

Biblical Theology of Baptism *for* Salvation

An Exegetical Examination of Acts 2:38

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Rationale for the Topic

This study is written in response to some evangelical attempts to reinterpret Acts 2:38 to read "*because of the remission of sins.*"

All major translations interpret this as "*Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ **for** the forgiveness of your sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.*"

Some evangelicals reinterpret this text to read "*Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ **because of** the forgiveness of your sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.*"

Bibliography on Baptism

We recommend the following studies on Baptism

Everett Ferguson, *Baptism in the Early Church: History, Theology, and Liturgy in the First Five Centuries*, Eerdmans, 2009.

This is comprehensive and outstanding study by an internationally acclaimed scholar.

G. R. Beasley-Murray, *Baptism in the New Testament*, Eerdmans, 1962.

Beasley-Murray is a Baptist scholar who has taught at some of the finest Baptist universities and seminaries. He was professor emeritus at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Kentucky, and a former principal of Spurgeon's College, London. Beasley-Murray discusses all of the major baptism texts in the New Testament, including Acts 2:38 and the other baptism texts in Acts.

Robert H. Stein, "Baptism and Becoming a Christian in the New Testament", is found in the *Southern Baptist Journal of Theology*, vol. 2, Spring, 1988, pp. 6-17.

Stein's article is in keeping with Professor Beasley-Murray's work.

A Response to Evangelical Reinterpretation of Acts 2:38

This study explores the meaning of Peter's response in Acts 2:38 to the Jews gathered in Jerusalem on the day of Pentecost. After preaching a sermon on the Holy Spirit and Jesus' Death and Resurrection based on Joel 2:28 and Psalm 16, Peter concluded "*Let all the house of Israel therefore know assuredly that God has made him both Lord and Christ, this Jesus whom you crucified.*" Luke continues "*Now when they heard this they were cut to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, "Brethren, what shall we do?"*" We can safely assume that at this point these Jews believed in Jesus; that he was both Lord and their promised Messiah, that they had crucified him, and that God had raised him from the dead. Peter responded telling them to "*Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.*"

It is clear from Luke's account of this sermon that these Jews really believed in Jesus. When they asked what they should do, Peter did not respond, "You do not have to do anything, you now believe and are therefore saved"! His instructions were "*repent and be baptized every one of you.*" But why should they be baptized? Quite clearly his answer gave the reason, "*for the forgiveness of sins.*" Luke tells us that Peter then encouraged them "*with many other words and exhorted them, saying, 'Save yourselves from this crooked generation.'*" The result was that "*those who received his word were baptized, and there were added that day about three thousand souls.*"

This brief account of the baptism of the 3000 on Pentecost is not difficult to understand. They heard Peter's preaching concerning Jesus, they *believed in Jesus*, they asked what they should then do, they were told to *repent* and *every one* of them to *be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of their sins*. They were then encouraged to save themselves from their crooked generation. They responded in faith by being baptized.

Some evangelical Christians have difficulty reconciling this brief narrative with their doctrine of *salvation by faith only*. They consider baptism a *work of obedience* in response to salvation, and not faith responding *for* salvation.

There is no question regarding the fundamental Christian doctrine of justification or salvation by grace through faith in Jesus! This is deeply imbedded in New Testament and Christian doctrine. *The question is how baptism fits into this equation.* The evangelical response is that baptism is a *work of obedience* experienced *after* salvation, baptism in their view is *because of* the salvation already received, and in response to that salvation. Baptism in Peter's view in Acts 2:38 is the result of faith and repentance, and is *for* or *unto* salvation. The error in evangelical views of baptism is that baptism is not simply a work of obedience *because of*, or after salvation, but is in fact faith expressing itself in response to grace and *for* salvation. This is clearly what Peter laid out in Acts 2:38. Stressing that baptism is not a work we engage in, but that it is faith in the working of God, Paul in Col 2:12 explains that baptism is *faith in the working of God*. Baptism is not faith in our working as an act of obedience, but *faith in God's working!*

