

guilt through the redemptive work of Christ, which clearing occurs at Justification. Water baptism thus signifies cleansing from guilt.

- (b) Acts 2:38 -- "And Peter said to them, "Repent, and let each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit."

Peter tells his hearers to receive the ordinance of baptism (which they did, in verse 4) for (or, unto) forgiveness of their sins. When we are united, through faith, to Christ in Spirit baptism, our sins are forgiven. The ordinance of water baptism signifies this cleansing from guilt; it does not accomplish it. Only the application of the blood of Christ brings forgiveness of sins, but the ordinance of baptism signifies and seals to us this forgiveness. Those who repent and believe on Christ and then receive water baptism are assured, by the visible sign, of forgiveness of sins.

That which is invisible (the cleansing away of our sins by the blood of Christ), God represents to us by that which is visible (the rite of water baptism). The ordinance of baptism is thus God's visible sign and seal of forgiveness of sins to those who trust in Christ and are united to Him and to the benefits of His redemption.

- (c) Acts 22:16 -- Paul, in recounting his conversion experience, quotes the words of Ananias: "And now, why do you linger? Stand up and receive baptism, and cleanse away your sins, calling on His name."

Here the ordinance of baptism signifies a washing, a cleansing away of sins. This cleansing takes place the moment we trust in Christ and are justified, when our sins are forgiven on the ground of the blood of Christ. Thus the ordinance of baptism does not bring about the cleansing, but does signify it. And yet here the significance is so close between the sign and the reality signified that Ananias can say "receive baptism and cleanse away your sins."

- (d) I Peter 3:21 -- Peter makes reference to the eight persons who were saved from the great Flood by means of the ark, and then says: "whose antitype, baptism, now saves you also -- not the putting off of the filth of the flesh, but the answer to God of a good conscience -- through the resurrection of Jesus Christ."

The word translated "answer" is *EPEROTEMA*. This word is a *hapax*, but its cognate verb *EPEROTAO* is used 59 times in the New Testament, and means "to ask", or "to demand". How do we derive "answer" from the act of asking? The idea in the verse seen to be that God asks or interrogates the conscience, and the conscience answers back. If a man's sins have never been forgiven, then when God asks the conscience, it answers "Guilty". But if his sins have been cleansed by the blood of Christ, and if he has been declared righteous on the basis of Christ's imputed righteousness, then his conscience answer "Not guilty" and "Righteous". Thus Peter says that baptism saves -- not the ordinance of baptism that physically washes the body, but the spiritual reality that water baptism signifies, namely the spiritual