



#3 In the Sojourners Series  
**A Clear Conscience**

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By Jason Corder

## Touchstones

Throughout the Old Testament, God instituted certain signs and ceremonies to be reminders to his people of significant events and His presence with them.

Sometimes, singular events reminded the people of God's provision, such as the rainbow that was displayed to Noah and his family upon leaving the ark.

However, these were often participatory events in which God worked with his people to demonstrate His power and will.

- It was Noah whom God called to build an ark in which God would provide the salvation of mankind
- Consider the Passover in which God had the family specifically sacrifice a lamb and take the blood of that animal and anoint the doorposts and lintels of their home. Any homes marked would be spared of God's judgment that night.
- What about the deliverance experience of walking through the Red Sea with water piled up on both sides, emerging from the other side into freedom?
- Or maybe the simple command that the prophet of God delivered to a military commander telling him to wash in the Jordan River to be healed of the dreaded leprosy.

In each of these cases, God was working, yet he chose to create a participatory role for his people in which they might demonstrate their faith in him.

Many of these events were commemorated by yearly festivals and activities.

- When God delivered his commandments to the people through Moses on Mount Sinai, he instituted an Old Testament law divided into three parts in which the people were commanded to participate:

## 1. Ceremonial Law

*The ceremonial law* explicitly related to Israel's worship (Lev 1:2-3).

- Its primary purpose was to point forward to Jesus Christ;
- these laws, therefore, were no longer necessary after Jesus' death and resurrection.
- While ceremonial law no longer binds us, the principles behind them—to worship and love a holy God—still apply.
- The Pharisees often accused Jesus of violating ceremonial law.

## 2. Civil Law

*The civil law* applied to daily living in Israel (Deut 24:10-11).

- While these commands were so specifically designed to govern God's people, the Jews, the principles behind these commands are timeless and should guide our conduct.
- Jesus demonstrated these principles by example.

## 3. Moral Law

*The moral law* (such as the Ten Commandments) is the direct command of God, and it requires strict obedience (Exod 20:13).

- The moral law reveals the nature and will of God.
- Jesus obeyed the moral law completely.
- He amplified and reinforced these commandments throughout the gospels, specifically the sermon on the Mount.

When Jesus came into this world, he fulfilled the entirety of the old law, something that no one was able to do before him, and he established a New Covenant written in his blood,

Although the ceremonial law was set aside after the death and resurrection of Jesus, (A fact that the apostle Paul and other apostles make abundantly clear). **Jesus chose to bring two aspects of the ceremonial law into the new covenant:**

- On the night that he was betrayed, he observed the Passover feast with the apostles and repurposed the elements of the Passover feast to remind us of his broken body and shed blood.
- And he repurposed the ceremonial washing or baptism of repentance in the Old Testament to be that place in which we might receive the forgiveness of sin.

## I. The BIG Deal

No matter who we are, sin is a part of our story, but it wasn't always that way. When God put Adam in the garden, he put him in a world of perfection and gave him one simple commandment.

### **Genesis 2:15-17**

*The Lord God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to work it and keep it. <sup>16</sup> And the Lord God commanded the man, saying, "You may surely eat of every tree of the garden, <sup>17</sup> but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat<sup>d</sup> of it you shall surely die."*

And yet one doesn't read far into Genesis the third chapter until we're introduced to the serpent who was more crafty than the other animals.

- He begins to create doubt in the mind of Eve whether or not the things that the Lord had said were actually true.
- He even goes so far as to say you won't surely die?!

### **Genesis 3:6-7**

*So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was to be desired to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate, and she also gave some to her husband who was with her, and he ate. <sup>7</sup> Then the eyes of both were opened, and they knew that they were naked.*

There they stood before one another and before the Lord naked and exposed.

Satan did not play fair

- Some of the information that was given was true!
- But it was set in a bed of deception,
- His intention was to forever shatter the beautiful relationship God desired with his creation.
- Satan knew better than anyone that a holy God could never have a personal relationship with a sinful creation.

And yet, here we stand, both naked and exposed, still struggling with the consequences and tendencies of the sin that entered the world so long ago.

The apostle Paul painfully reminds us in Romans, the third chapter that all of us are guilty of the same failure.

**Romans 3:23**

*for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,*

And that the consequences of those moral failings or sins remain the same as they did in the moment that God placed Adam in the garden.

**Romans 6:23**

*For the wages of sin is death....*

This is without question the biggest issue that mankind faces

- without sin, the world was devoid of death, pain, suffering, and work,
- yet mankind has chosen generation after generation to follow the footsteps of the first couple and choose sin.