Baptism and faith are both "acts" we must engage in personally. Faith is as much a work as is baptism! No one believes for us, we must believe or have faith in Jesus for ourselves. Likewise no one is baptized for us, we must submit to being baptized! Faith and baptism are therefore acts we must experience and engage in, but neither faith nor baptism are acts or works which *earn* salvation. Salvation is a gift of God's grace, and baptism is faith responding to God's grace. We respond to the preaching of grace and Christ by believing the preached message. Faith consequently is something we do in response to the message of grace. Faith is not something we do that earns us salvation! Faith is an appropriate response to God's grace. Likewise, baptism is not a work that we do that earns salvation. It is an appropriate response in faith to God's saving grace. This is what Peter explained in 1 Pet 3:21 when he discussed Noah and Christian baptism. After stating that Noah was "*saved through water*" Peter added, "*Baptism, which corresponds to this, now saves you, not as a removal of dirt from the body but as an appeal to God for a clear conscience, through the resurrection of Jesus Christ...*" Baptism is the response of a good conscience in faith to God's call for faith, and as Peter explains in both Acts 2:38 and 1 Pet 3:21, baptism is *for the purpose of* forgiveness and salvation. Faith and baptism are intricately connected as two poles in a continuum and not as two separate points. The minute you separate faith from baptism you end up in a situation of no real faith! The minute you separate baptism from faith you likewise end up in a situation of no real faith!

Whichever way you approach salvation, it is a matter of God's saving grace and not our effort, either in having faith or in being baptized. Salvation is always a matter of God's saving and powerful

grace. Furthermore, it is interesting to note that baptism is not a work we do, but something that is done to us! Baptism is always expressed in the passive voice and not the active voice. We submit *in faith to being baptized*, and *it is God who works salvation in our submission to baptism!*

The result of the difficulty experienced by evangelicals to understand faith and baptism as equal responses to God's saving grace is seen clearly in their attempts to interpret Acts 2:38 in a manner that makes baptism the result of salvation rather than faith leading to salvation. We then encounter the following interpretation of Acts 2:38, "Repent and be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ **because of** the forgiveness of sins..." rather than as Peter clearly charged "Repent and be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ **for (unto)** the forgiveness of sins..." The translation **for the forgiveness of sins** or **unto the remission of sins** is the translation found in all major English translations of Acts 2:38 (KJV, ASV, NASV, RSV, NRSV, NIV).

In similar fashion those adopting this false solution to Acts 2:38 reinterpret the final statement of the Nicene Creed to fit into their own doctrine of atonement. The Nicene Creed reads "*We acknowledge one baptism **unto** remission of sins.*" In similar fashion to Acts 2:38, we find this reinterpretation of the Nicene Creed, "*We acknowledge one baptism **because of** remission of sins.*" We set the words **unto** and **because of** in bold type since it is this point with which we take issue. We reject this tendency to change the reading of Acts 2:38 and the Nicene Creed to fit a particular doctrine of salvation by faith only!

In light of these problems, this study of Acts 2:38 is written with the purpose of examining the meaning of the Greek preposition eis in Acts 2:38. We will also examine and the implications of this for New Testament theology.

Since many evangelicals follow the proposals of Julius R. Mantey in regard to Acts 2:38, and his preference for *because of* in place of *for* or *unto*, much of the following discussion is focused on Mantey's thought as set out specifically in Dana and Mantey, *A Manual Grammar of the Greek New Testament*. We will notice that Mantey falls into the same error as some modern evangelical groups in that **he interprets eis according to his personal doctrine of atonement** rather than according to normal Greek syntax and use.

Translation of Acts 2:38 in the Major English Translations

KJV 1611 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.

ASV 1901 ³⁸ And Peter *said* unto them, Repent ye, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ unto the remission of your sins; and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.

RSV 1973/77 ³⁸ Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.

NASV 1977 ³⁸ Repent, and let each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.

NIV 1984 ³⁸ Peter replied, "Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.

NRSV 1989 ³⁸ Peter said to them, "Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ so that your sins may be forgiven; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.

NASV 1995 ³⁸ Peter *said* to them, "Repent, and each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.

The major English translations agree on Acts 2:38, for the remission of sins

Not one of the recognized major English translations translates the Greek *eis* in Acts 2:38 as **because**, with the major scholars in agreement that when *eis* is followed by an accusative noun it points forward, for the remission of sins, not back, as in because of the remission of sins.

The question we are addressing is “*On what grounds do some translate or interpret the Greek *eis*, for, as because?*” *Certainly not on grammatical grounds, but purely because of doctrinal persuasions.*

The Meaning of the Greek Preposition *Eis*

Bauer, Arndt, and Gingrich: *A Greek English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Church Literature*, 1957. This is a standard and widely recognized Greek English Lexicon (Dictionary). Arndt and Gingrich list over 20 different uses of *eis*.

The leading comment regarding this preposition is that *eis* with the *accusative* noun (simply put, the object in a sentence), indicates motion into a thing, or into its immediate vicinity.

