

The Bible versus the “Church of Christ”

Baptism: Part Three Acts 2:38 and Other “Proof Texts”

V. Acts 2:38 – For Jews Only?

- A. **The Accusation:** *“The Church of Christ also uses Acts 2:38 for their beliefs about baptism.... About this verse, Delton Haun’s tract says the following on page 7: ‘Peter said it is necessary for men in this age to be baptized to obtain pardon. The preposition “of” means “in order to” and is so rendered in some translations.’”*
- B. **The Accusation:** *“Notice how the Church of Christ must refer to OTHER TRANSLATIONS in order to find support for their false teachings! This is a standard practice among the cults: ESTABLISH MORE THAN ONE AUTHORITY SO THAT YOU CAN CHOOSE THE ONE YOU PREFER AT ANY GIVEN TIME. We will stick with the Book that God uses, the King James Bible, and we’ll show you WHY Acts 2:38 does not teach that a person has to be baptized in water in order to be saved.”*
- C. **The Response:** *The preposition “of” does mean “in order to,” no matter what translation is used.*
1. The Greek word is *eis* (εις), a preposition that means, “In order to, into, unto, or towards.”
 2. According to Acts 2:38, baptism is in order to the remission of sins.
 3. This is true – even in the King James Version.
 4. The King James Version is an accurate, reliable and trustworthy translation.
 - a. Most modern translations are not accurate or reliable.
 - b. However, the KJV was not given to man directly from God.
 - c. It was translated by fallible men and has a few minor errors or mistakes.
 5. We must be willing to look to the original languages for in depth Bible study.
 6. To argue against this, Mr. Melton cites Luke 5:14, saying that the cleansed leper *“was offering a sacrifice BECAUSE OF the cleansing that he already had.”*
 7. However, the Greek word for “for” in this verse is different – *peri* (περι), meaning, “On account of, because of, or with respect to.”
 - a. The Greek word *eis* is found in this verse – “for a testimony.”
 - b. There, it has the same meaning as in Acts 2:38.
 8. The best verse to compare with Acts 2:38 is Matthew 26:28 where the phrase “for the remission of sins” is the same in both verses.
 - a. The blood of Jesus was not shed because sins had already been forgiven.
 - b. Instead, His blood was shed unto or in order to the remission of sins.
 - c. Likewise, baptism is in order to the remission of sins.
- D. **The Accusation:** *“First of all, the same Peter who is preaching in Acts 2:38 later learns a few things about Salvation that he did NOT know in Acts 2. We know this is true, because in Acts 15:11 Peter says something very different.... In Acts 15:11 Peter says nothing about baptism. Why not? If it’s so important, why didn’t he mention it? Very simple. At the time of Acts 2:38, Peter didn’t fully understand Salvation by grace through faith (Eph. 2:8-9). God had to reveal this to Peter, and, by the time we reach Acts 15:11, Peter gives us God’s Salvation plan for today.”*
- E. **The Response:** *Peter was inspired by the Holy Spirit on both occasions; therefore, there can be no contradiction between the two statements.*
1. On the Day of Pentecost, Peter was not preaching what he had learned, but what he was inspired to say.
 - a. That was the purpose of the Spirit’s power!
 - b. Mr. Melton believes that the baptism of the Holy Spirit was to save Peter from his sins – from which he had already been forgiven!

The Bible versus the “Church of Christ”

