

"For" in Acts 2:38

Bible study on Acts 2:38.

Acts 22:16; 1 Pet. 3:21

We are baptized to wash away our sins. Peter says that baptism now saves us.

If Peter commanded people in Acts 2:38 to repent and be baptized "because of" the remission of sins, he contradicts himself in 1 Pet. 3:21.

Below, we see that "for" in Acts 2:38 does not signify a past action. We are commanded to be baptized in order to receive the forgiveness of sins. We are not baptized because we have been forgiven of our sins.

False Claim

Some people claim that *eis* (which is translated "for" in Acts 2:38) is sometimes translated "because" or "because of" in the New Testament. This is a false statement.

The Greek word *eis* is not translated "because" or "because of" in any reliable translation.

Translation of Acts 2:38

"for the forgiveness of your sins"	New American Standard Bible, Revised Standard Version, New International Version, Douay-Rheims Bible
"unto the remission of your sins"	American Standard Version
"for the remission of sins"	New King James Version, King James Version
"so that your sins may be forgiven"	New Revised Standard Version
"to remission of sins"	Young's Literal Translation

Translation of *eis* in Acts 2:38 by commentators.

(From Boles' Commentary on Acts.) "For, to or toward"

Abbott, Church of England, "Commentary on Acts"

Alexander, Presbyterian, "Commentary on Acts"

"unto, for, in order to"	Axtell, Baptist, "Shepherd's Handbook"
"for, unto"	Benson, Methodist, "Commentary on Bible"
"for, unto"	Bickersteth, Church of England, "Commentary on Acts"
"end toward which"	Butcher, Presbyterian, "Shepherd's Handbook"
"in reference to"	Adam Clark, Methodist, "Commentary on Bible"
"unto, to"	Dill, Baptist, "Shepherd's Handbook"
"is always prospective"	Ditzer, Methodist, "Wilkes-Ditzler Debate"
"aim, purpose"	Godet, Presbyterian, "Shepherd's Handbook"
"purpose"	Goodwin, Congregationalist, "Shepherd's Handbook"
"in order to"	Harkness, Baptist, "Shepherd's Handbook"
"the object to be obtained"	Harmon, Methodist, "Shepherd's Handbook"
"unto, in order to receive"	Harper, Baptist, "Shepherd's Handbook"
"unto"	Hovey, Baptist, "Commentary on John"
"unto, to this end"	Jacobus, Presbyterian, "Commentary on Acts"
"denotes object"	Meyer, Lutheran, "Commentary on Acts"
"with a view to"	McLintock, Methodist, McIntock & Strong Encyclopedia
"unto"	Rice, "Commentary on Acts"
"might receive"	Schaff, Presbyterian, "Shepherd's Handbook"
"in order to"	Strong, Methodist, "Shepherd's Handbook"
"unto, to the end"	Summers, Methodist, "Commentary on Acts"

"into, to, toward"	Thayer, Congregationalist, Greek-English Lexicon
"in order to"	Willmarth, Baptist, Baptist Quarterly, 1878

Strong's Greek Dictionary

Information to the left is a quotation.

#1519 (**eis**): "a primary preposition; to or into (indicating the point reached or entered), of place, time, or (figuratively) purpose (result, etc.); also in adverbial phrases:--(abundant-)ly, against, among, as, at, (back-)ward, before, by, concerning, + continual, + far more exceeding, for (intent, purpose), fore, + forth, in (among, at, unto, -so much that, -to), to the intent that, + of one mind, + never, of, (up-)on, + perish, + set at one again, (so) that, therefore(-unto), throughout, til, to (be, the end, -ward), (here-)until(-to), ...ward, (where-)fore, with. Often used in composition with the same general import, but only with verbs (etc.) expressing motion (literally or figuratively)."

Theological Dictionary of the New Testament

Gerald Kittle, Editor
(Translated By: Geofferey W. Bromiley, Volume II)

"*Eis*" in Matt. 12:41; Lk. 11:32 ("with a view to the preaching of repentance") states the reason and denotes a logical connection.

In Acts 2:38 *eis* denotes the direction of an action to a specific end as it does in Matt. 26:28; Mk. 1:4; Lk. 3:3.

Below are excerpts from second and third century Christians explaining the necessity of baptism for salvation. As Tertullian explained, the people teaching that baptism was not essential to salvation in the second and third centuries were the Gnostics.

The First Apology of Justin
[110-165 A.D.]

"And for this [rite] we have learned from the apostles this reason. Since at our birth we were born without our own knowledge or choice, by our parents coming together, and were brought up in bad habits and wicked training; in order that we may not remain the children of necessity and of ignorance, but may become children of choice and knowledge, and may obtain in the water remission of sins formerly committed, there is pronounced over him who chooses to be born again, and has repented of his sins, the name of God the Father and Lord of the universe; he who leads to

the laver the person that is to be washed calling him by his name alone. For no one can utter the name of the ineffable God; and if any one dare to say that there is a name, he raves with a hopeless madness. And this washing is illumination, because they who learn these things are illuminated in their understanding. And in the name of Jesus Christ, who was crucified under Pontius Pilate, and in the name of the Holy Ghost, who through the prophets foretold all things about Jesus, he who is illuminated is washed."

