

What Is Baptism? – No. 8

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Abundant evidence has been presented in previous articles on this site to establish the following facts concerning baptism:

1. Baptism is an act of immersion (Acts 8:38–39) or burial of the candidate (Rom. 6:4; Col. 2:12); the very word, *baptism* means immersion.
2. The baptism that was universally taught and administered by the authority of Christ was in water (Acts 8:36; 10:47; 1 Pet. 3:20–21).
3. This same water baptism is a condition of salvation, remission of sins, being added to the church, and is the act in which sins are washed away (Mark 16:16; Acts 2:38, 41; 22:16, etc.).

The objection is often raised that such a conclusion equals the doctrine of “water salvation.” Such is not the case at all, however. Consider Acts 22:16: “...arise and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on His name.” In an attempt to deny the plain import of these words, that one’s sins are not washed away until he is baptized, the straw man of “water salvation” is often raised. The fact is that the New Testament, neither here nor elsewhere, ever attributes the slightest power to water in regard to forgiveness of sins. This passage does not say **what** the element is that cleanses one of sins. It merely tells us **when** the cleansing occurs. Such passages as Revelation 1:5 tell us that Christ has “loosed (washed – KJV) us from our sins by His blood.” As the old song suggests, “What can wash away my sin? Nothing but the blood of Jesus!”

When does this washing occur or how does one apply the precious cleansing blood to his sin-stained life? At the time of baptism which is submitted to specifically in order to receive forgiveness of sins (cf. Acts 2:38; 22:16). Revelation 1:5 tells us the cleansing agent (Christ’s blood); Acts 22:16 tells us the cleansing act (baptism). One could as well argue that one believes in “attitude salvation” when he teaches the necessity of faith to salvation, as to argue that one believes in “water salvation” if he insists on the scriptural condition of baptism for salvation.

[**Note:** I wrote this article for, and it was published in the “Bible Thoughts” Column for the *Hood County News*, Granbury, Texas, April 16, 1978.]

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