



BAPTISM AND JESUS' BLOOD

In spite of the clearest 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 *alone* logically must exclude either "grace" or "faith"). In order 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; Rom. 6:3-4; Gal. 3:27; Tit. 3:5; 1 Pet 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 **not before**, 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 so to teach. However, neither this nor any other statement of Scripture so teaches, and we have never met anyone who believes such 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 (Mat. 26:28). We are redeemed by Jesus' blood (1 Pet. 1:18-19). He "washed us from our sins in his own blood" (Rev. 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: (1) Forgiveness/salvation apart from the blood of Christ is impossible, (2) baptism is the means of access to the blood of Christ, and therefore, (3) no baptism, no blood, no forgiveness/salvation.

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