**What Washes Away Our Sins - The Blood Of Christ Or Baptism?**

A lady I am currently studying with by phone wrote to me in an email this week – if “Christ had already forgiven the sins of the world, on the cross. … what left over sins would there have been for baptism to wash away?” Let’s answer that question …

Suppose a MLB player on Monday buys 100 tickets for all the kids in an orphanage. Suppose then 95 of the orphans use those tickets and go to the game that Saturday. Do you see that all the tickets were paid for on Monday, but they were not taken advantage of until Saturday?

It is the same way with Christ’s death. He paid for the sins of “every man” (Heb 2:9) on the cross in about 33 AD. But we don’t actually take advantage of that until our sins are washed away when we obey the gospel some 2000 years later.

Some say verses like John 3:16 prove salvation from sin occurs at the moment we believe, but if that were true, that would mean a person is saved before they even repent of their sins. But texts like Luke 13:3 (“except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish”) proves that’s false.

Another passage that shows salvation at the point of faith is false is Rom 10:9-10 – “That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.” Everybody understands that passage makes confession of Christ necessary to salvation but one can’t honestly confess Christ as the son of God unless he believes it first, right? That would mean that salvation does not come at the moment one believes, since one has to confess Christ after believing in order to be saved.

In that same context verse 13-14 reads “For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.” So calling on the name of the Lord is required for salvation. And verse 14 begins with “How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed?” showing that calling on the name of the Lord occurs after one believes. If calling on the name of the Lord is necessary to salvation and comes after faith, then logically one is not saved at the point one has faith, right?

But just how does one “call upon the name of the Lord”? Acts 22:16 answers that question. It says “And now why tarriest thou? arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord.” So the way a sinner calls on God to save him is by being baptized. That makes sense - Jesus said in Mark 16:16 “He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved,” so the way a sinner would ask (call upon) God to save him is by believing and being baptized, correct?

Now think about how Acts 22:16 relates to our question of whether a sinner’s sins are washed away when they believe. Saul of Tarsus believed when Jesus miraculously appeared to him on the road to Damascus, but here he is at least three days later being told to do something to get his sins washed away. Of course it is the death of Christ that washes away sins, but when? Were Saul’s sins washed away by the blood of Christ when he believed on the road to Damascus?, or were Saul’s sins washed away by the blood of Christ when he was baptized three days later? It is really easy to tell if you just accept what the Bible says here, isn’t it?

We can see the same thing in Acts 2:36-38. In verse 36 Peter accuses his Jewish audience of crucifying the Son of God. They believe the gospel and respond in verse 37 asking what they should do to make that right, to be forgiven. Peter replies “Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.” So they weren’t saved by the death of Christ when they believed, but when they repented and were baptized. Do you see that?

And the requirement was that they “be baptized … for the remission of sins” – that is, for that reason. Let’s illustrate from Matt 19:9 how the reason for something can be required. That verse says “Whosoever shall put away his wife, except it be for fornication, and shall marry another, committeth adultery.” Do you see how one must divorce their spouse “for (the reason of) fornication” or the divorce is unscriptural, God does not approve of it, and the subsequent remarriage is called adultery? Similarly, if one is baptized, even immersed as a believer, but he doesn’t do it “for the remission of sins,” then the baptism is unscriptural and God does not approve of it. Anybody that thinks they are saved at the point of faith before being baptized, is not baptized for the required reason – “for remission of sins,” therefore God does not approve of their baptism, and therefore they don’t receive the remission of sins.