They list the following ways in which *eis* can be translated:

- a. Used of place, *into, to, toward*
- b. With verbs of sending, *to, into, among*
- c. It can simply mean *direction, toward something*
- d. Used of time, *to the end*
- e. Used indicating degree, *fully*
- f. Indicating *goal, to, toward*
- g. Used as the result of an action, *into, to, so that*
- h. Used to denote purpose, *in order to, to*
- i. Used with the dative noun, *for*
- j. *One reading is listed as controversial, namely because.*
- k. *Regarding Acts 2:38, Bauer, Arndt, and Gingrich indicate that it denotes purpose, in order to, so*

Bauer, Arndt, and Gingrich indicate that this *controversial possibility* derives from J. R. Mantey, regarding whom something will be said below!

Kittel: *The Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* (Kittel) TNDT lists several categories in which *eis* must be considered.

- a. Spatial, cosmic and psychological.
- b. Temporal.
- c. Modal.
- d. In logical connection stating reason.
- e. With a noun or pronominal accusative, a final sense.
- f. With Personal reference, with reference to.
- g. The important point emphasized here is that the noun or *pronominal accusative* used with *eis* indicates final sense or result.
- h. In Greek the accusative indicates the limitation, result, direction, or end of the verbal action.
- i. (Simply put, *pronominal* refers to a pronoun. A pronominal accusative is a pronoun serving as a direct object.)

Syntax: The Greek Preposition *Eis* in Greek Syntax

- a. Syntax refers to *how words work* together in Greek.
- b. In Greek, *prepositions work in conjunction with nouns* and other grammatical forms such as the infinitive.

- c. Dana and Mantey, *A Manual Grammar of the Greek New Testament*, 1927/1957, p. 103 states that *eis* occurs more than 1,700 times in the Greek New Testament, and ***only with the accusative form of noun***.
- d. Cf. likewise Blass, Debrunner, Funk, *A Grammar of New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, 1961.
- e. Dana and Mantey argue that the ***fundamental compositional meaning*** of *eis* is *into, in, to go inside*.
- f. They state that *in conjunction with the accusative noun* the resultant meanings of *eis* are *into, unto, to, for*.
- g. Several remote meanings are offered such as *upon, against, among, with respect to, in reference to*.
- h. At this point Mantey mentions an interpretation that some (Arndt and Gingrich) have termed a *controversial meaning*, implying that it is not generally recognized as such by grammarians! Mantey argues for a translation of *eis* which ***might*** read as ***because of***. We will discuss Mantey's controversial and unusual interpretation in detail below, arguing that it is ***forced to meet Mantey's doctrinal stance on baptism and salvation***, and not based on the normal meaning as used in the Greek of the New Testament.

Greek Grammars: Greek Grammars on *Eis* and *the Accusative Case of Nouns*

Most Greek grammars indicate that *the accusative case*, simply stated, ***limits or describes extension***. By this they mean that *the accusative indicates the limit or direction of the verbal action*. In relation to the preposition *eis*, the *accusative case indicates the direction or limitation of the preposition eis*. This can be found in the following standard Greek Grammars.

H. P. V. Nunn, *A Syntax of New Testament Greek*.

W. H. Davis, *Beginner's Grammar of the Greek New Testament*.

James Hope Moulton and Henry G. Meacham, *An Introduction to the Study of New Testament Greek*.

Blass, Debrunner, Funk, *A Grammar of New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, 1961.

Dana and Mantey, *A Manual Grammar of the Greek New Testament*, 1927/1957, pp. 91 ff. The grammar argument states that *the accusative case relates primarily to action, and indicates direction, extent, or end*.

Dana and Mantey add, "The *accusative signifies that the object referred to is considered as the point toward which something is proceeding*: that it is the end of the action or motion described...The accusative embraces three ideas: the *end, or direction, or extent of motion or action*...The root meaning of the accusative is limitation."

Yet Mantey differs with the grammar rule of Dana and himself!

Discussion on Mantey's Erroneous Arguments for Translating *Eis* as *Because*

In this section we examine reasons why Mantey translates *eis* as *because* rather than as *for, toward, unto, with reference to* in the normal manner set out in his own Grammar.

As indicated above, none of the major translations deviates from the normal translation of *eis*! Mantey's discussion of the normal translations of *eis* in his grammar are excellent and to the point. *Eis* indicates *direction* and with the accusative it indicates *limitation*, not source or origin!

The major reason for Mantey seeking a different translation from the norm is his difficulty in taking **baptism for** in Acts 2:38 at face value!

“Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.”

We quote Mantey's argument on Acts 2:38 in detail:

“When one considers in Acts 2:38 repentance as self-renunciation and baptism as public expression of self-surrender and self-dedication to Christ, *which significance it certainly had in the first century* (emphasis IAF), the expression *eis afesin tōn hamartiōn humōn* may mean *for the purpose of the remission of sins*. **But** if one stresses baptism, without its early Christian import, as a ceremonial means of salvation, he does violence to Christianity as a whole, for one of its striking distinctions from Judaism and Paganism is that it is a religion of salvation by faith while all others teach salvation by works...”

