

A high-speed photograph of a water splash, creating a circular shape with a dark blue center. The water is splashing outwards, with many small droplets visible. The background is a light blue gradient.

BAPTISM & the GREEK MADE SIMPLE

Dave Miller, Ph.D.

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Dedication

To Deb—
whose positive influence on my life has
been inestimable, profound, and eternal.

Table of Contents

Preface	vii
Introduction	1
Endnotes	2
The Divine Scheme of Redemption	3
Greek Grammar	5
Endnotes	6
Matthew 28:19-20	9
Greek Present Participles	9
The Greek Preposition <i>Eis</i>	14
The Greek Noun <i>Onoma</i>	16
Summary	19
Conclusion	20
Endnotes	20
Mark 16:16	31
Greek Aorist Participles	31
English Grammar	33
Conclusion	35
Endnotes	35
Acts 2:38	38
The Greek Preposition <i>Eis</i>	38
New Testament “Causal” Use?	39
Matthew 3:11	40
Matthew 12:41/Luke 11:32	41
Matthew 14:31	42
Mark 15:34	43
Romans 4:20	43
Romans 11:32	43
Titus 3:14	44
Hebrews 12:7	44
Summary	45
“Causal” Use Outside the New Testament?	45
A Precise Syntactical Parallel: Matthew 26:28	47
Agreement in Person and Number	48
Conclusion	51
Endnotes	51

Acts 16:34	57
The Greek Perfect Participle	61
Endnotes	62
Acts 22:16	64
The Adverbial Participle	65
In Denial	66
Summary	67
Endnotes	68
Romans 6:3-4	75
The Greek Preposition <i>Eis</i>	75
Re-enacting the “Form” of Teaching	76
Summary	76
Endnotes	77
Galatians 3:26-27	79
The Greek Particle/Conjunction <i>Gar</i>	79
The Greek Preposition <i>Eis</i>	80
The Greek Verb <i>Enduo</i>	80
Greek Aorist verbs	81
Summary	81
Endnotes	81
Titus 3:5	83
The Central Features of Salvation	83
“Washing of Regeneration” and “Renewal of the Holy Spirit”?	84
Endnotes	86
I Peter 3:20-21	90
The Greek Preposition <i>Dia</i>	90
Type/Antitype	91
The “Resurrection of Jesus”	91
Endnotes	92
Conclusion	95
Endnotes	98
Epilogue	99

Appendices. 101

Appendix A: A Comparison Between Hebrews 11:30 and Salvation “by Faith”	102
Appendix B: Matthew 28:19-20 and Mark 16:15-16 Compared	104
Appendix C: Summary of <i>Eis</i> in Matthew 28:19	106
Appendix D: Mark 16—English Sentence Diagram	108
Appendix E: Sharp’s Rule	110
Appendix F: Mark 16—Men vs. Jesus.	112
Appendix G: Basic Meanings of Greek Prepositions.	114
Appendix H: Acts 2:38 in 60 English Translations	116
Appendix I: Greek Specialists on Acts 2:38.	119
Appendix J: Acts 2:21, 2:38, and 3:19 Compared	123
Appendix K: Verb & Participle of Identical Action Describing Same Action from Different Points of View in Acts 22:16	125
Appendix L: A Comparison of Acts 2:21 and Acts 2:38.	127
Appendix M: Convergence of Death, Blood, and Baptism in Romans 6:3-4.	129
Appendix N: Romans 6—Two New Lives?	131
Appendix O: The Gospel Enacted & Reenacted	133
Appendix P: Romans 6 and Colossians 2 Compared	135
Appendix Q: The Meaning of Hebrews 10:22.	137
Appendix R: Baptism and the Washing of Sin	139
Appendix S: The Meaning of Titus 3:5.	141
Appendix T: Study Charts.	143

Indices 147

Index of Scriptures	148
Index of Subjects	152
Index of Persons	154
Index of Bible Persons.	157
Index of Greek Words and Phrases	158
Index of Transliterated Greek Words and Phrases	160