God could have abandoned his creation, and who could blame him? But he chose to do something radically different.

**Genesis 3**

*And they heard the sound of the Lord God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and the man and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the Lord God among the trees of the garden. <sup>9</sup> But the Lord God called to the man and said to him, "Where are you?"*

Instead of running in the other direction, our Heavenly Father came to meet us in our sinful situation and, in the beauty of the garden, called out to a now-broken creation and asked, **where are you?**

**I would like to ask you.... where are you in your relationship with the Heavenly Father?**

- It is the most important question that you will ever answer,
- The enemy may try to convince us as he did with Adam and Eve to cover our sins or hide from the face of the heavenly father,
- the best possible solution to our problem is to common stand before him who knows it all.

In Romans, Paul does not just lay out the dire case against us but, in the same sentence, reminds us that God was prepared from the beginning to present us with the most amazing opportunity.

**Romans 6:23**

*For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.*

## II. An Unfathomable Solution

God will address all three parties that day in the Garden of Eden to both Adam and Eve. God lays out the consequences of sin, and as we read through this list, we recognize the heaviness of the price that has been paid by humanity.

Yet God doesn't just speak to Adam and Eve, but he speaks to Satan as well. He says to him:

### **Genesis 3:15**

*15 I will put enmity between you and the woman,  
and between your offspring<sup>[a]</sup> and her offspring;  
he shall bruise your head,  
and you shall bruise his heel.”*

If you get the sense that God knew this was coming you would be right.

In fact, the apostle Paul would remind the church in Ephesus that before the foundation of the world God already had determined that we would somehow be Holy and Blameless once again.

Ephesians 1:4

*Even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, we should be holy and blameless before him.*

But it wouldn't be until after the cross and the resurrection that we would fully recognize the cost of our salvation.

Peter, preaching the first gospel message on the day of Pentecost, brilliantly lays out the work of God throughout the Old Testament, culminating in verse 23.

### **Acts 2:23**

*this Jesus, delivered up according to the definite plan  
and foreknowledge of God, you crucified and killed by the hands of  
lawless men.*

That is the price of our salvation. The perfect lamb would have to be slaughtered. His blood spilled, so that redemption might be secured that the price of our sin might be paid.

**One of Jesus' final words from the cross was **tetelestai**, which means it is finished or the debt has been paid.**

Every Jewish person there would have instantly recognized this word as the equivalent of a Hebrew phrase that was used in the Old Testament sacrificial system.

- Each year, on the Jewish holiday called The Day of Atonement, the High Priest would enter into the temple and make a special sacrifice for the sins of the people of Israel.
- As soon as the priest had killed the animal, he would emerge from the place of sacrifice and declare to the waiting crowd “it is finished” in Hebrew.
- In this sacrifice, all the sins of Israel were symbolically placed on the lamb that was killed and punished in their place.

Yet the Bible teaches that this sacrificial system was never really complete or finished because the sacrifice of that lamb was imperfect and temporary.

- But when Jesus died on the cross, he became the perfect and final sacrifice for all sin.

### III. An Eternity Changing Event

There’s a great deal of confusion about baptism among folks today.

Although the New Testament seems to approach baptism in a very straightforward way, the concept of baptism is a source of great division.

People ask questions like.....

- What is baptism for?
- Is baptism necessary?
- What is the mode or method of baptism?
- Can you be saved without being baptized?

Fortunately scripture speaks to each of these questions.

When we think about baptism, we recognize that Peter may be one of the most qualified people to speak on the subject.

- It was to Peter that Jesus gave the keys to the kingdom,
- The opportunity to unlock the door for the Jews, the Samaritans, and the gentile world of the gospel of Jesus Christ,

- The good news of what Jesus came into this world to accomplish.

When asked on the day of Pentecost what the convicted believers should do to be saved. Peter gave them the answer.

## A: What is the purpose of Baptism?

Often times, understanding the purpose of something is the most important thing to understanding why something is important.

Much of the confusion around the subject of biblical baptism comes from a misunderstanding of the purpose of baptism.

- Some believe that you're baptized into a church
- Well, there's believe that baptism regenerates us
- Still believe that baptism is merely an outward sign of an inward commitment.

What does the Bible say? The purpose of baptism is?

### **Acts 2:37-38**

*When the people heard this, they were cut to the heart and said to Peter and the other apostles, "Brothers, what shall we do?"*

*And Peter said to them, "Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit."*

Peter plainly states that baptism is for **the forgiveness of your sins.**

- It isn't a sign
- He doesn't say its something we do to earn salvation
- Nor is it to join the church

## **Baptism is for the forgiveness of sin!**

## B: Is baptism necessary for salvation?

In our text today, Peter makes the following observation about baptism.



