

## Scriptural Baptism for the Remission of Sins

As with any intelligent study, we must do a number of things to arrive at the truth. First, there must be an open and investigative mind that seeks the truth (cp. John 7: 17, 8: 32). Next, there must be a recognized standard and source of truth. In the matter of spiritual truth, the Bible claims to have the truth and to be the source of the truth, a claim that we readily accept (cp. Acts 17: 2, 2 Tim. 3: 16, 17). Also, we must not allow emotion to cloud the truth. "Baptism cannot be for the remission of sins because my old great grandfather was never baptized," sort of thing. While emotion is definitely part of Christianity, it is not the means of determining truth (cp. Rom. 6: 17, 18).

The common mind-set of denominationalism relative to water baptism is expressed in the following:

**"Baptism is in no way for the remission of sins. Repentance in Acts 2: 38 is for remission of sins and baptism is done because one already has forgiveness. Hence, 'Repent for remission of sins and be baptized because you have remission'" (Acts 2: 38, what many religionists say).**

**Let us now introduce one crucial verse in the determination of scriptural baptism being for the remission of sins:**

**"38: Then Peter said unto them, 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" (Acts 2: 38).**

Having been a student and a teacher of Greek for many years, I am especially interested in what men such as Greek teacher, A. T. Robertson has to say about baptism and remission of sins. Regarding the expression, "Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins" in Acts 2: 38 Robertson states:

**"...One will decide the use here according as he believes that baptism is essential to the remission of sins or not. My view is decidedly against the idea that Peter, Paul, or any one in the New Testament taught baptism as essential to the remission of sins or the means of securing such remission. So I understand Peter to be urging baptism on each of them who had already turned (repented) and for it to be done in the name of Jesus Christ on the basis of the forgiveness of sins which they had already received" (Word Pictures in the New Testament, Vol. 3, p. 35, 36, A.T. Robertson).**

Robertson argues for flexibility regarding the expression, *eis aphesin ton amartion umon* (for remission of the sins of you) based on the use of *eis* in I Corinthians 2: 7; Matthew 10: 41; and Matthew 12: 41, insisting that in these cases, *eis* means "because of" and not, "unto" or "with a view to obtain."

Professor Robertson's statement is controversial, to say the least, due to the fact that Greek grammarians have stated that the Greek preposition *eis* ("for," "unto," "towards," "with a view

to," etc.) is always and only used in the accusative case, a case in Greek that always means forward action, not retroaction. I shall shortly say more about this matter.

Since Koine Greek grammar is primarily a restored grammar (careful study of New Testament use, syntax, and vocabulary), has Robertson established his point? Even if eis means "because of" in the verses Robertson offers as proof, such would not necessarily mean eis in Acts 2: 38 means "because of." I would grant, though, that if one can produce invincible proof that eis in the accusative is retroactive (because of), one will have established a point in Greek grammar that has not heretofore been established, to my knowledge.

**Let us now very simply examine the verses that are offered as proof that eis can mean "because of."**

**"7: But we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, even the hidden wisdom, which God ordained before the world unto our glory" (I Cor. 2: 7).**

When I read the grammar and consequent translation into English of the expression, eis doxan emon ("unto our glory"), I understand it just as it appears in the King James, "unto." Robertson thinks it must be rendered, "because of our glory," or something to this effect. I understand the "glory" here mentioned to be the future glory associated with the saved (Rom. 2: 7).

**"41: He that receiveth a prophet in the name of a prophet shall receive a prophet's reward; and he that receiveth a righteous man in the name of a righteous man shall receive a righteous man's reward" (Matt. 10: 41).**

Robertson insists that eis onoma (unto the name) must be rendered "because of the name" of a prophet or righteous man. I realize that a number of translations have "in" (eis). Without going into a lot of technical matters regarding possible finer nuances of eis, why cannot we simply understand Jesus as saying that a prophet or righteous man is received "in regards to" or "with a view to" his character and mission (name)? I understand that the character and mission already exist, but their reception can also be with reference to the future, a more subtle point that the grammar is apparently making.

**"41: The men of Nineveh shall rise in judgment with this generation, and shall condemn it: because they repented at the preaching of Jonas; and, behold, a greater than Jonas is here" (Matt. 12).**

The Ninevites repented unto (eis) the preaching of Jonah (with a view to his preaching, including both initial repentance and graduated repentance, Matt. 12: 41). On the strength of these three verses, Robertson argues that eis can mean "because of" and then he arbitrarily asserts that eis means "because of" in Acts 2: 38.