- c. Thus, he misunderstands the inspiration of the Apostles and the authority of their message on that day.
 - d. This was the beginning of the preaching of the Gospel – a message of good news that would not change from that day until the Lord’s return.
 2. To claim that Peter did not know the truth about salvation on Pentecost is to claim that the Holy Spirit misled Peter and everyone present on that day!
 3. God did not have to mention baptism every time salvation was discussed.
 - a. By declaring that it is essential to salvation, baptism is implied whenever salvation is mentioned.
 - b. Hearing, repentance and confession of faith are not mentioned every time salvation is discussed; yet, they are also essential.
 - c. Acts 15:11 is dealing with the events at the house of Cornelius, where baptism took place (Acts 10:46-48).
 4. Acts 15:11 teaches that all men – whether Jew or Gentile – are saved in the same way.
 - a. The order of events at the house of Cornelius is important to remember.
 - b. First, Peter began to tell them words whereby they would be saved (11:14).
 - c. As he began to speak, the Holy Spirit came upon them (11:15).
 - d. This was a sign that God had accepted the Gentiles and that the Gospel could be preached to them (11:16-18; 10:44-46).
 - e. Then, Peter commanded them to be baptized (10:46-48).
 - f. The commands to Cornelius were no different than those on Pentecost (2), or in Samaria (8), or to the eunuch (8), or to Saul (9).
 5. Salvation by grace through faith includes baptism; for, true faith is obedient (James 2:17-26).
- F. **The Accusation:** *“Secondly, please notice that there are NO GENTILES (non Jews (sic), like you and I) in Acts 2:38. [T]hese Jews... came to realize that they had crucified their Messiah. They had already been told how to be saved in verse twenty-one (which the Church of Christ never mentions), and they were ‘pricked in their heart’ in verse thirty-seven. So they asked, ‘Men and brethren, what shall we do?’ Notice that they did NOT ask, ‘What must I do to be saved?’ (The answer to THAT question is found in Acts 16:31, not Acts 2:38.) These Jews wanted to know what to do in light of the fact that they had crucified their Messiah. This is a NATIONAL situation concerning Israel, not an individual situation dealing with lost sinners. No one in the chapter asks how to be saved.”*
- G. **The Response:** *The baptism of about 3,000 individuals could have no effect on a national situation concerning Israel.*
 1. Acts 2:21 is a quotation from Joel 2:32.
 - a. This statement had been made hundreds of years before; but, its meaning was still not understood.
 - b. The rest of Peter’s sermon explains what it means to “call on the name of the Lord.”
 - i. It is certainly more than saying, “Lord, Lord” (Matt. 7:21ff).
 - ii. It is more than “faith only” (James 2:17-26).
 - c. To call upon the name of the Lord is to submit to His authority in obedience to His Word, including baptism (2:37-38; 22:16; Matt. 28:19).
 2. They were “pricked in the heart” because they realized that they had crucified the Messiah, the Son of God.
 3. When they asked, “What shall we do?” Peter answered by telling them how to have remission of sins.
 - a. Their question concerned their individual guilt and sin for rejecting and crucifying Jesus.

The Bible versus the “Church of Christ”

- b. How could an individual’s baptism affect a national sin?
- c. This argument makes no sense at all; for, it is a weak, human attempt to deny the plain teaching of Scripture.
- 4. They wanted to know how to be forgiven of their sins and Peter told them to repent and be baptized.
- 5. By the way, Acts 16:30-35 teaches that baptism was a part of the answer to the question, “What must I do to be saved?”
- H. **The Accusation:** “[T]he Jews were told to be baptized ‘in the name of Jesus Christ,’ but WE were told to be baptized in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost in Matthew 28:19. Acts 2:38 is obviously a special baptism for the first century Jews who had rejected Christ. They were told to be baptized in His name to show that they now RECEIVED Him.”
- I. **The Response:** Acts 10:48 teaches that Gentiles were baptized “in the name of the Lord.”
- J. **The Accusation:** “Now, this reveals to us a great truth about the Book of Acts: It is a Book of PROGRESSIVE REVELATION. God reveals more about salvation by grace through faith as the Book progresses. ...Peter learns a valuable lesson about grace in Acts 10:14-15, and by Acts 15:11 he is well established in the doctrine of Salvation by Grace.”
- K. **The Response:** God’s plan of salvation has not changed since the Day of Pentecost.
 - 1. Every account of conversion in the book of Acts includes baptism.
 - a. Acts 2:36-42 Pentecost
 - b. Acts 8:5-13 Samaritans
 - c. Acts 8:13 Simon
 - d. Acts 8:36-41 Ethiopian Eunuch
 - e. Acts 9:1-9 Saul (cf. 22:6-16; 26:12-19)
 - f. Acts 10:25-48 Cornelius
 - g. Acts 16:13-15 Lydia
 - h. Acts 16:31-34 Philippian Jailer
 - i. Acts 18:8 The Corinthians
 - j. Acts 19:1-7 Men at Ephesus
 - 2. God commands all of these things for man to be saved...
 - a. Hearing (Acts 10:22; 11:14; 18:8; Romans 10:14, 17)
 - b. Faith (Mark 16:16; Hebrews 11:6)
 - c. Repentance (Luke 13:3; Acts 2:38; 17:30-31)
 - d. Confession of faith (Acts 8:36-37; Romans 10:9-10)
 - e. Baptism (Romans 10:3-4; Galatians 3:27; 1 Peter 3:21)
 - 3. None of these exclude the grace of God or the blood of Christ.
- L. In spite of all these arguments to the contrary, Acts 2:38 still says exactly what God meant – “Repent and be baptized ...for the remission of sins.”

