

It Is Written

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Baptism and Jesus Blood

By Dub McClish

Despite the most explicit statements of Scripture to the contrary, most Protestant denominations deny that baptism is a condition of God's forgiveness of our sins. Some reason that acceptance of such would equal salvation by one's own works. Others reject the necessity of baptism because of their erroneous dictum of salvation by "grace alone" and "faith alone" (not realizing that this logically must exclude either "grace" or "faith"). To maintain their "denial syndrome" relative to baptism, men have invented numerous ingenious ploys to avoid the force of explicit statements of inspired men, including those made by Jesus (e.g., Mark 16:16; John 3:5; Acts 2:38; 22:16; Romans 6:3-4; Galatians 3:27; Titus 3:5; I Peter 3:21; et al.).

Those who teach and practice the New Testament doctrine concerning baptism in God's plan of salvation have been accused of teaching "water salvation." Acts 22:16 may elicit this accusation more often than any other passage: "And now why tarriest thou? Arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on his name." When we emphasize the plainness of this declaration that the guilt of sins is removed, but in the act of baptism, we hear the retort: "You believe that water will wash away sins." If this passage so states, then we would all be obligated to teach it. However, neither this nor any other statement in Scripture teaches such a thing, and we have never encountered anyone who believes such an obvious heresy.

One must look elsewhere to discover the only agent that can "wash away" the sins that will bring eternal condemnation, if not forgiven. Jesus "poured out" His blood for remission of the sins of mankind (Matthew 26:28). We are redeemed by Jesus' blood (I Peter 1:18-19). He "washed us from our sins in his own blood" (Revelation 1:5; cf. 7:14). The old hymn asks, "What can wash away my sin?" and flawlessly answers: "Nothing but the blood of Jesus." Unless one applies Jesus' blood to his sins, he will be eternally lost. What, then, does Acts 22:16 teach? Not what washes away sins, but when one's sins are "washed away." The "what" (as noted above) is the blood of Jesus; the "when" is in the act of baptism. Romans 6:3 explicitly makes baptism the access to Jesus' blood by saying one is "baptized into his death." The Scriptural conclusions are unavoidable:

- Forgiveness and salvation apart from the blood of Christ are impossible,
- Baptism is the means of access to the blood of Christ, and therefore,
- No baptism, no blood, no forgiveness or salvation.

MY SERVANT: ISRAEL OR JESUS?

By Terry Wane Benton

The skeptic claims: "Christian interpretations emerged over the centuries, often distorting the original meanings by selectively quoting verses and overlooking the nuances of Hebrew grammar. For example, in Isaiah 49:3, the servant is explicitly identified as "Israel."

Here, the skeptic took a verse out of its context and pretended that "My Servant" means "Israel" in every context. This effort aims to persuade you that Isaiah 52-53 is referring to Israel rather than speaking of the Messiah, Jesus.

When you read chapters 49-53, you will see that the skeptic makes a glaring error that was either blatantly careless or intentionally deceptive. It appears that the skeptic was hoping you would take his word for it and assume that, because Isaiah 49:3 mentions Israel as "My Servant," you would simply assume that this is the "real" context and usage in Isaiah 52-53.

Let me bring to your attention this deceptive move on the skeptic's part.

God has many different "servants", not just Israel. It depends on the context as to whom He may be calling someone "My Servant" and in what role a particular servant may be called into action. In Jeremiah, Babylon and Nebuchadnezzar are referred to as "My Servant" (Jeremiah 25:9; 27:6) because they served God's purpose of chastising Israel. He calls different ones to serve in various roles. In Isaiah 49:3, Israel is referred to as "My Servant", but in Isaiah 49:5, Isaiah is described as "My Servant." The service Isaiah provided was "to bring Jacob (Israel) back to God" and "so that Israel is gathered to Him (God)." So, in the same text and context, "My Servant" might refer to Israel when He looks back to the role they served in, but then, since Israel failed and fell away from God, Isaiah becomes "My Servant" to try to bring Israel back.

In Isaiah 49:6, Isaiah would be "a light to the Gentiles." Through the Gentiles studying and hearing the words of Isaiah, they would see the light and come to God, even when Israel ceased to be the light to the Gentiles.

In Isaiah 50:10, He asks Israel, "Who among you fears the Lord? Who obeys the voice of His Servant?" So, Israel is not "My Servant" in every text.

In Isaiah 52:13, "My Servant" is a "man" (Isaiah 52:14). His visage is marred more than any man. "He" is not Israel. He shall sprinkle many nations. Kings will shut their mouths at him (Isaiah 52:15). As we move into chapter 53, Isaiah is still talking about a specific man as "My Servant." He contrasts this specific Servant (a man) with "we" and "us" (the collective people of Israel). "He has no form or comeliness; and when we (Israelites) see him (Jesus)...We hid our faces from him (Jesus) (Isaiah 53:3). "He has borne our griefs" (Isaiah 53:4). "The Lord laid on him (Jesus) the iniquity of us all" (Isaiah 53:6).

There is no way to make "My Servant" be Israel in this text. You have to have an agenda to intentionally avoid seeing Jesus. Jesus is the one who was made an offering for sin. Israel was not made an offering for sin. Israel was among those who needed what this Servant came to provide. After Jesus' soul was made an offering for sin, His days were prolonged. Nobody ever thought this text was about "Israel, My Servant" until after they needed an agenda to get Jesus out of the text, and by doing so, they keep proving that they were the "stiff-necked" people Moses said they were. But we are not fooled. We see Jesus here as the only viable candidate for this amazing prophecy!

When Money Means Everything

By Zeke Flores

I know a guy to whom money means everything. He's not rich, but he is very well off and has everything he wants - a nice house, new cars, a beautiful family, and lots of toys - but he doesn't have Christ. His reasoning is, "I have everything I want; what can religion possibly add to me?"

How would you answer him? How can someone whose eyes are on the physical be convinced that the unseen realm of spirituality is worth prioritizing? It seems to me that there are many like my friend, people whose possessions never truly make them rich and whose sights are always just a bit too low.

And so, they miss the real riches.

"For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sake he became poor, so that you by his poverty might become rich" (II Corinthians 8:9).