

# THE BAPTIST LANDMARK

“REMOVE NOT THE ANCIENT LANDMARK, WHICH THY FATHERS HAVE SET.” PROVERBS 22:28

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## SALVATION BEFORE BAPTISM

by H. B. Little

Baptists understand that true believers have eternal life before they are baptized. Believers receive the forgiveness of sins when they truly believe. We are justified by *faith* and have peace with God. Rom 5:1. Not everyone holds this truth, *for many deceivers* are in this world. 2 Jn 1:7. Some believe baptism is essential to the forgiveness of sins—that a person cannot be saved without baptism.

We have set before our reader two radically different ideas: the Baptist principle of salvation by faith alone (a spiritual act), and the principle of salvation in the water (a physical act). Both cannot be true. The ideas are as different as light and darkness. Every sincere person must determine which idea to believe. While every born-again Christian knows when he passed from death to life—when he believed—we ought to be able to support our position with the Bible. Here are a few points for your consideration.

Christ made disciples before He baptized them. *Jesus made and baptized more disciples than John*, John 4:1. The disciples were not made when He baptized them; He baptized His disciples. They were His disciples before they were baptized. The true disciples of Christ are saved. Salvation precedes baptism.

Christ commissioned His church to make disciples before baptizing them. Consider the Great Commission. *Go ye therefore, and teach [make disciples of] all nations, baptizing them [the ones already discipled]*, Mat 28:14. While Christ was here, He made disciples and then baptized them. He sent His church on the very same mission. His instruction is clear, only those who are His disciples are to be baptized. Baptism doesn't make disciples. Salvation precedes baptism.

Christ gave men assurance of pardon—the forgiveness of sins—in the absence of baptism. Consider the woman who washed Christ's feet with her tears in the house of Simon the Pharisee. Simon saw this woman at the Lord's feet and said

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## DOCTRINE AND SUCCESSION

by M. A. Brawner

There was an occasion where a discussion was held on the topic of serving the Lord in His Church. One of the men in the discussion held to the view which is found in the notes of Study Bibles, taught by popular preachers across television, and cultivated in modern seminaries and colleges. This view suggests that every born again person is part of the Church the Lord organized. According to this view, it matters little where a born again person attends Church as long as they are born again and trying to live for the Lord. The other man in the discussion held to the view of those who know that particular doctrine and status of Churches go hand-in-glove. If the doctrine fails to be sound, the Church also fails to be sound. While rejoicing in soul salvation, these understand that there is only “One Lord, One Faith, and One Baptism” which excludes every other thing that calls itself “Faith and Baptism” because they fail to align with the “One Lord”.

Multitudes of those who are truly born again have forsaken the Lord and His Church by falling for the position of the first man in the discussion. When the first position is read, it seems very kind and compassionate. It places the emphasis on people being born again so they gain heaven and escape hell. There are many issues of life and eternity which are left out of this position. For one, it fails to see how that the majority of these so called “churches” use “repeat after me” methods to work with lost sinners. They believe they can lead sinners through the Bible and help them down the path that leads to salvation. In this way, people who are truly born again allow their children and grandchildren to be trapped by a “Feel Good” view of serving the Lord.

Additionally, these so-called “churches” who hold the view of “just get them saved”, practice open doctrines of the New Testament. For instance, when it comes to baptism, either sprinkling or

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## PERILS IN PREACHING

John Taylor (1752-1836) was a Baptist preacher who labored mostly on the Kentucky frontier. He was in the ministry for over fifty years. In those fifty years, he travelled an hundred thousand miles preaching the gospel. He authored “A History of Ten Baptist Churches” which ought to be read by every Baptist preacher. In this book, Bro. Taylor gives a summary of his ministry. He was a man in the mold of Paul: in journeyings often and in perils. He tirelessly labored for the Lord providing a wonderful example to us of persistence in preaching to a lost and dying world. Here he tells us of some the hardships he endured carrying the word of God.