Comments on Mantey's argument

- a. Mantey points out that in the context of the *1st century*, *eis afesin may mean for the purpose of the remission of sins!* **But in the context of the 20th century, it means because of!**
- b. Why, if it could and most likely should be translated in this manner *in the first century* should it not be translated in the same manner in the **20th or 21st centuries?**
- c. *The reason is that it does not fit Mantey's 20th century theology and doctrinal views!*
- d. The translation *for the purpose of the remission of sins* does violence, not to the remaining teachings on baptism in the New Testament, *but only to Mantey's doctrinal views!*
- e. Mantey's description of Paganism as teaching salvation by works may be correct, but his understanding of Judaism is faulty when he maintains that Judaism taught salvation by works!
- f. Recent studies on Judaism by E. P. Sanders, W. D. Davies, *et al.* argue that 2nd Temple Judaism at the time of Christ did not see justification as a result of works, but of faith.
- g. Furthermore, since the New Testament apparently does teach salvation or the washing away of sin as a result of baptism, *Acts 22:16, 1 Pet 3:21*, then we must assume, according to Mantey, that the New Testament teaches salvation by works!
- h. *However*, this does not follow. **What is defective is Mantey's understanding of the relationship of faith and baptism in the New Testament.** Cf. G. R. Beasley-Murray, *Baptism in the New Testament* for an excellent theology of faith and baptism.

Returning to Mantey's argument

“The sentence **metanoēsen eis to kērugma Iōna** in Mt. 12:41 and Lk. 12:32 is *forceful evidence for a causal use of this preposition*. *What led to their repentance?* Of course it was Jonah's preaching.”
Before we continue, let us examine Mantey's argument on Mt 12:41 which he considers forceful evidence for a causal use of eis!

The **RSV** translates this as “for they repented *at* the preaching of Jonah.”

The **KJV** translates this as “because they repented *at* the preaching of Jonas.”

The **ASV 1901** likewise translated this as “for they repented *at* the preaching of Jonah”.

The **NASV** likewise translated this as “they repented *at* the preaching of Jonah.”

We can safely assume that the *eis* in these translations should be rendered as *at*!

However, adopting Mantey's own category of "Remote meanings" for *eis* he suggests "(5) *With respect to, with reference to*" as possible meanings for *eis*. In this case we can translate Mt 12:41 as "they repented *with reference to,*" or "*with respect to,*" the preaching of Jonah"!

Bauer, Arndt, and Gingrich state that when used with a person or thing *eis* should be translated as "*with respect or with reference to*" the person or thing.

In Mt 12:41, they "*repented with respect to the preaching of Jonah!*"

The *forceful evidence* assumed by Mantey is not as forceful as he would have us believe! *In fact it is not an argument for a causal rendering because as Mantey claims!*

Mantey, "Mt 3:11 furnishes further evidence: **egō men humas baptizō en hudati eis metanoian**. Did John baptize that they might repent, or because of repentance? If the former we have no further Scriptural confirmation of it. If the latter, his practice was confirmed and followed by the apostles... In connection with this verse we have the testimony of a first century writer to the effect that John the Baptist baptized people only after they had repented. Josephus, Antiquities of the Jews, book 18, chapter 5, section 2..."

Once again, Mantey fails to permit the translation to work within his own category of definitions, that is, *eis* being understood as *in reference to*. In this case the translation would be "I baptize you in water *with reference to* (your) repentance!"

However, the **NASV** translates Mt 3:11 as "*I baptize you with water for repentance.*" The **KJV** translates this as "*I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance.*" The **RSV** and **NIV** translate this as "*I baptize you with water for repentance.*"

Our conclusion; Mantey has proven nothing

There are categories within the accepted possibilities for *eis* that would be suitable for Mt 3:11 without resorting to categories not normally accepted, yet which fit one's own doctrinal biases.

His *forceful evidence* falls far short of being either forceful or convincing!

Every argument Mantey has proposed can be better explained from within his own "Resultant" or "Remote" meanings, without resorting to a "controversial" translation, *because of*.

Objections to Mantey's unfounded interpretation

This has to do with how we use Scripture and how we determine doctrine!

Mantey reads Scripture through the lens of preferred doctrine, rather than determining doctrine through the lens of Scripture!

Are we to interpret Scripture from within our doctrine, or do we interpret our doctrine from within Scripture?

Mantey wants us to interpret Scripture so it agrees with a particular doctrine he holds dear! However, we do not interpret Scripture according to our doctrine, but interpret our doctrine according to Scripture.

