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# ***Teaching Sound Doctrine***

## ***Lord Teach Us Pt. 11***

“The Most Popular Thief in Town”

Part 2

### THE THIEF’S KNOWLEDGE OF CHRIST

From what the thief said while hanging on the cross, he had a good deal of knowledge/information about Jesus already. It is true he could have learned what he stated during the crucifixion or it is just as likely that he could have learned it at a previous time we simply do not know we do know that the thief was by no means ignorant of who Jesus was.

We know some of the things the thief believed from the conversation.

1. He believed in the existence of God. We learn this in *Luk 23:40 But the other answering rebuked him, saying, Dost not thou fear God, seeing thou art in the same condemnation?*
2. The thief understood the standard of right and wrong. In the very next verse he states *Luk 23:41 And we indeed justly; for we receive the due reward of our deeds: but this man hath done nothing amiss.*
3. The innocence of Jesus was known to the thief because in the same verse he states This man (Jesus) had done nothing amiss.
4. The thief knew that Jesus was a king. That Jesus’ life would not end with the crucifixion. That Jesus would come in His kingdom. That Jesus could bless him in His kingdom.

His knowledge of these things?

1. It seems improbable that he would have learned these things while on the cross. He could have learned them from John, Jesus, or any of His disciples.

a. Mark 1:4-5 we learn that “John did baptize in the wilderness, and preach the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins. Verse 5 states “*And there went out unto him all the land of Judaea, and they of Jerusalem, and*

*were all baptized of him in the river of Jordan, confessing their sins.”*

b. John 4:1-2 *“When therefore the Lord knew how the Pharisees had heard that Jesus made and baptized more disciples than John, 2(Though Jesus himself baptized not, but his disciples,)”*

c. Jesus sent His disciples out on the limited commission; Mat. 10. The thief could have heard their teaching. Since we are not told the question could be asked. Could he have been a disciple? It is something we cannot prove nor disprove. However, one cannot insist that the thief had never been baptized.

### The Thief and the New Testament

In any consideration of the thief, one must keep in mind that the thief lived under the Old Testament. The writer of the book of Hebrews argues that a change of law was made. "For the Priesthood being changed, there is made of necessity a change also of the law" (Heb. 7:12). Hebrews 9:16, 17 tell us when this change of law was effected. "For where a testament is, there must of necessity be the death of him that made it. For a testament is of force where there hath been death: for it doth never avail while he that made it liveth." Paul, in Rom. 7:4, said: "Wherefore, my brethren, ye also were made dead to the law through the body of Christ." Prior to the death of Christ, the Old Testament was in force. After his death, the New Testament became effective.

It is obvious, therefore, that we live in the New Testament era. It is equally obvious that when Jesus said "Today shalt thou be with me in Paradise" the thief was yet under the Old Testament, since this remark was made prior to the death of Christ. Whatever might be shown to be true concerning the salvation of the thief is of no relevance to our salvation, since he lived under a different law from that under which people today live.

One might as well argue that if Abraham ' Moses and David were saved without baptism, then one today can likewise be saved without baptism. But baptism is made a condition of salvation under the New Testament. It was not a condition of salvation under the Old Testament, the law under which Abraham, Moses, David and the thief lived.

In the secular field, there are many laws applicable to us today that were not applicable to our ancestors. The right to assess an income tax was established by the passing of the sixteenth amendment to the constitution in 1913. Should one

therefore argue, "Since my great-grandfather paid no income tax, I therefore do not have to pay income tax?" The tax men would quickly explain, "But the laws under which you live demand the payment of income tax, while there was no such law when your great-grandfather lived." My great-grandfather very likely did not have to have a driver's license, a draft card, or a social security number. But the law under which I live requires all of these. The Old Testament did not command baptism, but the New Testament does.

### Christ's Authority on Earth to Forgive

Jesus taught in Matt. 9:1-8 that he had authority on earth to forgive sins. He said, "But that ye may know that the Son of man hath authority on earth to forgive sins (then saith he to the sick of the palsy), Arise, and take up thy bed, and go unto thy house" (Matt. 9:6). The palsied man was not told to be baptized, nor was he commanded to believe, or to repent. While Jesus was on earth, he could dispense of his spiritual goods on any terms that he saw fit.

Thus during the personal ministry of Christ, there were different conditions stipulated for salvation. In Lk. 18:18-30 a "certain ruler" was told to "sell all that thou hast, and distribute unto the poor . . ." This is not a universal condition of salvation today. This was one of those special cases, while Jesus was yet on earth. He then could dispense of his goods on any terms that he saw fit, or he unconditionally could bestow his goods. Prior to a man's death, he may do with his property as he chooses. But after the death of the testator, his goods are bestowed according to the terms of his will. Different conditions for receiving God's blessings were imposed upon different individuals during the personal ministry of Christ, and in some instances, no conditions at all were imposed.

But after the death of Christ, a new law (testament) became effective. His spiritual blessings were then imparted according to the terms of his will. No longer was there a diversity of conditions imposed. Under the New Testament, the same things are required of every individual. Before the household of Cornelius Peter declared, "Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons: but in every nation he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness, is acceptable to him" (Acts 10: 34, 35). God only has one plan of salvation now, and that plan is revealed in the gospel of Christ (Rom. 1: 16). One of the conditions of that plan of salvation is that one be baptized for the remission of sins. Peter taught that "every one of you" must "repent and be baptized" in the name of Christ "for the remission of sins" (Acts 2: 38).

There is no need to inquire as to whether Abraham, or Moses, or the thief on the cross had to be baptized. The pertinent question is, "what must I do to be saved?" This question is not answered by finding out what the thief (who lived

under a different law, and while Christ was yet on earth) had to do. "What must I do?" can only be answered by a search of the testament under which I live. Since the death of Christ, men have lived under the New Testament, and by that testament we shall- be judged (John 12:48).

### Conclusion

In every instance of conversion about which you can read in the New Testament, the subject converted was baptized. Thus, my friend let me urge you not to misuse the thief, and to permit your misunderstanding of his salvation to keep you from doing what Christ has commanded you to do. Remember, "The Pharisees and the lawyers rejected for themselves the counsel of God, being not baptized of him" (Lk. 7:30). Do not make the same mistake they made.

The New Testament declares, "Blessed are they that DO HIS COMMANDMENTS that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city" (Rev. 22:14). One of Christ's commandments is baptism. Jesus said, "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that disbelieveth shall be condemned" (Mk. 16:16). Please do not permit the thief on the cross to cause you to reject the counsel of God against yourself. When Peter preached to Cornelius' household, the Bible says, "And he COMMANDED them to be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ" (Acts 10:48). Unless you "do his commandments," one of which is baptism, you will have no right to the tree of life.