*...inconveniences I often met with them; I will name a few of them; traveling once with a companion, our lot was to take up quarters in a deserted Cabin that had two apartments, in one of them we put our horses for safe keeping, in the other we built a fire and slept; in the morning we found our horses had broken out, and in the dry glade grass it was impracticable to track them, however we searched the chief of the next day, but found them not, in which time we ate up our provisions; it was about thirty miles to the first inhabitants ahead, and nearly the same behind, we left our Cabin in the evening to go on ahead, with our Saddles and all we had on our backs; after a few miles dark compelled us to take up camp in the great open glade, he having a gun we obtained fire, but little or no fuel to supply it; but, though in the middle of winter, the weather was not very cold, so that we suffered as much from hunger as cold, for we had walked very hard to find our horses. The next morning, without a mouthful to eat, we set out with all the cheerfulness we were master of, to make this near thirty miles, with all our luggage before we got breakfast—the trace was very slashy [marshy, muddy] in these great*

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within himself that she was a sinner and should be rebuked by the Lord. After Jesus rebuked the self-righteousness of Simon, He turned to the woman and said, "Thy sins are forgiven...thy faith hath saved thee; go in peace." Luke 7:48-50. Was this woman saved by baptism? No. She was sitting at the feet of Jesus. There is not a hint of water in the verse, except her tears. Yet at the feet of Jesus she found salvation—the forgiveness of sins—without baptism.

Consider the thief who was crucified alongside the Savior. As others mocked the Lord, this dying man said, "We indeed [are] justly [condemned]; for we receive the due reward of our deeds: but this man [Jesus] hath done nothing amiss." Then he turned to the Savior and said, "Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom." Luke 23:41-42. How did the Lord respond? Did He say, "if only you weren't fixed to the cross, if only there was water"? No! He gave the man assurance that his sins were forgiven—that his prayer was heard. The Savior tenderly spoke, "Today, shalt thou be with me in paradise." Luke 23:43. That thief died with the assurance of salvation without baptism.

The Spirit gives men assurance of pardon in the absence of baptism. Consider the conversion of the Gentiles in the house of Cornelius at Caesarea. Peter had been called to preach unto the men of that house. And he preached unto them Jesus Christ and Him crucified. *While Peter yet spake...the Holy Ghost fell on all them which heard the word.* Acts 10:44. Peter recalls this occasion after his return to Jerusalem, saying, "God...bare them witness, giving them the Holy Ghost... and put no difference between us and them, purifying their hearts by faith." Act 15:8. These Gentiles heard the word and believed, and God gave assurance that He had purified (cleansed) their hearts by giving them the Holy Ghost. Only after the evident outpouring of the Holy Ghost did Peter call for their baptism. They received the assurance of salvation before they were baptized.

Christ taught salvation by faith in Him without baptism. Consider the following passage. *He that heareth My word, and believeth on Him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death*

*unto life.* John 5:24. The Savior plainly stated that the final condition of salvation is belief. He that believes *hath* (has now) eternal life. When a believer is baptized, he is already in possession of eternal life. He had it the very moment he believed.

Paul taught salvation by faith in Christ without baptism. Consider the conversion of the Philippian Jailer. Paul and Silas had been jailed for their preaching of the resurrected Savior. While in prison, they prayed and praised God. He caused an earthquake which led to their release. In the midst of this, the jailer came before Paul and Silas and asked point-blank, "sirs, what must I do to be saved?" Acts 16:30. The answer of the preachers was plain, "believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." Acts 16:31. The passage is so plain that it is unmistakable to an unbiased mind. Belief is the final condition of salvation. Salvation comes before baptism.

The Old Testament prophets taught salvation by faith in Christ. Consider the sermon preached by Peter to the household of Cornelius. "To Him [Christ] give all the prophets witness, that through His name whosoever believeth in Him shall receive remission of sins." Acts 10:43. According to Peter, the prophets foretold of the coming Savior. They taught that men are saved by faith in Him. They prophesied hundreds of years before baptism was given, with the exception of John the Baptist.

