

## The “Thief on the Cross”

The Bible makes it clear---in numerous passages—that baptism is an essential element in the conversion process (see the article on Baptism). Despite this fact, many churches teach that baptism has *nothing* to do with the conversion process, but is something that happens *after* one is already saved.

A favorite standard argument of this group refers to Jesus on the cross telling the thief that he would be with Jesus that day in Paradise (see Luke 23:43). The argument goes something like this: “See, the thief on the cross was saved—and he was not baptized. Therefore one does not have to be baptized in order to be saved.”

This totally bogus argument is effective only because of people’s ignorance of the Bible! Why? Simply this: when Jesus gave the command to be baptized (Matthew 28:18-20), it could not *possibly* refer to the thief on the cross. Why? HE WAS ALREADY DEAD! The command was given during the time between the resurrection and Jesus’ ascension. The first baptisms in response to the great commission did not occur until Pentecost (Acts 2). The thief had been in the grave for several weeks. *Of course* the thief was not baptized! (Dig up a corpse and dip it in water???? Not likely.)

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