

When Is a Sinner Saved?

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There is no more important question for anyone to ponder because it involves one's eternal destiny. One may be mistaken about his house, his job, his car, his health, mathematics, history, or any number of things, but one dare not be mistaken about this subject. We could ask this question in different terms:

- When does one receive God's saving grace?
- When are one's sins remitted/forgiven/washed away?
- When does one become a Christian?
- When is one added to the church?

If salvation itself is important, the **point at which** one is saved is crucial. Some believe that all people will be saved, regardless of what they believe/do or fail to believe/do. Bible believers know better. The New Testament speaks of salvation for some, but damnation for others (Mat. 7:13-14; 25:46; John 5:28-29; et al.). The saved are those who have obeyed God's initial conditions of salvation/pardon (Mat. 7:21; Heb. 5:9). It is at this point that disagreement among Bible believers generally surfaces. Shall we let the Bible answer?

❖ What does Jesus answer?

- "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved" (Mark 16:16).

❖ What did Peter say?

- "Repent and be baptized...unto remission of your sins" (Acts 2:38) and "baptism doth now also save us" (1 Pet. 3:21).

❖ What did Ananias tell Saul?

- "Arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins" (Acts 22:16).

These passages are not cited to establish or even imply a doctrine of "salvation by baptism only," for the Bible sets forth necessary prior and succeeding acts to baptism. These passages specify, however, the **exact point** at which the Christ saves sinners from the guilt of their past sins. They all answer with one voice: In the act of baptism—**and not before**.

When does the Lord add a person to His church? The moment he is saved (Acts 2:47). When were the 3000 added on Pentecost? "They then that received his word ["repent and be baptized," v. 38] were baptized: and there were added unto them in that day about 3,000 souls" (v. 41). So being saved and being added to the church occur simultaneously—**and in the same**

act. The New Testament knows nothing of “being saved” at one point, then being baptized later to “join a church.”

We dare trust nothing but the Word of God for the answer to the questions with which we began. **God and His Son alone** determine the point at which one is saved; They have revealed it in Their Word, and men dare not tamper with it. “Blessed are they that hear the word of God and keep it” (Luke 11:28).

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