I do not accept I Corinthians 2: 7; Matthew 10: 41; and Matthew 12: 41 as proof that eis can and does have a "because of" action. Again, even if I am wrong about this, such does not prove that eis arbitrarily in Acts 2: 38 means "because of."

**Regarding the preposition eis:**

"The preposition en, meaning in, always takes the dative case. Thus 'in the house' is expressed by en to oiko. The preposition eis, meaning into, on the other hand, always takes the accusative. Thus 'into the house' is expressed by eis ton oikon..." (New Testament Greek for Beginners, p. 40, Machen).

The highly respected Greek grammarian Author W. Machen, whose grammar I have used for years in teaching Greek, continued regarding eis and the accusative case in Greek:

**"These three prepositions (en, eis, apo, dm) illustrate the general principle that the genitive is the case of separation, the dative the case of rest in a place, and the accusative the case of motion toward a place...prepositions expressing motion toward a place naturally take the accusative" (Ibid., p. 40).**

A case study of Matthew 26: 28 and Acts 2: 38. The two parallel statements are, Eis aphasin hamartion ("for remission of sins," Matt. 26: 28) and eis aphasin ton hamartion ("for remission of the sins," Acts 2: 38). The addition of the definite article, ton (genitive, plural, "the sins of you") in Acts 2: 38 is inconsequential.

The grammar of Matthew 26: 28 and Acts 2: 38 is essentially the same. Just as Jesus' blood looked forward (accusative case) and was not shed "because of" (does not even make sense); so, baptism when preceded by repentance is for remission of sins, again, the accusative having forward action and not retroactive. (Note that repentance and baptism are coupled (kai, "and") and both together, then, reach forth toward the remission or forgiveness of sins; hence, to deny baptism in this role is also to automatically deny repentance as having this role of reaching forward to remission. Since remission is seen as having occurred at the point in time of scriptural baptism, baptism is the final act before remission is obtained, or, put another way, baptism is the act in which remission is secured. All of this is said based on an accurate application of the Greek grammar. Statements such as found in Acts 10: 43 regarding belief and remission do not pose a problem. I say this because the serious Bible student understands that "belief" in such verses is comprehensively used to stand for and include all the necessary particulars; initial belief, repentance, confession of Jesus' deity, and baptism being the particulars.

**Another evasive move:** "There is a change in grammar in the case of baptism, change in number ("let each one of you") and person, from second to third. Hence, only repentance is for remission of sins," some contend. Such a grammar argument is without merit and shows how desperate some are to evade the simple teaching that scriptural baptism is for the remission of sins. "Repent"(metanoesate) is second person, plural and "be baptized" (baptistheto) is third person, singular (The Analytical Greek Lexicon, pg. 266 and 65, respectively). However, such a fact does not alter the equal role baptism plays in remission of sins. "Be baptized" is also passive as to voice, but what material difference does such make as far as the thrust of Peter's statement? "Be baptized" is actually rendered, "let each and every one of you allow himself to be baptized." The change from the plural to the singular actually, if any difference at all, makes baptism more personal in Peter's language. Again, though, repentance and baptism are equally vital in the obtainment of remission of sins.

**Allowing the context in influence.** The trained linguist and translator always pay close

attention to the context in which a word, phrase, clause, or statement occurs. Peter showed that his hearers were guilty of sin, even the murder of their Messiah (Acts 2: 23, 33). They cried out wanting to know what they could do (v. 37). Verse thirty-eight is Peter's answer to their question. They who gladly received Peter's teaching were baptized that day (v. 41). They were "added" (cp. Gal. 3: 26, 27). From that point in time, they ceased to be viewed as "non-Christian" and are seen as Christians (v. 42-47).

By comparing Paul's teaching in Romans 6 with Matthew 26: 28, we learn that it is in the act of scriptural baptism that Jesus' blood is spiritually contacted; thus, resulting in the "remission of sins."

### **"Washing away of sin" without "for."**

**"16: And now why tarriest thou? arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord" (Acts 22, cp. Acts 9: 6).**

What does the esteemed Greek scholar Robertson say regarding Acts 22: 16?

"It is possible, as in Acts 2: 38, to take these words as teaching baptismal remission or salvation by means of baptism, but to do so is in my opinion a complete subversion of Paul's vivid and picturesque language. As in Romans 6: 4-6 where baptism is the picture of death, burial and resurrection, so here baptism pictures the change that had already taken place when Paul surrendered to Jesus on the way (verse ten). Baptism here pictures the washing away of sins by the blood of Christ" (Word Pictures of the New Testament, Vol. 3, pg. 391, 392).