## **I Peter 3:21**

*because they formerly did not obey, when God's patience waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was being prepared, in which a few, that is, eight persons, were brought safely through water. <sup>21</sup> Baptism, which corresponds to this, now saves you, not as a removal of dirt from the body but as an appeal to God for a good conscience, through the resurrection of Jesus Christ, <sup>22</sup> who has gone into heaven and is at the right hand of God, with angels, authorities, and powers having been subjected to him.*

## **Baptism, which corresponds to this, now saves you!**

This is a bold and straightforward statement from a man entrusted with sharing the first gospel message.

Whatever our position may be on baptism, his words here should make us all pause.

**There are several things right off that we should observe about this text.**

### **1. Baptism is not a work.**

- Not the removal of dirt from the flesh.
- The only thing physically in this world that we can accomplish by submerging ourselves in a pool of water is to physically clean the dirt from our bodies.
- However Peter emphatically points out that this is not what baptism accomplishes! This is not about us getting wet or washing ourselves up so we're worthy.

**This is a place where we come to God and ask him for something.**

One of the questions we must always ask when it comes to a discussion about salvation is at what point does a person become saved? How does someone announce to God and the world they intention to follow Christ as the Lord of their life?

**Over the years, very groups have advocated for different positions**

- Some say that the parents of a child make that determination, which is later confirmed by the child as they reach adulthood.
- Others say that we are to pray, announcing to the heavenly father our intention to make Jesus the Lord of our life.

The problem is that there is no scriptural reference for either one of these traditions.

## 2 It is a personal appeal to God

The Greek word translated as "appeal" (is ἐπερώτημα – *eperōtēma* . This is the only place in the entire Greek Bible - Greek New Testament and Septuagint Old Testament - where the word appears.

It is defined as:

1. an inquiry, a question
2. a demand
3. earnestly seeking, a craving, an intense desire

As defined by scripture, baptism is seeking, craving, or desiring forgiveness of our sins. Can we be saved without our sins having been forgiven?

## 3. Through the resurrection of Christ.

The resurrection of Jesus Christ changed everything!

The consequence of sin, death, had held the world in its grip for generations, but on that Sunday morning, when Jesus walked from the tomb, his emergence signaled a powerful new force was at work in this broken world.

Death had been swallowed up in life, and hope for a future free from the consequences of sin would someday be realized.

Baptism is a moment of transition, the moving from death to life.

**Acts 2:37-38**

*“Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.*

#### **Titus 3:4**

*But when the goodness and loving kindness of God our Savior appeared, <sup>5</sup> he saved us, not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to his own mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit,<sup>6</sup> whom he poured out on us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior, <sup>7</sup> so that being justified by his grace we might become heirs according to the hope of eternal life.*

The word for regeneration in verse 5 (“[God] saved us . . . by the washing of regeneration” [palingenesias in Greek]) is used only one other place in the entire Bible

- Matthew 19:28. Jesus says to the twelve apostles, “Truly, I say to you, in the new world (a very loose translation of “in the regeneration” [Greek en te palingenesia]) when the Son of Man will sit on his glorious throne, you who have followed me will also sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel.”
- This a reference to the rebirth of the creation.

It’s like saying “in the new heavens and the new earth” that Isaiah spoke about in Isaiah 65:17 and 66:22.

## **C: What is the mode or method of baptism?**

The answer to the motor method of baptism is a bit simpler. The word baptize is actually a transliterated word. What that means is that the translators, in copying the text from the original language to our English version, chose not to translate that word but rather create an English from the Greek.

Baptizo. (bap-tid'-zo) is used 76 in the scripture it means to dip, to immerse, to submerge (of vessels sunk) to cleanse by dipping or submerging, to wash, to make clean with water, to wash one's self, bathe to overwhelm

The clearest example that shows the meaning of baptizo is a text from the Greek poet and physician Nicander, who lived about 200 B.C.

- It is a recipe for making pickles and is helpful because it uses both words.
- Nicander says that in order to make a pickle, the vegetable should first be 'dipped'(bapto) into boiling water and then 'baptized' (baptizo) in the
- vinegar solution.
- Both verbs concern the immersing of vegetables in a solution.
- But the first is temporary. The second, the act of baptizing the vegetable, produces a permanent change.

## Conclusion

### **Mark 16:15-18**

*And he said to them, "Go into all the world and proclaim the gospel to the whole creation. Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned.*