baptizing in the wilderness and preaching a baptism of repentance for the remission of sins. Then all the land of Judea, and those from Jerusalem, went out to him and were baptized by him in the Jordan River, confessing their sins" (Mark 1:4,5). Jesus' disciples also baptized people (John 4:1,2). John's baptism was God's will for the people of Israel. Those who refused it "***rejected the will of God for themselves...***" (Luke 7:29,30). Since the thief appears to have had some knowledge of Jesus and His kingdom, it is quite possible that he had earlier heard and obeyed John's preaching, but later returned to his life of crime.

Fifth, no one can be saved today the way the thief was saved because no one is in the same situation the thief was in. He was in the physical presence of Jesus. He was able to speak with the Lord face to face. The Lord as the testator of His will had the right to do what He wished with His salvation while He lived, but once He died, the conditions of His will have to be met in order for one to be saved (Hebrews 9:16,17). Since Jesus has now died, the conditions of salvation given in His New Testament are required of all today who want to be saved.

Are you saved? Do not let someone deceive you into thinking you can be saved like the thief on the cross. Today, we must obey the terms of salvation given by the Lord in His Great Commission. We must hear the gospel, believe in Jesus Christ, repent of all our past sins, confess that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, and be immersed for the remission of sins. One is thereby added by the Lord to His church, the body of the saved (Ephesians 1:22,23; Ephesians 4:4-6; Ephesians 5:23).

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God's Plan of Salvation

- **Hear** the Gospel of Christ - Romans 10:14; Romans 10:17
- **Believe** that Jesus Christ is the Son of God - Mark 16:16; John 8:24
- **Repent** of our sins - Luke 13:3; Acts 2:38
- **Confess** Christ before men - Matthew 10:32, 33; Romans 10:10
- **Be Immersed** (Baptized) into Christ - Galatians 3:27; I Peter 3:21; Acts 22:16
- **Live Faithfully** for Christ - Revelation 2:10; 2 Peter 1:10; 2 Peter 3:18

If you are not following God's plan, please obey it today

Saved Like a Thief?

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Our Lord was crucified between two thieves. According to the accounts in Matthew and Mark, the thieves joined the enemies of Jesus in mocking Him (Matthew 27:38-44; Mark 15:27-32). However, Luke records that one thief repented of his evil speaking: "***Then one of the criminals who were hanged blasphemed Him saying, 'If you are the Christ, save Yourself and us.' But the other, answering, rebuked him, saying, 'Do you not even fear God, seeing you are under the same condemnation? And we indeed justly, for we receive the due reward of our deeds; but this Man has done nothing wrong.' Then he said to Jesus, 'Lord, remember me when You come into your kingdom.' And Jesus said to him, 'Assuredly, I say to you, today you will be with Me in Paradise"***" (Luke 23:39-43).

The Bible teaches that in order for one to be saved today, he must hear the gospel, believe in Jesus Christ as the Son of God, repent of his past sins, and be buried with Christ in baptism so that his sins will be washed away (Matthew 28:19,20; Mark 16:16; Luke 24:46,47; Acts 2:38; Acts 8:37: Romans 6:3,4). In spite of this clear teaching, many argue that one is saved the moment he believes. They claim one is saved before, and without, baptism. When the requirement of baptism is pointed out to them, they often will reply, "But the thief on the cross was saved without being baptized. If he could be saved without being baptized, I can too!"

Does the salvation of the thief on the cross provide an example for us to follow today in conversion? Is it possible for us to be saved as the thief was? Does the salvation of the thief mean that we can ignore the Lord's command to be baptized for the remission of sins (Mark 16:16; Acts 2:38; 1 Peter 3:21)? The example of the thief on the cross is not for us to follow today because there are many differences between the thief and those who live since Jesus died on the cross.

First, the thief was a Jew. He was one of God's chosen people under the Old Testament (Genesis 12:1-3; Deuteronomy 7:6-8). He was born into a covenant relationship with God. Therefore, he was already a child of God. But he was a child of God who had strayed into sin. He only needed to repent and he would be forgiven. The case of the thief is the same as that of several other Jews whose sins were forgiven by the Lord when He was on the earth (Mark 2:1-12; Luke 7:36-50; Luke 19:1-10). We today do not live under the Old Testament law. We live under the law of Christ. The Old Testament law was "***nailed to the cross***" (Colossians 2:14). This means that it ceased to be God's law to govern His people at the time Jesus died. "***For the priesthood being changed, of necessity there is also a change of the law***" (Hebrews 7:12). Paul wrote to the Galatians: "***...the law was our tutor to bring us to Christ, that we might be justified by faith. But after faith has come, we are no longer under a tutor***" (Galatians 3:24,25). If anyone is saved today, it must be according to the conditions found in the New Testament.

Second, the thief was saved before the Great Commission was given. This was given by Jesus to His apostles shortly before He went back to Heaven. He commanded them to preach the gospel to the whole world, every nation, and every creature. Those who heard and believed the gospel, repented of their sins and were baptized, would be saved. Those who refused would be lost (Matthew 28:19,20; Mark 16:15,16). The thief was not required to obey the terms of the Great Commission because he died before it was given. But you and I, and all men today, must obey these terms if we want to be saved.

Third, in every case of conversion recorded in the book of Acts, people were required to obey the terms given in the Great Commission in order to be saved. In Acts 2, the Jews on Pentecost heard Peter preach the gospel. They were "***cut to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, 'Men and brethren, what shall we do?***"" They were commanded to "***Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of your sins...***" (Acts 2:37,38). Saul of Tarsus saw the Lord on the road to Damascus. He was told to go into the city and he would be told what he must do. He prayed and fasted for three days, but still was not saved (Acts 9:1-19). Ananias was sent to tell him to "***Arise and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on the name of the Lord***" (Acts 22:16). All the conditions of salvation are implied, if not stated, in every example of conversion in the book of Acts. Baptism is mentioned specifically in most of them (Acts 8:12,13; Acts 8:36-39; Acts 9:18; Acts 10:48; Acts 16:15,33,34; Acts 18:8; Acts 19:5). These are the examples of conversion which we must follow if we want to be saved today!

Fourth, it is possible that the thief had already been baptized. "***John came***