VI. Acts 22:16 – Part of the Old Law?

- A. **The Accusation:** “Revelation 1:5 plainly tells us that it is the BLOOD OF JESUS CHRIST that washes away sin, not water baptism, so there is obviously more to Acts 22:16 than the Church of Christ teaches.”
- B. **The Response:** One contacts the blood of Jesus in the water of baptism.
 - 1. If two verses teach that two different things are involved in the washing away of sins, why must it be assumed that only one of the two is actually necessary?
 - a. Acts 2:38 – Repentance and baptism are both essential to salvation.
 - b. Rom. 4:1-4; Jam. 2:21 – Grace, faith, and works were all necessary for Abraham’s justification.
 - c. Likewise, the blood of Jesus and baptism work together to wash away sins.
 - 2. It is only in baptism that one can contact the blood of Jesus.

The Bible versus the “Church of Christ”

- a. Jesus shed His blood in His death on the cross (John 19:33-35).
 - b. The sinner is baptized into His death (Romans 6:3-4).
 - c. Thus, in baptism, the blood of Christ is contacted and sins are washed away (cf. Revelation 7:14).
3. By baptism, one reenacts the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus (Rom. 6:3-11)
- C. **The Accusation:** “*Why did Ananias say this to Paul? [H]e was a Jewish proselyte who still followed the Old Testament law. He ...did not yet have full understanding of Salvation by Grace. Obviously he didn’t, or he wouldn’t have been following the law. [He] associated water baptism with the Old Testament laws of PURIFICATION (Jn. 11:55; Num. 19:7-22; Acts 21:24-25), which were for washing the FLESH, not the soul. He didn’t have a clear understanding of the Blood Atonement of Christ, which washes away all sin.*”
- D. **The Response:** *Ananias was sent by God to tell Saul what he “must do.”*
1. Ananias was “a devout man according to the law” because he was a faithful and obedient Jew (22:12).
 - a. Remember to whom Paul was speaking on this occasion – his Jewish “brethren and fathers” (22:1).
 - b. He wanted them to understand that he had not abandoned God by becoming a Christian.
 - c. In fact, it was a devout Jew who instructed him in how to become a disciple of Christ.
 2. However, Ananias had become a Christian; for, he is called a disciple in Acts 9:10.
 3. Furthermore, the Lord spoke to Ananias in a vision and sent him to Saul (9:10-18).
 4. And, the Lord told Saul that what he was told in the city would be what he **must** do (Acts 9:3-6).
 - a. The Lord also promised Saul that he would be told what was appointed for him to do (22:10).
 - b. It was Ananias who revealed this to Saul (22:14-15).
 5. Thus, what was told to Saul by Ananias was the will of the Lord – not the teaching of the Old Testament!
 6. Ananias must have had a “clear understanding of the blood atonement of Christ” or he could not have become a Christian!