The baptismal salvation crowd often object to this last line of argument. They say that before baptism was instituted obedience to other religious rituals were essential to salvation. But Abraham was saved without any religious ritual. Paul writes, *Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness.* Rom 4:3. In other words, Abraham was right with God by faith. Paul asks, *cometh this blessedness then upon the circumcision only, or upon the uncircumcision also?* Rom 4:9. In other words, does God count righteous only those who have received the ordinances? He answers his own question: *for we say that faith was reckoned to Abraham for righteousness. How was it then reckoned? When he was in circumcision, or in uncircumcision? Not in circumcision, but in uncircumcision.* Rom 4:9-10. It was not the ordinance that made Abraham right with God. It was his faith. Not only does Paul say that it was Abraham's faith that saved him. It was his faith before his obedience in circumcision.

Salvation comes before baptism—or any other ordinance.

Was Abraham a special circumstance? Paul answers this question in the same passage. He writes, *now it [the history of Abraham] was not written for his sake alone, that it was imputed to him; but for us also, to whom it shall be imputed, if we believe on Him that raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead.* Rom 4:23-24. This account was not written for the honor of Abraham alone. He is no special circumstance when it comes to the means of salvation. His example shows us how to be saved. Abraham was right with God before the ordinance. And Paul tells us that we must be right with God the same way. We are saved before baptism.

We have set before you the truth of God's word. Jesus, the Spirit, Paul, Peter, the prophets, and Abraham all testify that salvation is obtained by faith before obedience to any ordinance. Salvation comes before baptism. This a true Christian knows very well.

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## SCHOLARLY COMMENTARY

Few scriptures are as misunderstood as Mark 16:16. The passage states:

*He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned.*

This article contains explanations of Mark 16:16 from two Baptist preachers who were first-rate scholars.

John Broadus was a co-founder of the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary and its second president. During his presidency, our churches considered the seminary sound in the faith. He wrote an explanation of this verse in his [Commentary on the Gospel of Mark](#):

*Believeth, namely, the gospel they preached. And is baptized. It was a matter of course that one who believed would be baptized, as the recognized public confession of Christ and symbol of allegiance to him. In all the cases described in the Acts and Epistles, this was done immediately upon believing. It is therefore naturally associated here with believing, as its appropriate and expected manifestation. But the salvation, being spiritual, is, strictly speaking, conditioned upon the spiritual act of believing (compare Paul's teaching), and not upon the ceremonial act which manifests the*

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pouring or full body immersion are accepted as valid. Even if a group says that only full body immersion is required, there is little care whether a scriptural Church authorized it or whether an administrator who meets scriptural qualifications is involved. After all, they really believe soul salvation already puts them in what they call the "church" so any details about how baptism is administered makes little sense to them. The Lord's Supper, even if it is practiced, is offered to anyone present who believes they are a child of God. In the same service might be those who were sprinkled as an infant for salvation, those who were baptized as an adult for salvation, those who engage in "repeat after me" for salvation, and those who are truly born again. Each and everyone is offered the Lord's Supper as long as they feel good about their salvation. Can any clear thinking child of God believe that the Lord is the head of such a monstrosity? Such so-called "churches" are far from being "kind and compassionate". They are "cruel and dishonoring". They are cruel to those whom they deceive and dishonoring to the Lord with Whom is "Light and No Darkness At All".

Sincere and clear thinking people know the Bible is the Word of God. In this day, we are required to point out that the King James Version of the Bible is the one that accurately contains what the Holy Spirit inspired to be written in the original languages. All others have mostly been developed so that book sellers can make money and the devil can confuse people about what God has actually shared with man. With this said, sincere and clear thinking people need to appeal to the Bible in order to learn what it means to serve the Lord in His Church. God has been clear with details on this topic.

It is clear that the Lord said He would build His own Church. In Matthew 16:18, the Lord plainly said that He would build His own Church on "the Rock". This statement is clarified when we read in the book of Ephesians how the Church was built. Here we read, "And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief corner stone", Eph 2:20. So then, the Lord built His Church after establishing it with His own apostles and

Himself being the chief corner stone. He then said that the "gates of hell" would never prevail against it, Matt 16:18. This means that the Church the Lord established would continue through the centuries of time without a break in its succession. Like the links in a chain, the Lord started it back nearly 2,000 years ago and Church has sprung from Church, always linked together, to this very day.

