

SEEKERS

Bible Study Course

Lesson Five

WATER BAPTISM

Although none of us deserves salvation, God wants all of us to be saved (2 Peter 3:9). None of us could ever do enough good deeds to earn salvation, but in order to have our sins forgiven, we must meet the conditions God has set forth.

These include **faith** in Him, **repenting** of our sins, **confessing** that Jesus is the Son of God, and **being buried with Christ in baptism**. At that moment the blood of Jesus washes away our sins.

Most religious groups will agree with all of the other conditions (faith, repentance, confession), but *many will deny that baptism has anything to do with salvation*. This lesson will demonstrate that baptism is essential to salvation, and why.

By now it is clear that salvation is a process that begins with hearing the Word of God, which produces faith. But *at what point is a person cleansed from his sins?* Some teach that God saves a person *the moment he believes*; others think salvation comes at the point of repentance or confessing the Deity of Jesus. What people (even good and sincere people) think and say *does not matter*. What does **the Bible** teach?

As we saw in Lesson # 4, Peter taught the people to be baptized for the forgiveness of their sins. It is in the act of baptism that the process of salvation is completed (initially).

Consider the man called Saul (who later became the apostle Paul) who persecuted the church. Having persecuted Christians in Jerusalem, he was on his way to Damascus to stir up trouble there also. On the way he was struck blind, and Jesus talked to him from heaven. Paul now knew that the Jesus he had been persecuting was the Son of God (Acts. 9:4-6).

But was he saved yet?

Saul was so repentant that he neither ate nor drank for three days (Acts 9:9). He spent the time continually *praying* (Acts 9:11). **Did any of these things save him from his sins?** No. He still had his sins when Ananias came to him. If anyone could be saved by fasting and prayer and being sorry for what he had done, Saul would have been.

But Ananias spoke to him with these words: *“And now why are you waiting ? Arise and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on the name of the Lord”* (Acts 22:16).

Saul's sins could be washed away only when he was baptized thus completing the salvation process.

Jesus likened this process to physical birth. When a baby is conceived in the mother's womb, the child needs time to grow, develop, and be able to survive once it is born. After the child is born, he is taught the important matters of life.

When the Word of God (called “the seed” in Luke 8:11) is planted within one's heart, it takes time for him to understand it and decide to obey it. When one is *baptized*, he is **born again** (a spiritual birth). Jesus taught these truths to a man called Nicodemus. Jesus told him, *“Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God”* (John 3:5).

Baptism is the last step in the “new birth” process. The jailer in Phillippi was taught the Word of God some time after midnight (Acts 16:25). When he asked what to do to be saved, Saul (who was now the apostle Paul) answered him:

“Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved, you and your household. Then they spoke the word of the Lord to him and to all who were in his house. And he took them the same hour of the night and washed their stripes. And immediately he and all his family were baptized. Now when he had brought them into his house, he set food before them; and he rejoiced, having believed in God with all his household” (Acts 16:31-34).

Notice that hearing the Word of God was so important that the jailer awakened his family to hear what Paul had to say. The message Paul preached to these people must have *included baptism*. Furthermore, they must have regarded baptism as *essential to salvation*, or **they would not have been baptized at such an unusual hour**. Notice that they all rejoiced after they were baptized, *“having believe in God.”*

Next we want to consider the Ethiopian eunuch.

“Then Philip opened his mouth, and beginning at this same Scripture, preached Jesus to him. Now as they went down the road, they came to some water. And the eunuch said, See, here is water. What hinders me from being baptized?” (Acts 8:35,36).

Notice that if Jesus is preached properly, *baptism is taught*. There is no other reason why anyone would want to be baptized when Jesus is preached- unless to “preach Christ” means to tell someone how to have his sins forgiven, **which included baptism for the forgiveness of sins**.

Let the Bible explain this further. We know that those who do not obey the gospel will be lost (2 Thessalonians 1:8). But what does it mean to *“obey the gospel”*? If the gospel is *the death of Christ on the cross for our sins, His burial, and His resurrection* (1 Corinthians 15:1-4), how can we **obey**

that? We obey a *“form”* of that doctrine or teaching (Romans 6:17,18). We **die to sin**; we are **buried with Jesus in baptism** into His death; and we **arise** to walk in *“newness of life”* (Romans 6:3-7). This is how a person *“obeys the gospel”* in baptism.

Many religious groups substitute “sprinkling” for baptism, but **a burial requires that a person be completely covered**. Remember the Ethiopian eunuch who wanted to be baptized? Here is the way it was done:

“So he commanded the chariot to stand still. And both Philip and the eunuch went down into the water, and he baptized him. Now when they came up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord caught Philip away, so that the eunuch saw him no more, and he went on his way rejoicing” (Acts 8:38,39).

Baptism, then is only for those who have **believe in Christ**, have **repented of their sins**, and **confessed the name of Jesus as the Son of God**. It is by **immersion** (*being completely covered by the water*) and **for the forgiveness of sins**. It is the picture of Jesus’ burial and resurrection, the final step in being born again. Anyone who has not yet been baptized for the forgiveness of sins needs to give serious thought to this part of the salvation process.