

~~BAPTISM~~

for the “Remission of Sins”



THE New Testament, which came in force with the death of Christ upon the cross (Hebrews 9:15-17), teaches that the baptism of the New Testament is for the “*remission of sins*.” Carefully read Acts 2:38; then Acts 22:16 and Colossians 2:11-12. In instituting the Lord’s Supper, using this same mode of expression, Jesus said, “For this is my blood of the New Testament, which is shed for many for the *remission of sins*” (Matthew 26:28) and Hebrews 9:22 says “without shedding of blood is no *remission*.”

What does the word “*remission*” in “*remission of sins*” mean? (As we see above, it is used in reference to baptism and the blood of Christ. Whatever it means, it means the same for both). This word in the original language of the New Testament is *aphesis*. In its root meaning it signifies a sending away. In the King James Version it is translated “forgiveness” in Acts 5:31; 13:38; 26:18; Ephesians 1:7; and Colossians 1:14 (examples of its usage and meaning). Ephesians 1:7 explicitly says, “In whom [Christ] we have redemption through his blood, the *forgiveness* of sins, according to the riches of his grace.” In “*remission* of sins” there is forgiveness, the sending away of our sins.

This is plainly spoken in Acts 2:38 in connection with baptism. On the Day of Pentecost those convicted of their sins by the preaching of the apostles cried out, “Men and brethren, what shall we do? 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 [Spirit].” Likewise, Paul relates in Acts 22:16 how that Ananias came to him, following his being blinded for three days

and praying (Acts 9:9-11), and said, "And now why tarriest thou? Arise, and be baptized, and *wash away thy sins*, calling on the name of the Lord." Then Paul later in one of his epistles states, "In whom [Christ] ye are circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, in *putting off the body of the sins of the flesh* by the circumcision of Christ: Buried with him *in baptism*, wherein also ye are risen with him through the faith of the operation of God, who hath raised him from the dead." Parallel thoughts are found in Romans 6:1-5.

When we read that baptism is for the "remission of sins," it is not talking about an isolated act that is taking place. It is not talking about any merit in water (or water washing away our sins). Baptism is not something to be understood separate and aside from the grace of God. Everything about baptism is to be understood in the context of a larger picture. Baptism is for the "remission of sins" only as it is in conjunction with other things that have taken place and that are taking place. The larger context is the grace of God. And the things that have taken place are the death, burial and resurrection of Christ. The things that are taking place from our perspective are faith, repentance and commitment. With all of this in mind, let us consider the following.

I. Baptism Must Be Preceded and Accompanied by Faith

In the Great Commission, the Lord said, "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that *believeth* and is *baptized* shall be saved..." (Mark 16:15-16a). In Acts 8:35-39, following the teaching of Philip and passing a pool, the Ethiopian said, "See, here is water; what doth hinder me to be baptized?" Then we read, "And Philip said, If thou *believest* with all thine heart, thou mayest. And he answered and said, I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God. And he commanded the chariot to stand still: and they went down both into the water, both Philip and the eunuch; and he baptized him." The truth seen here is parallel with Colossians 2:12, "Buried with him *in baptism*, wherein also ye are risen with him through the *faith* of the operation [working] of God, who hath raised him from the dead."

II. Baptism Must Be Preceded and Accompanied by Repentance

As pointed out in Acts 2:38, these people on the Day of Pentecost were told to “*Repent*, and be *baptized* every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the *remission of sins*...” This corresponds exactly to what is said in the Great Commission as recorded in Luke 24:47, “And that *repentance* and *remission of sins* should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem.” Repentance, a change of heart, is a definite “must” before baptism can be for the remission of sins. The sins must be repented of and forsaken. In repentance we die to sin, and in baptism we are buried and arise to walk in newness of life. Without repentance, baptism is invalid. We are still in our sins.

III. Baptism Must Actually Be Baptism to Be Baptism

This truth is so obvious it almost seems redundant to point it out. In the episode involving Philip and the Ethiopian in Acts 8:35-39, when the eunuch was told he could be baptized if he believed with all of his heart and he made the good confession, we read, “And he commanded the chariot to stand still: and they *went down* both *into the water*, both Philip and the eunuch; and he *baptized* him.” Romans 6:4 says that “we are *buried* with him [Christ] by baptism...” All of this corresponds to the literal meaning of the word “baptize” (*baptizo*) in the language of the New Testament. It means to plunge, to dip, to immerse. To call something else baptism besides immersion does not make it immersion (baptism). We must actually be buried and raised in baptism.

IV. Baptism Must Be for the Remission of Sins

In Acts 19:1-5, some disciples of John the Baptist who had already been baptized (immersed) were baptized (immersed) again. John’s baptism was no longer valid and did not now correspond to the full revelation of the New Testament message and what baptism was all about. In partaking of the Lord’s Supper, it is not really the Lord’s Supper unless we are “discerning the Lord’s body” (1 Corinthians 11:29). It just becomes a common meal. It is not the Lord’s Supper (1 Corinthians

11:20). In parallel thinking, we ask these questions: In our mixed-up denominational world today, although immersion may be practiced by some, is baptism for the remission of sins really taking place? Is it taking place when “faith only” is being taught and preachers go out of their way to deny what the Bible says about baptism (that it is for the remission of sins), telling people that baptism has nothing to do with their salvation? Too much is at stake to not handle the Word of God aright. Let us take it for what it says.

YES, the New Testament teaches that baptism is for the remission of sins. But it is not an isolated act, and it is all in the context of the grace of God. Peter, who said that baptism was for the remission of sins in Acts 2:38, says in 1 Peter 3:21 that “baptism doth also now save us (not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God,) by the resurrection of Jesus Christ.” Titus 3:5 states, “Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost [Spirit].” Then Romans 6:3-5 reads, “Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death? Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection.” Here we see that in baptism we are united spiritually with the death, burial and resurrection of Christ (believing these great truths). Baptism is the acceptance of the grace of God. Being baptized into his death, it is for the “remission of sins.” The blood of Christ washes away our sins. We arise to walk in newness of life.—*James E. Gibbons* □



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