

# What Is Baptism? – No. 6

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In previous articles, we have seen that the action of baptism is immersion, both by definition and description in the New Testament. This is substantiated by the scholarship of the world. We have also shown several things that baptism **will not** do. It is now appropriate to study what the New Testament says baptism **will do**. There are two principal schools of thought on this subject. One says that baptism is an act of obedience of one **who has already been saved**, thus it is part of one's obedience because he is a Christian. The other says that baptism is the final act of obedience one submits to in **becoming a Christian** and that sins that alienate one from God are not forgiven until baptism is completed. What does the Bible say?

1. Jesus taught the apostles that as they preached the Gospel, "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved" (Mark 16:16). Note the order: (1) believe, (2) baptized, (3) saved. The order is **not** (1) believe, (2) saved, (3) baptized if you wish to join a church. Clearly, baptism is here made a condition of salvation to the very same extent as faith. If baptism is not essential to salvation, is faith? The teaching of Jesus is that both are essential to salvation from sin.
2. When the apostles began to fulfill the command to "go preach," they told people "Repent ye, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ unto the remission of your sins" (Acts 2:38). What relation does repentance sustain to remission, forgiveness of sins? Is not repentance always required before forgiveness is given? Surely so. Please notice that baptism is in the same relationship to remission of sins as repentance is. The same argument that would place baptism **after** remission of sins would also place repentance **after** remission of sins. Clearly the apostles are preaching what Jesus taught them in Mark 16:16, namely that one has his sins forgiven and is therefore saved **in the act of baptism and not before**.

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