

Spiritual Considerations...



Selected articles designed to assist in our Bible study and Christian walk.

Dave Phillips, editor

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Salvation Issues

Dave Phillips

A popular phrase is distinguishing between *salvation issues* and *obedience issues*. I have to smile when I hear it used. It seems to me that a command that is rejected changes an *obedience issue* into a *salvation issue*. But, let's be careful that we understand clearly what the commands mean. For, if we miss the specific meaning of the command, we'll miss the recognition of obedience.

For example, have you ever heard one say, "I have been baptized, but I was saved before I was ever baptized. Baptism doesn't save a person, Jesus does. My baptism was an open declaration to the world that I have been saved. Do I need to be baptized in order to be obedient? Yes! Do I need to be baptized in order to be saved? No."

Now we have a problem – not over an opinion, but an understanding of a command of God.

You may even hear some say that Acts 2:38 can be translated, "repent and be baptized because your sins have already been forgiven." If you aren't careful, you can be deceived.

Jack Lewis is a preeminent Biblical scholar. His ability to write thoroughly and concisely is an immense blessing to the church. Please read the following article – compare passages – and see if the issue doesn't become clear.

We are baptized in obedience to the will of Christ in order to have our sins forgiven. What a tremendous blessing!

EIS, "For the Forgiveness" or "Because of Forgiveness?"

Jack Lewis, Harding University Graduate School of Religion

Prior to Jesus' public ministry, John the Baptist had preached a baptism of repentance for remission of sins (**eis aphasis hamartion**; Mark 1:4, Luke 3:3). Those people who rejected John's baptism rejected for themselves the counsel of God (Luke 7:29, 30). Its purpose is identical with the purposes suggested for Jesus' death (Matthew 26:28) and for the baptism of Pentecost (Acts 2:38).

Jesus died (shed His blood) in order that people could have remission of sins (**eis aphasis hamartion**; Matthew 26:28). Without the shedding of blood, there is no remission (Hebrews 9:22). No one could argue that Jesus died because sins had already been forgiven. He purchased the church with His own blood (Acts 20:28). With His blood He purchased a people for His own possession (Titus 2:14). He died for our sins (**huper ton hamartion**; 1 Corinthians 15:3).

Jesus, after the resurrection, informed His disciples that it was written that the Christ should suffer and be raised on the third day and that repentance and the remission of sins (**eis aphasis hamartion**) be preached in His name unto all the nations (Luke 24:47). Would anyone want to argue that repentance is to be done because sins have already been forgiven?

In each of these verses, the phrase is the same as that in Acts 2:38 – **eis aphasis hamartion**. If one case means "because of," then all should mean that.

Acts 2:38 was rendered into Latin by Jerome as in **remissio peccatorum vestorum**, and it came into English with John Wycliffe in 1380 reading "in to remission." With Tyndale (1525) it came to be "for the remission" and remained that way through all the English translations (Great Bible, Geneva Bible, Bishops' Bible, Rheims and King James). The RV/ASV (1881/1901) rendered the verse "unto remission": but the RSV then continued "for" in the phrase "for the forgiveness."

The New Testament surveyed in twenty-six translations have some variety (Curtis Vaughn, *The New Testament from 26 Translations* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 19687), 444.: “that you may have your sins forgiven” (Williams), “into the remission” (Rotherham), “unto remission” (American Bible Union), “for the forgiveness” (Twentieth Century New Testament), “in order to have your sins forgiven” (Goodspeed), and “so that you can have” (Phillips). Other renderings include Knox: “to have your sins forgiven”; Centenary Translation: “for remission,” and Schonfield: “for the forgiveness.” Not a one of them has any suggestion of “because of” – that is that *eis* is to be understood as starting what has already taken place.

The translations of the last half of the twentieth century are not different: NASV: “for the forgiveness.” TEV: “so that your sins may be forgiven.” Lamsa: “for the forgiveness.” NKJV: “for the remission.” NIV: “for the forgiveness.” NAB: “for the forgiveness.” Cassirer: “so that your sins may be forgiven you.” REB: “then renderings represent the best understanding of the most capable contemporary scholarship – Catholic, Evangelical, and Protestant. In fact, it is doubtful that any English translation can be turned up which understood the verse in any other way.

A.T. Robertson said,

But in Matthew 28:19, **baptizontes eis to onoma**, and Romans 6:3f. **eis Christon and eis ton thanaton**, the notion of sphere is the true one. The same thing may be true of **baptisthento eis aphesis ton hamartion** (Acts 2:38), where only the context and the tenor of N.T. teaching can determine whether “into,” “unto,” or merely “in” or “on” (“upon”) is the right translation, a task for the interpreter, not for the grammarian. (A.T. Robertson, *A Grammar of the Greek New Testament in the Light of Historical Research* (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1934), 592.

The Greek lexicon shows that among the multiple uses of *eis* with the accusative case is the expression of purpose. Nets are let down “for a catch” (Luke 5:4; **eis agran**), and there is “for this reason” (**eis touto**; Mark 1:38; John 18:37; Acts 9:21; etc.). Along with these are listed all the occurrences of **eis aphesis hamartion** considered earlier in this paper (Walter Bauer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, tr. And ed. W.F. Arndt, R.W. Gingrich, and F.W. Danker (2nd ed.; Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1979), 229). Moule lists Acts 2:38 in the cases where *eis* has the sense of “with a view to” or “resulting in.” (C.F.D. Moule, *An Idiom-Book of New Testament Greek* (Cambridge: University Press, 1959), 70). Turner lists the verse as an example of “purposive *eis*”!!! (J.H. Moulton, *A Grammar of New Testament Greek*, Vol., 3 Syntax by Nigel Turner (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1963), 266).

Coming at the same question from another viewpoint, the promise of the commission in Mark is “He that believes and is baptized will be saved” (**sosthesetai**; Mark 16:16). The verb is future tense. Salvation is plainly placed after baptism. The structure is parallel to that of Acts 2:38 where the obedient are promised the gift of the Holy Spirit. Again the tense is future (**lempsesthe**). Should one expect the Holy Spirit prior to doing the things specified as prerequisites? Every conversion narrated in the book of Acts ends with the baptism of the individual. They are not treated as though saved and **then later** baptized.

The death to sin is connected by Paul **with baptism**. One is buried with Christ **in baptism** into His death and then raised to walk in newness of life (Romans 6:4). Newness of life here after baptism, not before it. One comes into contact with Christ’s death **at baptism**.

Yet again in Peter’s declaration that baptism, the like figure to the flood, “now saves you” (1 Peter 3:21). Hearts are sprinkled from an evil conscience, but bodies are **washed** in pure **water** (Hebrews 10:22).