Preface

Who is qualified to write a book on technical matters of the Greek language of the New Testament? Perhaps two answers to that question are appropriate: (1) he who has spent years of study in order to achieve mastery of that language, and (2) he who studies, carefully examines, and accurately represents the writings of those who have achieved mastery of that language. The author readily admits that he belongs to the latter category. While he has studied the Bible for over 50 years, and formally studied Koine Greek on both the undergraduate and graduate levels, he has nevertheless relied heavily on a host of Greek scholars from the past few centuries who have distinguished themselves for their widely-acknowledged linguistic expertise. Greek scholars may certainly disagree with each other on fine points of the language. Though they will often disagree with one another in regard to their theological prejudices, nevertheless, general linguistic consensus within the scholarly community exists in many areas, particularly regarding the general doctrines of the Christian religion.

The author's central purpose has been to provide reassurance and encouragement to those who desire to be correct in their understanding and practice of New Testament baptism, specifically, the **design** of baptism as God intended. I have sought to keep to a minimum the use of Greek words, especially in their non-transliterated form. However, I have retained them in quoted material in order to be true to the original author's remarks. After the first full citation of each source in the Endnotes, all later references to that source are abbreviated.

My sincere thanks for the gracious feedback and recommendations from Dr. Justin Rogers who holds a Ph.D. in Judaic, Hebraic, and Cognate Studies from Hebrew Union College, and currently serves as Director of the Graduate School of Theology and Associate Professor of Biblical Studies at Freed-Hardeman University, where he teaches courses on the languages of the Bible; Dr. James Smeal, who holds a Ph.D. in Greek and Latin Classical Studies from Vanderbilt University, currently serving as professor of Greek at Amridge University; and Dr. Jim Gardner, who holds degrees from Harvard College and Yale Law School, with formal training in Classical Greek language and literature at Harvard and Dartmouth, currently serving as a professor of Philosophy at Freed-Hardeman University.

Dave Miller
Montgomery, AL
July, 2018

Introduction

In the unfathomable wisdom of deity, the Holy Spirit chose to record God's will for the human race in three languages: Hebrew, Aramaic, and Koine Greek. All human beings who desire to know the will of God must either become acquainted with these languages or rely on those who have done so. Human language is sufficiently flexible that it constitutes a fit medium through which to convey the divine will. Even rather poorly executed English translations often transfer the gist of God's will, since His will is repetitive, simple, and couched in actual historical settings/narratives. In fact, it is not necessary for a person to know Greek in order to know the truth about any doctrinal matter for which God will hold humans accountable. No excuse exists for humans to be embroiled in endless discussions and disagreements about the meaning of mandatory biblical doctrines. All persons of accountable mind and age can and must arrive at the truth on any matter concerning which God requires understanding. As Jesus stated succinctly: "If anyone **wants** to do His will, he shall **know** concerning the doctrine.... And you shall **know** the truth, and the truth shall make you free" (John 7:17; 8:32).¹

This observation certainly applies to the purpose of water baptism. God would not leave people unable to ascertain the way to be saved. That is not to say that, at any point in history, societal circumstances may obscure the simplicity of the Gospel and influence large numbers of people to embrace error on Christian doctrine.² Falsehood can become widely accepted and extremely popular—but the **number** of those who adopt the error does not make error truth (Exodus 23:2). All people still have a responsibility before God to arrive at the truth—even if "few" do so (Matthew 7:14; 22:14; Luke 13:23; John 6:66). New Testament teaching on the subject of baptism is not difficult to understand. The forthright statements in the New Testament on baptism in virtually any English translation are as plain and understandable as the passages on faith. It is humans who have conjured convoluted concoctions to advocate the one