It is also clear that these Churches have been taught to hold to the doctrine the Lord gave it in order to remain as He established the first one. This is how they remain obedient to the Lord rather than submitting to what makes men happy. To the Church in Rome it was written, "But now is made manifest, and by the scriptures of the prophets, according to the commandment of the everlasting God, made known to all nations for the obedience of faith", Rom 16:26. This points out that God has given commandment through the scriptures so that men would be obedient to "The Faith".

Peter pointed out that those who have been saved and united to the Church are, "Elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ...", 1 Pet 1:2. Here we find Church members being reminded of how were born again and united together in order to be obedient to Jesus Christ.

Paul taught to Timothy, "But continue thou in the things which thou hast learned and hast been assured of, knowing of whom thou hast learned them; and that from a child thou hast known the holy scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus", 2 Tim 3:14-15. Again, we learn that God has used the scriptures of the Bible to bring the knowledge of salvation to man with the goal of them obeying Christ during their lives.

The succession of these Churches possessing these doctrines have been held consistent by the preaching and teaching ministry headed by the Lord. We find this in such scriptures as Eph 4:11-12 which state, "And He gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ." We also see how 2 Tim 2:2 presents the following

instruction: "And the things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also." An unbroken lineage of Churches who continue to teach what the Lord originally taught them is supported by a God called teaching and preaching ministry. These are gifts from the Lord to His Churches so they can do the work of "the perfecting of saints, the work of the ministry, and the edifying of the body of Christ." Faithful men in the Churches have passed along to other faithful men who went on to perpetuate this work having served to preserve these doctrines.

The opportunity to serve the Lord is the greatest station any individual can fill in this life. Doing so must take place by saved people who seek out and unite with one of the Churches who has arrived in this day through the unbroken lineage of Churches from the one the Lord established. Such Churches are particular with the doctrine they believe and teach. They hold to the unique administration of the ordinances by a ministry which meets the qualifications contained in the Bible. The history of these doctrines and practices coincide with the succession of the Churches who hold them. May God grant the grace needed so that many eyes may be opened to such a succession in order to lay hold on it to enjoy the rich blessings it brings.

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**PERILS IN PREACHING**

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lonesome glades, besides Yoh River and many of its branches to wade through—after we left the glades the way was monstrous mountainous, before we got to Cheat River or Tunkard's Bottom those mountains appeared pretty hard on our hunger bitten knees. We passed along by a hunters camp late in the day but they were gone, we rummaged about after bones they had cast away, and perhaps been pillaged by their dogs, but could not get one mouthful; however, we got breakfast and supper together at night. My partner who travelled with me in this little rugged tour, was a pleasant little man, the name of Powel. It was at his house our great meeting had been, with but few people where Clark's wife obtained conversion while on her knees. At the time of our travel Powell was a Baptist and now lives in Woodford county, Kentucky. It is said he now loves whiskey a little too much. Powel's horse went home, mine I never got which was a considerable loss to me. Another similar tour I had about two winters after and partly on the same road. In the first instance I had no horse, in the last I had one too many, for I had one to lead; there had been snow on the ground, but a great rain had taken it chiefly off. I started from a place called the Crab Orchard, not far from Tunkard's Bottom, it was upwards of forty miles to the first house, I set out early to gain that object before night; I soon took a tremendous mountain called Laurel Hill, but in that place called Cheat Mountain; my road was so small for eight miles, that it could scarcely be followed by day light, when I came to the great glades where the settlement had been, the road was plainer, I soon after came to a creek, over which a bridge had been made by the settlers, when there, I saw that the water was up to the planks of the bridge; I pushed on but soon found the planks were afloat, but hurrying forward, the lead horse first fell through and as the one I rode was going down, I sprang from him on the floating planks, with my saddlebags in my hand, and escaped clear to the opposite shore; when I turned round, here were both my horses between the cills of the bridge, and barricaded with floating planks on each side, and the water about as deep as they were high. The next thing was to counsel how to get them out, and none to counsel but myself, for the poor horses could say