What Mantey and similar evangelical arguments do is called Deductive Theology, as opposed to Inductive Biblical Theology, in which they interpret things, even Scripture, from within their own doctrine, or to be in agreement with their own doctrine.

In Mantey's system he moves from doctrine to Scripture.

We call Mantey's approach Dogmatic Theology rather than Biblical Inductive Theology. Inductive Biblical theology works differently! *In Biblical theology we move inductively from Scripture to doctrine and interpret doctrine through the lens of Scripture. Mantey reverses this process!*

Scriptures with Similar Eis Constructions to Acts 2:38

- a. There are a number of New Testament texts related to baptism and forgiveness which are not translated *because*, but retain the rendering of *for*, *into*, or *unto* translation.
- b. We will examine several of these texts in which *eis* is in a parallel construction with Acts 2:38, and where *eis* was preceded by the verb form baptized and was followed by the accusative case.
- c. The purpose of this section of the study is to demonstrate that there are many Greek constructions in the New Testament that are parallel to Acts 2:38 where none of the major translations have been compelled to follow Mantey's controversial handling of Acts 2:38.
- d. The only reason Mantey and evangelicals translate the *eis* in Acts 2:38 as *because of* is that the rules of Greek Syntax which require a rendering of *for* or *unto* would violate their specific doctrine!
- e. We stress again, that doctrine should be shaped by Scripture, and not Scripture by doctrine!

Matt 26:28 contains wording and syntax similar to Acts 2:38.

In order to demonstrate the parallel nature of this text with Acts 2:38 we will quote both Matt 26:28 and Acts 2:38. (For those not familiar with the Greek text we will also demonstrate the parallel nature of the texts by *emphasizing* the parallel words in the Greek text.)

Matt 26:28 - τοῦτο γάρ ἐστιν τὸ αἷμά μου τῆς διαθήκης τὸ περὶ πολλῶν ἐκχυννόμενον εἰς ἄφεσιν ἁμαρτιῶν, English alphabet, "touto gar estin to haima mou tēs diathkēs to peri pollōn ekchunnomenon *eis afesin amartiōn*, for the forgiveness of sin.

Acts 2:38 - Μετανοήσατε, [φησὶν,] καὶ βαπτισθήτω ἕκαστος ὑμῶν ἐπὶ τῷ ὀνόματι Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ εἰς ἄφεσιν τῶν ἁμαρτιῶν ὑμῶν, metanoēsate kai baptisthētō ekastos humwn epi tō onmati Iēsou Christou *eis afesin tōn amartiōn humōn*, (for the forgiveness of our sins).

Matt 26:28 "this is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many *for the forgiveness of sins*"

Acts 2:38 "be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ *for the forgiveness of your sins.*"

None of the major translators translate Matt 26:28 as Mantey would have us do with Acts 2:38, "this is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many *because of* the forgiveness of sins"!

Jesus' blood had yet to be shed. His blood was to be shed in the very near future *for the forgiveness of sins*. Jesus was not saying that his blood was shed *because of* forgiveness, but *for* the forgiveness of sins! The sense of Jesus' statement was that his blood was to be shed *with respect to* or *in regard to* the forgiveness of sins.

There is no need to translate this text other than according to the normal criteria for standard Greek grammar and Syntax (and in accordance with Mantey's own primary criteria), which is what the major translations have done.

There is no need to translate Acts 2:38 as Mantey would. On all occasions the *eis* should be translated *for* the forgiveness of sins.

Rom 6:3 and εἰς.

"Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized *into* his death?" ἢ ἀγνοεῖτε ὅτι, ὅσοι ἐβαπτίσθημεν εἰς Χριστὸν Ἰησοῦν, εἰς τὸν θάνατον αὐτοῦ ἐβαπτίσθημεν, *hē agnoeite hoti, hosoi ebaptisthēmen eis Christon Iēsoun, eis ton Qanaton autou ebaptisthēmen.*

Notice that as in Acts 2:38, the *eis* in Rom 6:3 follows a baptism verb, *baptized*, and is followed by an accusative noun, *death*.

The natural translation of this text calls for the English preposition *εις* being rendered *into* as in the major translations, and *not because*.

The construction of the clause closely parallels Acts 2:38!

Gal 3:26.