VII. 1 Peter 3:21 – Is Baptism a “Figure”?

- A. **The Accusation:** “*The Church of Christ also uses 1 Peter 3:21 to teach that water baptism saves people, but, as anyone can clearly see, the verse says that it is a ‘figure,’ not a doctrine. Water baptism PICTURES the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ. When a believer is baptized he is being identified with Jesus Christ, but it is his BELIEF that brings Salvation, as we’ve already seen.*”
- B. **The Response:** *In this passage, the Flood is the figure, not baptism.*
1. The Greek word for “figure” is *antitupon* (αντιτυπον) meaning, “Antitype; a thing resembling another, its counterpart).
 2. In the Bible, God often taught by using the relationships between types and antitypes.
 - a. Adam was a type of Christ.
 - b. The tabernacle was a type of the church.
 - c. The Passover Lamb was a type of Jesus.
 3. In this passage, the water of the flood was a type of the water of baptism.
 - a. The water of the flood lifted up the ark – along with Noah and his family – and carried them safely to a new world, free from sin.
 - b. Likewise, baptism saves us by translating us from the domain of Satan into the kingdom of God’s dear Son (cf. Colossians 1:13-14).

The Bible versus the “Church of Christ”

- c. The water of the flood was the dividing line between the lost and the saved.
 - d. Likewise, the water of baptism is the dividing line between the lost and the saved – those outside of Christ and those in Him and His body.
 - e. The water of the flood washed away the old world and the sinners who inhabited it.
 - f. The water of baptism washes away the old man of sin and the new man is raised to walk in newness of life.
4. In other words, the Flood is a figure of baptism.
- C. Baptism is not a figure of salvation, but an essential step to forgiveness of sins.

VIII. Other Verses and the Truth about Baptism

- A. **The Accusation:** *“Romans 6:3-4 and Galatians 3:27 are frequently used by the Church of Christ to teach that water baptism is essential for Salvation, but there is no WATER baptism in either of these verses. These portions of scripture are speaking of the SPIRITUAL baptism of 1 Corinthians 12:13 which places the new believer into the body of Christ. Water baptism does NOT place anyone into the body of Christ. The Holy Ghost places us into Christ the moment we RECEIVE Christ as our Saviour, and this has nothing to do with water baptism. Remember, to ‘baptize’ means to immerse. To be baptized into Christ is to be IMMERSED into Christ, not into the water (1 Cor. 12:13).”*
- B. **The Response:** *These passages refer to water baptism because it is the “one baptism” that continues today.*
- C. **The Accusation:** *“Paul said in 1 Corinthians that, “Christ sent me not to baptize, but to preach the gospel....’ The ‘gospel’ is defined in 1 Corinthians 15:1-4 as being the good news that Christ died, was buried, and then rose again on the third day, and the subject of water baptism isn’t mentioned once. Baptism is important, and all true believers should submit to water baptism (Acts 10:47; 8:37-38; Mt. 28:18-20), but trusting water baptism for Salvation is a terrible and unscriptural mistake.”*
- D. **The Response:** *Baptism is a part of the Gospel; and, preaching the Gospel includes preaching baptism for the remission of sins.*
- 1. Again, in every account of conversion in the book of Acts, when the Gospel was preached, people were baptized (cf. Acts 8:35-36).
 - 2. In truth, one cannot preach Christ without preaching baptism.
 - 3. Even the Corinthians who heard and believed the Gospel were baptized (18:8).
 - 4. The context of both of Paul’s statements to the church at Corinth must be considered.
 - a. Paul was glad that he had not personally baptized many in Corinth because of the divisions that had arisen in that congregation (1 Cor. 1:12-16).
 - b. Thus, he said, “For Christ sent me not to baptize, but to preach the gospel.”
 - c. This does not mean that baptism was not essential to their salvation or that it was unimportant.
 - d. Instead, it means that baptizing people was not Paul’s only (or even sole) purpose as an apostle and a preacher (cf. Mark 16:15-16).
 - i. Obviously, preaching the Gospel led to the baptisms of those who believed it.
 - ii. However, it is likely that while Paul did the preaching, someone else did the baptizing (cf. John 4:2).
 - e. Baptism was supposed to unite, not divide.
 - 5. The fundamental facts of the Gospel are the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus.
 - 6. Yet, when those facts are believed, obedience must follow (cf. Rom. 10:16; 2 Thes. 1:8; 1 Pet. 4:17; Jam. 2:20; 1 Peter 1:22-25).
 - 7. In fact, the New Testament is the Gospel of Christ (cf. Gal. 2:14; etc.).