into a personal attack. Though unintentional, I believe, such a question makes God out to be arbitrary. God’s demand for faith and repentance make sense. It makes sense that a person should be willing to openly confess his faith in Jesus, but baptism? How does a water dunking make sense?

This kind of questioning and reasoning closes the mind to the instruction of Jesus and the meaningful explanations presented by the New Testament writers. Such thinking could even present a loved one as a false standard, after all, *he was such a good man, he surely could not have gotten things wrong.*

I want to restate the original question using the explanation for baptism presented by the Apostle Paul in Romans 6:

“Are you telling me that just because my papa was not *united with Christ* he will not be with God in heaven?” You see, Paul taught that baptism united the believer with Christ. Perhaps that gives a clearer perspective.

From scripture we can read that Jesus directly connected baptism with discipleship in the Great Commission (Matthew 28:18-20). We can read that the Apostle Peter directly connected baptism to salvation (1 Peter 3:21). To sever baptism from discipleship and salvation would do an injustice to scripture.

Of course, there is the well-known exception. (I sincerely intend no sarcasm.) *The thief on the cross was not baptized but assured Paradise*

*with Jesus.* There is no question but that at least one exception exists. So, the question is restated (and toned down a bit): “Do you think God will make an exception for papa?”

I would not dare to sit in God’s seat of judgment. Yet, it is unwise to teach an exception as the normal way of things. Consider...

Enoch did not die physically (Genesis 4:24); nor did Elijah (2 Kings 2:11). Yet, who would teach that a person does not have to face physical death based on these two exceptions?

King David lusted for Bathsheba, committed adultery with her and later ordered the death of her husband to cover up their sin. Yet, David and Bathsheba were not stoned to death as the Law of Moses demanded. In fact, it was God himself who sent the prophet Nathan to confront David with his sin. Who in their right mind would use this *exception* to teach that God allows adultery and murder?

I know from scripture that God is just. I also see in scripture some instances that appear to be exceptions to strict justice. For the living, I can only teach what the scriptures teach about the importance of baptism and its connection to discipleship, salvation, and unity with Christ. As for the dead, I’ll leave things to God.

*A personal note: It has been my hope that this series of essays on baptism would be instructional, not adversarial or divisive. While I have presented some of my own reasoning when dealing with various questions, I have always appealed to scripture. I would urge anyone with questions about baptism to do the same.*

Is baptism really that important?  
What do the scriptures say?