“for in Christ Jesus you are all sons of God, *through faith*.²⁷ For as many of you as were baptized *into* Christ have put on Christ.” Πάντες γὰρ υἱοὶ θεοῦ ἐστε διὰ τῆς πίστεως ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ· 27 ὅσοι γὰρ εἰς Χριστὸν ἐβαπτίσθητε, Χριστὸν ἐνεδύσασθε, *Pavntes gar huioi theou este dia tēs pisteōs en Cristō Iēsou*^{27h} *osoi gar eis Criston ebaptisqhte, Christon enedusasthe.*

Notice again that the preposition *eis* is preceded by the baptism verb and followed by a noun in the accusative case, Christ. (In this case the word order is a little different for the baptism word follows *eis*. We are reminded that Greek does not follow the English conventions of word order, but changes word order for emphasis.) Here the preposition *eis* is correctly translated and interpreted as *into*, not *because*. Notice also that baptism is considered by Paul to be a matter of faith, not works! We become children of God *through faith*, *for* as many as have been *baptized into Christ* have put on Christ. The Greek particle or conjunction **gar**, *for*, indicates the *reason* or *ground* for their becoming children of God through faith. (Dana and Mantey on **gar**, “**Gar** may express a ground or reason, an explanation, a confirmation or assurance...”). Christian baptism may not be removed from the faith dynamic and considered a work without doing it and faith an injustice. Baptism is a faith principle, not a work principle, just as repentance and confession of faith are faith principles and not work principles.

In fact Paul explains in **Col 2:12** that *baptism is faith in the working of God!*

Col 2:12, “*and you were buried with him in baptism, in which you were also raised with him through faith in the working of God ...*”

Rom 10:10 is a fascinating case for the accusative following eis in justification and salvation.

The construction is almost parallel to Acts 2:38 where *forgiveness* stands in place of *salvation!*

RSV “*For man believes with his heart (eis) and so is justified, and he confesses with his lips (eis) and so is saved.*”

ASV “*for with the heart a person believes, (eis) resulting in righteousness, and with the mouth he confesses, (eis) resulting in salvation.*”

KJV “*For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.*”

NIV is somewhat different, yet still conveys the same meaning, “*For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you confess and are saved.*” The Greek reads καρδιά γὰρ πιστεύεται εἰς δικαιοσύνην, στόματι δὲ ὁμολογεῖται εἰς σωτηρίαν, *kardia gar pisteuetai eis dikaiosunēn, stomati de homologeitai eis sōtērian.*

Notice that in each case above the *eis* points forward to the accusative nouns following, that is, *righteousness* and *salvation!*

Presumably Mantey and others who follow Mantey’s views of Christian doctrine stressing *salvation by faith only* would have no problem with the first part of this verse! Using the ASV, “*For with the heart man believes resulting in righteousness.*” No problem here since salvation is by faith, the faith not works principle! But with the second part, “*with the mouth he confesses, eis resulting in salvation*” they

should have problems since confessing in their understanding would be a work! In this case they would need to translate the second clause “with the mouth he confesses, *because of salvation*”!

However, by doing this they would destroy the syntactical parallelism Paul has used to make his point.

The only way around Mantey’s problem is to argue that *confessing faith* is a faith principle and not a work principle! *However, if confessing with the mouth that Jesus is Lord is a faith principle, why is confessing ones faith in baptism a work principle?*

We stress here that *believing* in Jesus Christ is *something we do*, as is *repenting* of ones sins *something we do*, and as is *confessing* ones faith something we do, yet they are considered by evangelicals to be *faith principles* and not work principles! Likewise we stress that *baptism* is *something we surrender to* as a faith principle and not something we do to merit or earn forgiveness.

Mantey’s arguments on Matt 3:11 are erroneous and faulty.

In similar fashion we examine Mk 1:4.

RSV “John the baptizer appeared in the wilderness, preaching a baptism *of repentance for the forgiveness of sins.*”

KJV “John did baptize in the wilderness, and preach the baptism *of repentance for the remission of sins.*”

NASV “John the Baptist appeared in the wilderness preaching a baptism *of repentance for the forgiveness of sins.*”

NIV “And so John came, baptizing in the desert region and preaching a baptism *of repentance for the forgiveness of sins.*”

The **Greek reads** ἐγένετο Ἰωάννης [ὁ] βαπτίζων ἐν τῇ ἐρήμῳ καὶ κηρύσσων βάπτισμα μετάνοιας εἰς ἄφεσιν ἁμαρτιῶν, *egeneto Iōannēs [ho] baptizōn en tē erēmō kai kērussōn baptisma metanoias eis afesin hamartiōn*, “*John the baptizer appeared in the wilderness, preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins.*”

Notice that John was preaching a baptism *of repentance*, that is, a baptism characterized by repentance (the genitive construction of repentance provides the meaning *of repentance*), and that this baptism was *for (eis) the forgiveness of sins.*

Notice also that the Greek construction *eis afesin hamartiōn, for the forgiveness of sins* here in Mk 1:4 is exactly parallel to that of Acts 2:38 *eis afesin tōn hamartiōn (for the forgiveness of sins)* other than for the presence of the definite article *tōn* in Acts 2:38.