Professor Robertson has Saul having already done what he was to do before he even arrived at the location (see Acts 22: 10, 9: 6). Involved in the "must do" was the matter of Saul's baptism.

What is the problem with such men? Robertson and others consider water baptism as standing alone. Hence, water salvation or "baptismal regeneration" (Catholic presentation of baptism, "holy water," etc.). It is interesting that in all the cases of "salvation" found in Acts having detail, water baptism is always observed as present (Acts 2, 8, 10, 16, 18, 19, etc.).

We must realize that the candidate for baptism is already a greatly changed person (having already believed, repented, and confessed). However, their relationship and status as such with God is not changed. One is baptized into Christ and anterior to that precise point in time, they are not in Christ, where all spiritual blessings and salvation are enjoyed (Eph. 1: 3-7, 2 Tim. 2: 10). Even when one has done all required to remission of sins or salvation, they certainly have not merited salvation or obtained remission of sins by such works (Tit. 3: 5, Eph. 2: 8-10).

### **Still unconvinced as to scriptural baptism for the remission of sins, as seen in Acts 2: 38?**

Do you still believe that Peter really said: "38: ..Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ 'because you already have the remission of sins,' and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost"? Remember that "repentance" and "baptized" are joined together; so what

is true for one, is also true for the other. Hence, one would have to consistently argue that one is to "repent and be baptized because you already, before repentance and baptism, have remission of sins." Some who deny the essentiality of scriptural baptism have now gone to teaching that forgiveness comes before repentance, realizing their dilemma.

I do not know of a single English translation that has much use today that has, "Repent and be baptized because you already have remission of sins." At this time, I shall insert forty translations of the focused on language of Acts 2: 38 for your consideration:

- King James Version** - "for the remission of sins.
- American Standard Version** - "unto the remission of sins.
- New King James Version** - "for the remission of sins."
- New International Version** - "for the forgiveness of your sins."
- Revised Standard Version** - "for the forgiveness of your sins."
- New Revised Standard Version** - "so that your sins may be forgiven."
- New American Standard Bible** - " for the forgiveness of your sins."
- World English Bible** - "for the forgiveness of sins."
- Bible in Basic English** - "for the forgiveness of your sins."
- Contemporary English Version** - "so that your sins will be forgiven."
- Good News Bible** - "so that your sins will be forgiven."
- God's Word** - "so that your sins will be forgiven."
- Young's Literal Translation** - "to remission of sins."
- Modern King James Version** - "to remission of sins."
- International Standard Version** - "for the forgiveness of your sins."
- English Standard Version** - "for the forgiveness of your sins."
- Literal Translation of the Holy Bible** - "to remission of sins."
- New English Translation** - "for the forgiveness of your sins."
- New Living Translation** - "for the forgiveness of your sins."
- Today's English Version** - "so that your sins will be forgiven."
- The Douay-Rheims Bible** - "for the remission of your sins."
- Hebrew Names Version** - "for the forgiveness of sins."
- The Webster Bible** - "for the remission of sins."
- Wesley's New Testament** - "to the remission of sins."
- Third Millennium Bible** - "for the remission of sins."
- The Darby Translation** - "for the remission of sins."
- J. B. Philips Translation** - "so that you may have your sins forgiven."
- New American Bible** - "for the forgiveness of your sins."
- Amplified Bible** - "for the forgiveness of and release from your sins."
- Worldwide English Bible** - "Your wrong ways will be forgiven you."
- Weymouth Bible** - "with a view to the remission of your sins."
- Revised King James New Testament** - "for the remission of sins."
- Modern Literal Version** - "for the forgiveness of your sins."
- Common Version New Testament** - "for the forgiveness of your sins."
- Interlinear Greek New Testament** - "for remission of sins."
- Living Oracles** - "in order to the remission of sins."

**Montgomery New Testament** - "for the remission of your sins."

**The Emphasized Bible** - "into the remission of your sins."

**Covenant Edition New Testament** - "to cancel your sins."

**Christian Standard Bible** - "for the forgiveness of your sins."

I am truly sorry that there is so much extant teaching that attempts to deny that scriptural baptism is, "for the remission of sins." I shall close this study by supplying words from the Apostle Peter regarding baptism:

**"21: The like figure whereunto even baptism doth also now save us (not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God,) by the resurrection of Jesus Christ" (I Pet. 3).**

All that is taught in the New Testament about water baptism is consistent with, "Scriptural baptism being for the remission of sins." We would to God that men would lay aside their human teaching and philosophies and accept the clear teaching of God on this vital subject. (Related reading, "[Acts 2: 38, an Analysis](#)")