(Edited by Alexander Roberts, James Donaldson; Revised and arranged with notes A. Cleveland Coxe, Ante-Nicene Fathers; Volume 1; The Apostolic Fathers, Justin Martyr, Irenaeus; Peabody, Massachusetts: Hendrickson Publishing, Inc., 1994; p. 183)

Tertullian; Chap. XII Of the necessity of baptism to salvation [145-220 A.D.]

When, however, the prescript is laid down that "without baptism, salvation is attainable by none" (chiefly on the ground of that declaration of the Lord, who says, "Unless one be born of water, he hath not life"), . . .

(Edited by Alexander Roberts, James Donaldson; Revised and arranged with notes A. Cleveland Coxe, Ante-Nicene Fathers; Volume 3; Latin Christianity: Its Founder, Tertullian I. Apologetic; II. Anti-Marcion; III. Ethical; Peabody, Massachusetts: Hendrickson Publishing, Inc., 1994; p. 674-5)

Tertullian, On Baptism [145-220 A.D.]

1. Happy is our sacred mystery of water. For by washing away the sins of our early blindness, we are set free and admitted into eternal life. An essay on this subject is worthwhile. First, it will instruct those who are new in the faith. Secondly, it will teach those who have been content with merely believing. Because of their ignorance, they have a probable faith that is untried. They have not made a full examination of the [Christian] traditions. As a consequence, a viper of the Cainite heresy, having recently become familiar in this region, has carried away a great number with her venomous doctrine. She has made it her first aim to destroy baptism. This is quite fitting, because vipers, snakes, and lizards are generally attracted to arid and waterless places.

However, we little fishes are born in water, after the example of our *Ichthys* Jesus Christ. And we have safety in no other way than by permanently abiding in water. So that monstrous creature, who

had no right to teach even sound doctrine, knew very well how to kill the little fishes - by taking them away from the water!

2. The perversity of her false doctrine is very great. It shakes the faith, and it can entirely block a person from receiving the faith. In fact, it opposes the faith on the very principles of which the faith consists! Absolutely nothing makes men's minds more hardened than the simplicity of the divine works which are visible in the act [of baptism]. Particularly, when this is compared with the grandeur promised in the effect. The resulting attainment of eternity is deemed unbelievable merely because the act is one of great simplicity - without pomp. For without any type of unusual preparation, a man is lowered in the water. With the utterance of a few words, he is dipped, and then rises again not much the [physically] cleaner.

Footnote: The Cainites were a gnostic sect that taught against water baptism. They believed that Cain, Esau, Judas, and the people of Sodom all had special divine knowledge hidden from most other humans. They circulated a spurious "Gospel of Judas."

Footnote: The Greek word *ichthys* (fish) was an acrostic for "Jesus Christ, the Son of God, the Savior."

(Tertullian, translated by David W. Burcot, *A Glimpse At Early Christian Church Life*; Tyler, TX: Scroll Publishing Co., 1991; p. 93-4)

Tertullian: The Significance of Baptism [145-220 A.D.]

To an extent, there is a spiritual parallel to the simple act: Since we are defiled by sins, as if by dirt, we should be washed from those stains in water. However, sins do not show themselves on our physical skin. For example, no one carries on his skin the spot of idolatry, or fornication, or fraud. Rather, persons of that kind are foul in the spirit, which is the author of the sin. After all, the spirit is lord; the flesh is merely the servant. Yet, they mutually share in the guilt: the spirit, because it commands; the flesh, because it serves the spirit. Therefore, after the waters have been given medicinal virtue through the intervention of the angel, then the spirit is bodily washed in the waters, and the flesh is likewise spiritually cleansed.

(Tertullian, translated by David W. Burcot, *A Glimpse at Early Christian Church Life*; Tyler, TX: Scroll Publishing Co., 1989; p. 98)

Tertullian [145-220 A.D.]: Is baptism necessary for salvation?

13. But the heretics provoke further questions. They say, "Baptism is not necessary for those to whom faith is sufficient. After all, Abraham pleased God by a sacrament of faith, not water." But in all cases it is the later things that have conclusive force. The later [revelation of God] prevails over the earlier. Granted, in former days there was salvation by bare faith, before the suffering and resurrection of the Lord. But now faith has been enlarged, and has become a faith that believes in his birth, suffering, and resurrection. So the ordinance [of faith] has been amplified by the addition of the sealing act of baptism. This is, so to speak, the clothing of the faith which was previously bare, which now cannot exist without its proper law.

For the law of baptizing has been imposed, and the formula prescribed: "Go," he says, "teaching the nations, baptizing them into the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit." (Matt. 28:19) "Unless a man has been born again of water and Spirit, he shall not enter into the kingdom of the heavens." (John 3:5) Those words have tied faith to the necessity of baptism. Accordingly, all who became believers after that time were baptized. So it was that Paul was baptized when he believed. This is the meaning of the direction which the Lord had given him when he was struck with blindness, "Arise, and enter Damascus; there it shall be demonstrated to you what you ought to do." This meant he was to be baptized, which was the only thing he lacked. For he had sufficiently learned and believed the Nazarene to be "the Lord, the Son of God." (Acts 9:1-31)

(Tertullian, translated by David W. Burcot, *A Glimpse at Early Christian Church Life*; Tyler, TX: Scroll Publishing Co., 1989; p. 109-10)