Now if we were to follow Mantey in Acts 2:38 in Mk 1:4, then the translation would be, “John the Baptist appeared in the wilderness preaching a baptism of repentance *because of the forgiveness of sins*”!

We know from our study of the Gospels that John would not baptize anyone unless they demonstrated repentance! Mantey’s interpretation would, therefore, have John baptizing unrepentant people *because of forgiveness* already received before they had in fact repented!

This implies and emphasizes Mantey’s confused theology!

We then have people baptized *because* they had been forgiven *before they had repented!* This does not fit in with Peter’s instruction in Acts 2:38 that the believing Jews must *repent and then be baptized!* What Mark was implying was that John was preaching a baptism *for the forgiveness of sins*, the baptism being characterized by repentance!

We should note here that the nominative noun preceding *for forgiveness* is *baptisma, baptism, repentance* is a genitive noun modifying the nominative noun baptism, so it was not John preaching *repentance for forgiveness* but *baptism for forgiveness!*

Likewise, Peter was preaching a baptism characterized by faith and repentance *for (eis)* the forgiveness of sins.

Luke's parallel statement regarding John's preaching (Lk 3:3) follows the same pattern as does Mark, "and he went into all the region about the Jordan, preaching a baptism of repentance *for (eis)* the forgiveness of sins."

Some Additional Scriptures on Baptism and Salvation that teach that Baptism has a Major Role in Salvation

Mk 16:15, 16: *"Go into all the world and preach the gospel to the whole creation. ¹⁶ He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned."*

This text has been contested by some on the ground that the ending of Mark's Gospel is uncertain. Whether one accepts the text as original to Mark or not, most acknowledge the apostolicity of the text and consider the teaching of the text to be consistent with New Testament doctrine.

The text clearly connects belief and baptism as conditions of salvation.

Some argue that since the second clause of the verse does not expressly mention *not baptized*, for example, "*but he who does not believe and is not baptized will be condemned*" negates the strong connection of baptism to the first clause believe.

Typical of this is a statement in an article by the NT Restoration Foundation "*Notice, however, those who Jesus said would be condemned: "whoever does not believe." No mention was made of not being baptized. The emphasis is on unbelief, not baptism. Condemnation comes as a result of unbelief, not the lack of any ritual activity.*"

The article continues, "*Indeed, it is unthinkable that anyone would believe in Jesus and refuse to be baptized*"! **Did the NT Restoration Foundation miss the point?** By their own confession *it is unthinkable* that one who does not believe will want to be baptized! **Yes, the NT Restoration Foundation did miss the point!** It would be redundant for Jesus to add *not baptized* after *not believing*, for those not believing would not want to be baptized anyway! The statement "and is not baptized" in the second clause is not necessary and is self-explanatory!

Acts 22:16: *"And now why do you wait? Rise and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on his name."*

In this text Paul is explaining the circumstances of his conversion (see Acts 9 for his conversion). That he believes in Jesus is obvious from the context of his conversion. Ananias now called on Paul to arise and be baptized, but for what purpose?

Mantey and others who follow him would have Paul's baptism *because of his forgiveness and cleansing*, and see baptism as an act of obedience following salvation. **However, that is not what the text clearly states!**

In keeping with Mark 16:15, 16, and Acts 2:38, baptism here *clearly preceded cleansing and the forgiveness of sin.*

Beasley-Murray makes a strong point that in both Acts 2:38 and Acts 22:16 baptism is associated with the name of Jesus, either "*in the name of Jesus Christ*" or "*calling on his name.*" This would imply that the power of salvation lies primarily in the person of Jesus, and not in the believing, repenting, and baptizing! Beasley-Murray argues that there is more in the expression "in the name of Jesus" than merely the authority of Jesus. It is in his death and resurrection that salvation is focused, and "*in the name of Jesus Christ*" or "*in the person of Jesus Christ*" connects us dynamically with his death and resurrection.

Col 2:12: “*and you were buried with him in baptism, in which you were also raised with him through faith in the working of God, who raised him from the dead.*”

In this text Paul is making the point that the Colossian Christians were not in a covenant relationship with God through physical circumcision, as was the case with Israel, but their covenant relationship with God was through a “circumcision not made with hands.” He continues to explain that they had entered this new covenant relationship with God by dying and being raised with Jesus (see Rom 6:1-4). Their covenant relationship was based in that salvation which God worked and brought about through Jesus, and their connection with this covenant took place *through their baptism* which expressed their *faith in the working of God*.