*nothing on that head, while they stood trembling in the cold water. Those glade creeks are generally deep, with steep banks, lined with small willows on each margin, and the water running dead. This stream was about eight steps across it, and timber laid on those planks and locked in the willows at each end had prevented their floating off—my plan was to stand on the cill of the bridge, up to my knees in water, and float the planks off till I got to my horses, and with mighty struggling with the poor animals, get them up the bank. My saddle was wet, the bridle caked with ice and my hands so benumbed, that I could not draw on my gloves. I suppose I lost a full hour of the day, at this place, with my feet wet to my knees, my bare hands to hold the frozen bridles, one to ride with, the other to lead, my saddle-bags being dry kept me a little from the wet saddle. I hurried on lest Yoh River should rise beyond fording; I soon met with another creek, which ran over my horses, where I got a fresh ducking, when I came to the River, I found it was impossible to cross it except by swimming, which I had often done in similar cases; I paused awhile, but when I found that I must go up the current to get to the opposite shore, and just below was an ivy bluff for a long distance, that was impassible but that I must inevitably be dashed against it; viewing the muddy waves foaming over the great rocks which lay in the River, and dashing against the icy rock on the other shore, I concluded that it was not proper to tempt the Lord my God to work a miracle in my preservation. What food I had for myself and horses we consumed, and about one o'clock, turned tail to get, if possible, to where I came from in the morning; riding on, I became so very cold in my wet freezing clothes, I concluded a little walking would comfort me. It was usual to drive my horse before me in such cases, but the beast I led, being untutored that way, broke ground to run back, and both together ran off in full speed, I ran with all my might to keep in sight of them, in these great glades; I thus ran a mile or two in hopes the water ahead where they had so hard a struggle would stop them, which it did, there I caught them, I was now very wet with heat and sweat, what shall I do was the next question, swim the creek immediately which had risen higher or wait and cool first; I had ten miles to go, the sun about two hours high, the road amazing bad when I got to Cheat Mountain, and so dim that I could scarce*

*follow it by day light, the moon also dark, that there was no alternative but to dash on, or camp in the woods without fire; I mounted my horse and swam the creek with all my sweat, the water ran up round my middle, and soon after my clothes froze except what lay next to my skin.—About dark I got to where I started from at morning light, getting from my horse I could scarce keep my feet; I staggered on to the house, and soon went to bed, my hands were so swollen with cold that I could scarce use them, after some warm supper I slept sound; for several days I felt in a kind of listless stupor; about one month after this I was stricken with a prodigious surfeit, a breaking out, from head to foot, in likeness of ringworm covered with white scales, so that scarce a part under my clothes was free from it, and continues more or less to this day, which has been a good deal upwards of forty years. I had many tours similar but none quite equal to the two last named, in point of difficulty.*

**SCHOLARLY COMMENTARY**

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*believing. A believer who should refuse to perform the ceremonial act so expressly enjoined would be gravely disobeying the Saviour; and they who have substituted for the baptism of believers a ceremony performed upon infants have utterly set aside the act of personal confession and allegiance which the Saviour appointed.*

A. T. Robertson was a protege of Dr. Broadus—and his son-in-law. Dr. Robertson was a professor, an author, and a well-respected scholar in his day. He wrote the following in his Word Pictures of the New Testament:

**And is baptized** (καὶ βαπτισθεῖς). *The omission of baptized with “disbelieveth” would seem to show that Jesus does not make baptism essential to salvation. Condemnation rests on disbelief, not on baptism. So salvation rests on belief. Baptism is merely the picture of the new life not the means of securing it.*

Both Dr. Broadus and Dr. Robertson believed true faith to be the final condition of salvation. They taught salvation to be a spiritual matter which could never be obtained by an outward act—even one as important as baptism.