

aired on KALS September 9, 2003

I Peter 3:18-22

18. “For Christ also died for sins once for all, the just for the unjust, so that He might bring us to God, having been put to death in the flesh, but made alive in the spirit;

19. in which also He went and made proclamation to the spirits now in prison,

20. who once were disobedient, when the patience of God kept waiting in the days of Noah, during the construction of the ark, in which a few, that is, eight persons, were brought safely through the water.

21. Corresponding to that, baptism now saves you--not the removal of dirt from the flesh, but an appeal to God for a good conscience--through the resurrection of Jesus Christ,

22. who is at the right hand of God, having gone into heaven, after angels and authorities and powers had been subjected to Him.”

In this passage we find the specific statement that “baptism now saves you.” It is important to note that Jesus gave Peter, the author of these words, the keys to the kingdom of heaven according to Matthew 16:19. The phrase “baptism now saves you” is a major key indeed.

The baptism referred to here is necessarily water

baptism, as seen in the context. Verse 21 starts with the clause “and corresponding to that” followed by the statement “baptism now saves you.” The baptism here corresponds to the previous verse, which states that Noah and his family “were brought safely through the water.”

After stating that “baptism now saves you,” I Peter 3:21 goes on to clarify how water baptism is used by God to save a person. The verse goes on to say about baptism: “(It is) not the removal of dirt from the flesh, but an appeal to God for a good conscience.” Water baptism is not a bath to remove physical dirt from the outside of the body. But instead is an appeal to God for a good conscience--in other words baptism is an inner washing. A good conscience is one that is washed clean and purged of the guilt of sins. Forgiveness of sins yields a good conscience. This is consistent with Peter’s original statement on the day of Pentecost when he proclaimed, “Repent and let each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.” Acts 2:38

The main idea of the kernel sentence within I Peter 3:21 is that “baptism now saves you.” This thought is completed with the phrase “through the resurrection of Jesus Christ.” God proved that Jesus was the Christ by raising Him from the grave alive. When a person rises up out of the watery grave of baptism to walk in newness of life, this type of the resurrection confirms that the person is now a child of God.

By God's own word, the one baptism spoken of in I Peter 3:21 has the power to save you.

Also note the phrase "an appeal to God" in I Peter 3:21. The word "appeal" used here in the Greek was a legal term which meant "to summon." This is comparable to a subpoena used in our court system today. So God has designed baptism as a divine summons, our appeal which guarantees His presence at baptism--by His own word!