

Is Baptism Essential For Salvation? (No. 7)

By Casey Head

“What must one do to be saved?” That is the question we have been considering in this series of articles which began almost two months ago. One of the best ways to answer that question is to notice what the people in the first century did to be saved. Because we looked at Acts 2:38 last week, let’s now examine the conversion accounts in the book of Acts. Were the people of the first century told to believe only and to simply receive Christ into their heart? Were they instructed to pray the “sinner’s prayer?” Or were they commanded to believe, repent and be baptized in order to be saved?

In **Acts 2:37-41**, we find that Peter commanded the Jews on Pentecost to repent and be baptized. We see in this passage that baptism is connected to the “remission of sins” (vv. 38), the “gift of the Holy Ghost” (vv. 38), salvation (vv. 40), and being added to the body of Christ (vv. 47).

We find the conversion of the Samaritans in **Acts 8:12-13**. An evangelist named Philip was in Samaria preaching the gospel of Christ. It says in vv. 12-13, “But when they believed Philip preaching the things concerning the kingdom of God, and the name of Jesus Christ they were baptized, both men and women. Then Simon himself believed also: and when he was baptized, he continued with Philip.” How did the Samaritans respond to the gospel? They believed and were baptized (see Mk. 16:16)!

Later in the same chapter, in **Acts 8:35-39**, Philip was commissioned by the Holy Spirit to preach to the Ethiopian eunuch. Philip began in Isaiah 53 and “preached unto him Jesus” (vv. 35). Notice the eunuch’s response in verse 36... “And as they went on their way, they came unto a certain water: and the eunuch said, See, here is water; what doth hinder me to be baptized?” After hearing the eunuch’s confession, Philip baptized this man, and “he went on his way rejoicing” (vv. 37-39).

In **Acts 9:1-18**, we find the conversion of Saul of Tarsus. He encountered Christ on the road to Damascus, and he asked the Lord, “What wilt thou have me to do?” (vv. 6) Jesus told him to go into the city of Damascus and it would be told him what he “must do” (vv. 6). For three days, Saul was blind, hungry, thirsty (vv. 9), and yet in his sins (Ac. 22:16). When Ananias, a Christian, came to Saul, he said to him, “Why tarriest thou? Arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord” (Ac. 22:16). Saul was not saved on the road to Damascus, but when he was baptized!

In **Acts 10:46-48**, Peter commanded Cornelius and the other Gentiles to be baptized. He said to them in verse 47, “Can any man forbid water, that these should not be baptized?”

Finally, turn to **Acts 16**. In **verses 14-15**, we find the conversion of Lydia. The Lord opened her heart (vv. 14), and in verse 15 it says that “she was baptized.” Later, in **verses 30-33**, Paul and Silas while in prison preached the gospel to the Philippian jailor. Verse 33 says that the jailor “took them the same hour of the night, and washed their stripes; and was baptized, he and all his, straightway.”

These conversion accounts show the necessity and urgency of baptism! The recipients of the gospel were never told to believe only or pray the sinner’s prayer. They were told without exception to be baptized! Shouldn’t we teach what the apostles taught regarding conversion?

If you have any questions, or if you would like to meet for a private or public Bible study, please contact me. I want to hear from you. My phone number is (828)467-1463. My email address is NCBibleQuestions@yahoo.com, and my mailing address is P.O. Box 401, Spruce Pine, NC 28777.