

Biblical Baptism – No. 9

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The Bible tells us, by implication, **when** one should be baptized. When the multitudes on the day of Pentecost heard the Gospel, Luke records the response as follows: “They then that received his word were baptized: and there were added unto them in that day about three thousand souls” (Acts 2:41). It is highly unlikely that any of these came to this remarkable occasion with towel and dry clothes under their arms, yet they obeyed the apostolic command immediately.

When Philip “preached Jesus” to the Ethiopian on the road to Gaza, the man did not want to wait until they came to the next town, but besought the evangelist to stop at the first body of water sufficient to immerse him: “And...they came unto a certain water and the eunuch saith, Behold, here is water; what doth hinder me to be baptized?” (Acts 8:36). Philip immediately complied with this request (vv. 38–39).

When the jailor at Philippi asked what he should do to be saved, it was already past midnight (16:25). Yet, when told what he should do, he and his household were baptized “the same hour of the night” (vv. 30–34).

Ananias urged Saul of Tarsus to wait no longer to obtain the salvation he sought: “And now why tarriest thou? arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on his name” (22:16). Saul responded in obedience immediately.

The immediacy of these baptismal responses in each case is unmistakable. The preachers did not suggest any delay, and the subjects did not request any delay for even an hour, much less a few days or until a “special baptismal service” could be planned a week later. The reason for such instant response should be equally evident. The faithful men who delivered the Gospel made it clear to these sinners that **until they were baptized, they were still in the guilt and condemnation of their sins**, which would cause them to be lost eternally.

The Bible therefore teaches that, at the earliest moment one learns that he is a sinner in need of salvation and that baptism is a God-given condition of forgiveness of one’s sins, he should be baptized. Baptism is more than a ritualistic act. It is more than a mere topic of theological curiosity or discussion. It is not merely an optional religious act. It is more than a means of admission to a religious order built by men. It is not an act of human merit or righteousness. Rather, the Bible teaches us that baptism is the very act in which Jesus Christ

cleanses and saves the sinner from his sins by His shed blood, whereupon He adds him to His church, which is His earthly depository of those who are saved (Acts 2:27-47).

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