while minimizing the other. Indeed, so endemic is the “faith only/grace only” theory that it has been permitted to completely overthrow the plain statements of Scripture regarding the design of baptism and force the interpreter to dismiss the plain and obvious meaning of the grammar which the Holy Spirit selected to express Himself. So much of Christendom has redefined such Bible terms as “faith,” “works,” “law,” and “grace,” that many have likewise redefined the purpose of baptism, literally inventing a novel function that is, in fact, not expounded in the New Testament. When sophisticated ploys are advanced to obscure what the Bible teaches on a subject like baptism, one must dig deeper, beneath the surface translation terminology, and examine the original language in order to ascertain if additional light might be shed by which allegations can be tested. This volume is a modest attempt to examine carefully and accurately the meaning of the Greek that underlies key verses pertaining to water baptism.³ [NOTE: The reader is urged to expend the necessary effort to read the considerable amount of useful material that has been relegated to the Endnotes of each section.]

Endnotes

- ¹ All bold type within Bible quotations is emphasis added by the author.
- ² Legion have been the errors and false doctrines peddled in the name of Christ—from the binding of Mosaic Law on Gentiles that plagued the first century Church (e.g., Acts 15), to the second century heresies of Docetism and Gnosticism, to Mariolatry and the papacy centuries later. The fact that millions of people may embrace such doctrines is no proof that the doctrines are biblical.
- ³ It is unfortunate that resorting to the Greek is necessitated by those who invent these novelties, since Bible teaching on this basic doctrine is easy to ascertain. If Jesus had made His Word as complicated as the evasive ploys developed to dismiss the obvious import of the many verses on baptism, one wonders if the common people would have “heard Him gladly” (Mark 12:37). Indeed, “all attempts to evade the plain meaning of Scripture should be viewed with extreme skepticism. It is a shame that human ingenuity in a bad cause makes necessary great labor to refute it” (personal e-mail from Jim Gardner, July 11, 2018).

The Divine Scheme of Redemption

From eternity (Ephesians 3:20-21), God foreknew that we humans would disobey Him. So out of His great compassion and love, He devised the plan by which He could forgive us and allow us to be reconciled to Him. This plan entailed the sending of Himself in the person of His Son to die on the cross to atone for our sin with the blood of Christ. Here is the Gospel—the “good news” of the Bible. God so loved the entire human population that He made provision for our forgiveness—though we do not deserve it. Here is the **grace** of the Bible: God extends hope of salvation to us while we are sinners (Romans 5:8). Here is the **central subject matter** of the Bible. Here is the **theme** of the entire Bible. God loves us; He wants to save us; He sent Jesus to achieve that purpose.

However, even though God **loves everybody** (John 3:16), even though Jesus **died for everybody** (1 John 2:2), making salvation **available to everybody** (Titus 2:11), nevertheless, Scripture makes clear that not everybody will be saved. As Jesus declared: “Enter by the narrow gate; for wide is the gate and broad is the way that leads to destruction, and there are many who go in by it. Because narrow is the gate and difficult is the way which leads to life, and **there are few who find it**” (Matthew 7:13-14). What makes the difference? It is our **response** to the Gospel (Matthew 7:21; Luke 6:46; Romans 10:16; Revelation 22:14-17). The strict Calvinist insists: “There is **absolutely nothing** a person can do, since those who will be saved were pre-decided by God in eternity and that sovereign choice is achieved without regard to the elects’ actions.” The viewpoint that presently prevails within Christendom says, “It is true that there’s nothing you can do to be saved; however, you must accept Jesus into your heart as your personal Savior; just believe; just have faith; it’s an act of the will.”

