



BIBLICAL BAPTISM—NO. 6

“Does the New Testament say what baptism is for?” Acts 2:38 states (KJV): “Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and **be baptized** every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ **for the remission of sins...**” (emph. added).

While Peter’s words seem clearly to teach that men must repent and be baptized **in order to receive** remission of sins, many argue otherwise. They aver that the preposition *for* is capable of more than one meaning, affecting the meaning of Peter’s statement. *For* is indeed capable of two meanings, almost opposites, depending on its usage, as our daily conversations illustrate. We “automatically” interpret the intended meaning, depending on context.

If one enters a store **for** a loaf of bread, he does so **in order to get a**

loaf of bread. If, however, one is in prison **for** bank robbery, he is not there **in order to rob**, but **because he has robbed**, a bank. In the first case, *for* refers to a desired, unattained, result. In the second case, *for* refers to a result already attained. Those who reject the Scriptural purpose of baptism assert *for remission of sins* in Acts 2:38 means that men should be baptized **because they have received** remission of their sins.

This cannot be Peter’s meaning for several reasons:

First, Acts 2:38 inseparably joins repentance and baptism by the coordinate conjunction, *and*, which makes them equally related to their common object, “remission of sins.” They are spiritual “Siamese twins.” Where one goes in relation to remission of sins, the other must go, also. Thus if baptism is **because of** remission of sins, then so is repentance. However, one will search the Bible in vain to find a single instance in which God promised or pronounced forgiveness of any sin prior to repentance. Since repentance must precede remission of sins, so also must baptism.

Second, in instituting the Lord’s supper, Jesus said of the fruit of the vine: “For this is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many **for the remission of sins**” (Mat. 26: 27–28, emph. added). What *for the remission* of sins means in one statement, it must mean in both. Jesus did not shed His blood **because** the sins of men had already been forgiven, but **that they may be** forgiven. So it is with baptism and remission of sins.

Third, the Greek preposition, *eis*, translated *for*, points forward rather than backward, as the American Standard Version correctly reflects: “Repent ye, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ **unto the remission** of your sins” (emph. added).

Fourth, many other passages teach that baptism is a condition of pardon (Mark 16:16; John 3:5; Acts 22:16; et al.).

5101 East University Drive, Greenbelt Business Park
(HWY 380/377, 3 mi. E of Loop 288), Denton, Texas 76208
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