“*And you were buried with him in baptism, in which you were also raised with him through faith in the working of God, who raised him from the dead.*”

Christians take on a new life by dying to their old life and being born again or anew with Christ. Paul clearly teaches in Rom 6 and here in this text that this takes place at baptism. It is in baptism that they were united with Christ in a death like his.

This text emphasizes that in baptism the believer is trusting (faith) in the working of God, not in their own working. In baptism we surrender in faith to the working of God.

Rom 6:1-5:

“*What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin that grace may abound? ² By no means! How can we who died to sin still live in it? ³ Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? ⁴ *We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, so that as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life.* ⁵ *For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we shall certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his.*”*

In baptism we die to ourselves and our old manner of life. We are symbolically buried and raised with Christ to begin a new walk in life! We are united with Christ and his death in baptism!

If we are saved before baptism, then according to this verse we are saved before dying to our old sinful life and being united with Christ in a new life like his! By dying in baptism we are then dying to a salvation and experiencing a new and different birth from that of salvation. This argument patently misses the point Paul is making!

The new birth Paul is describing is not the result of our working, but comes about through our faith in the working of God!

1 Pet 3:2: “***Baptism**, which corresponds to this, **now saves you**, not as a removal of dirt from the body but as an appeal to God for a clear conscience, through the resurrection of Jesus Christ.*”

Peter clearly connects salvation to water and baptism in this verse! Peter is making an analogy to Noah’s experience in the flood, and observes that eight souls were saved on that occasion by water. He then connects his analogy to Christian baptism.

We should note that the salvation of Noah and his family from the flood came about as a result of God’s grace and Noah’s faith in God, not in his own ability. Notice what the writer of Hebrews says regarding Noah, “*By faith Noah, being warned by God concerning events as yet unseen, took heed and constructed an ark for the saving of his household; by this he condemned the world and became an heir of the righteousness which comes by faith.*”

Notice Peter’s statement regarding Noah and Christian salvation, “*God’s patience waited in the days of Noah, during the building of the ark, in which a few, that is, eight persons, were saved through water.* ²¹ *Baptism, which corresponds to this, now saves you, not as a removal of dirt from the body but as an appeal to God for (eis) a clear conscience, through the resurrection of Jesus Christ.*”

Peter clearly states that Christians are saved by baptism.

However, baptism becomes the prayer, request, or appeal to God *for (eis) a clear conscience*.

It would take a stretch of imagination to translate this in a way that would imply that baptism is an appeal to God *because* of a clear conscience!

That is what some evangelical theology would imply, but it is clearly not what Peter implied or stated very clearly!

In this case, then, baptism is an appeal to God for salvation?

The Task of the Translator

This section discusses the task of the translator in making a translation of the Greek text.

C. H. Dodd, noted New Testament scholar, once observed that the translator must realize that he undertakes an impossible art!

Dodd would agree that his observation was an overstatement, but would observe that it indicates the difficulty faced by translators who translate from an ancient text into a modern language.

The following are principles that the translator must take seriously when translating from one language and era to a modern era.

The translation must:

- a. Be true to the idiom, language, and message of the original text.
- b. Speak accurately in the idiom of the readers.
- c. Be clear and intelligible.
- d. Strive toward a measure of consistency in its choice of words.
- e. Manifest a literary style that is suitable to the tenor of the message.
- f. Be accurate in its reproduction of the original message.
- g. Be true to the Gospel of Jesus Christ, rather than to a particular theological or denominational persuasion.
- h. Be made by a committee that is reasonably widespread in theological conviction, and qualified in the field of textual criticism and translation.

The Task of the Interpreter, Commentator, Teacher, Preacher, or Theologian.

This is where the *scholar*, *Minister*, or *Bible student* appears in the equation.

The interpreter must be true to the language, syntax, and wording of the original message.

The interpreter must faithfully render the meaning of the original text.

The interpreter must be careful not to read into the text or his/her interpretation his/her own religious convictions.

The interpreter must work from (out of) the text toward doctrine, and not from doctrine back into the text. Technically we refer to this as *exegesis* (out of the text) rather than *eisegesis* (into the text).

The exposition of the text must be true to the words, idiom, grammar, and syntax of the original text.

The meaning of words and sentences must be determined from the historical, sociological, and theological context of the original writer and not from that of the interpreter.

Final Problems with Mantey's and Some Interpretations of Acts 2:28

Mantey in his grammar recognizes that the syntax of the text calls for *eis* to be translated *for* or *unto*, but forces his interpretation to comply with his preferred Christian doctrine.

Mantey shapes his interpretation according to his preferred doctrine, rather than have Scripture shape his doctrine.

Mantey is *inconsistent* in applying his views of *because of* in texts that clearly by his own definition should follow the general rules required by *eis* regardless of whether they threaten his preconceived doctrinal position!