

Biblical Baptism – No. 8

Dub McClish

For failure to grasp the connection between baptism and the blood of Christ, many people woefully misunderstand the role of baptism in God's plan. Those who understand this relationship do not question the necessity of baptism. Those who deny that baptism in water is necessary for one to be forgiven of sins sometimes accuse those who thus believe of teaching "water salvation." They often make this accusation when we emphasize the unmistakable language of Acts 22:16: "And now why tarriest thou? Arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on his name." The accuser may say, "You believe that water will wash away one's sins." However, neither Acts 22:16 nor any other passage of Scripture even hints that water can wash away sins. There is not enough water in all of the oceans, lakes, and rivers of the world to wash away even one sin. Had it been possible for water to wash away sins, the incarnate Word could have remained in Heaven.

Acts 22:16 does not tell us what element "washes away" or removes sins. We must look elsewhere for this information. Jesus spoke on this subject when He instituted the Lord's supper: "For this is my **blood** of the covenant, which is poured out for many **unto remission of sins**" (Mat. 26:28, emp. added). Peter wrote on the same subject: "Knowing that **ye were redeemed...**with precious blood, as of a lamb without spot, **even the blood of Christ**" (1 Pet. 1:18-19, emp. added). The principle stated in Hebrews 9:22 reaches all the way back to the offerings of Cain and Abel and culminates especially in the sacrifice of Jesus on the cross: "Apart from shedding of **blood** there is no **remission**" (emp. added). After speaking of the Christ, John explicitly identified the cleansing agent for sin: "Unto him that loved us and **washed us from our sins in his own blood**" (Rev. 1:5, KJV, emp. added). The old hymn has had it exactly right all along: "What can wash away my sin? Nothing but the blood of Jesus."

If Ananias was not telling Saul of Tarsus (Acts 22:16) **what** would wash away his (and our) sins, what was he telling him? He was telling him **when** the blood of Christ would wash away his sins – at baptism. The conclusions are irresistible: No baptism – no blood; no blood – no forgiveness; no forgiveness – no salvation. Paul tied baptism and the blood of Christ together as follows: "Or are ye ignorant that all we who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized

into his death?" (Rom. 6:4). Obviously, one is not in Christ nor does he have the benefits of His shed blood short of baptism.

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