Apart from the obvious self-contradiction of the latter viewpoint (“You don’t have to **do** anything, but you **do** have to believe”), both versions of Calvinism completely sidestep the fact that throughout Bible history, God expected people to obey Him in order to receive His approval, and that such obedience does not constitute **earning** His approval, **deserving** His approval, or nullifying the “free” gift of His grace. Putting it another way, man’s inability to merit God’s physical and spiritual blessings does not discount the necessity of prerequisite obedience. Denominationalism has taken a fatal wrong turn when it decided that, since there is nothing a person can do to deserve, merit, or earn salvation, let alone atone for one’s own sins, then there’s nothing that person can or must do before God freely grants His forgiveness.¹

It is the contention of this writer that the New Testament teaches that for a person to contact the blood of Christ, given by God’s grace and for which he is completely undeserving, he must hear the Gospel message (Romans 10:17)—which implies the ability and mental effort necessary to listen, comprehend, and **understand** its precepts (Acts 8:30). This largely intellectual, cognitive encounter, in turn, has the potential to instigate faith in the human heart (John 8:24; Romans 10:13) which, in turn, should motivate that person to repent of sins (Luke 13:3; Acts 2:38)—which entails a change of mind (*metanoia*) regarding past sinful behavior and beliefs. The next logical “step” (Romans 4:12) is for this new, heartfelt faith and change of mind to motivate the person to make an oral declaration—the confession of Christ’s deity **with the mouth** (Romans 10:9-10). The culminating salvific action entails the individual then submitting himself to immersion in water in order for God to apply the cleansing effects of the blood of Christ for the forgiveness of sins and salvation (Romans 6:3-4; 1 Peter 3:21). Please observe carefully: (1) these five actions are separate and distinct—each standing on its own as unique but equally necessary in conjunction with the other four, and (2) these five actions require both mental and/or physical effort on the part of the individual—they are not done by God or the Holy Spirit **for** the individual—but require personal volition, the exercise of free will, and specific internal and outward actions.

Perhaps the majority view within Christendom at large is that “Baptism is **not** a part of salvation.” But this writer contends that the New Testament plainly teaches that baptism **is** a part of the gospel plan of salvation every bit as much as faith, repentance, and confession of Jesus. Even as a person **cannot** be saved apart from faith, likewise a person **cannot** be saved without water immersion, and a person must **understand** that forgiveness does not occur **before** baptism. Indeed, **many** passages in the New Testament demonstrate the absolute essentiality of water baptism **preceding** forgiveness of sin (Acts 2:38; 8:12-13,36-38; 9:18; 10:47-48; 16:15,33; 18:8; 19:5; 22:16; Romans 6:3-4; 1 Corinthians 12:13;² Galatians 3:27; Ephesians 4:5; Colossians 2:12; Titus 3:5; Hebrews 10:22; 1 Peter 3:21). It is nothing short of inexcusable and preposterous that so much of Christendom has dismissed this veritable plethora of witnesses to the divine design of water immersion,³ largely by concocting convoluted, sophisticated evasions of the clear import of the language used by the Holy Spirit.⁴

The Greek Grammar

Since God chose to communicate His will to the human race in human language, we must give adequate attention to the specific linguistic features that the Holy Spirit selected to express the divine thoughts⁵—especially when disagreement exists regarding any particular doctrine which impacts one’s salvation. As Paul explained to the Corinthians concerning apostolic preaching and writing: “These things we also speak, not in words which man’s wisdom teaches but which the Holy Spirit teaches, comparing spiritual things with spiritual” (1 Corinthians 2:13). The reader is urged to examine the following pages in order to give a fair and honest evaluation of the Greek linguistics that underlie several of the New Testament verses on baptism.⁶

Endnotes

¹ Under the “shadows” (Colossians 2:17; Hebrews 8:5; 10:1) of the Law of Moses, the priestly sacrifices, cleansings, and purifications (e.g., Leviticus 4:1-35; 8:6; 16:4; Numbers 8:7; 19:1-22; et al.) were obviously **symbolic**—in the sense that H₂O and other physical substances (hyssop, scarlet, cedar wood, ashes of a red heifer, etc.) could not literally provide spiritual cleansing from sin. See Psalm 51:7; Hebrews 9:19-22. Nevertheless, the priests and people were plainly and explicitly told that they **would be cleansed and forgiven** when they complied with the instructions for cleansing. Regarding the “water of purification,” God forthrightly declared: “It is for purifying from sin” (Numbers 19:9). Nine times in Leviticus chapters 4-5, the refrain that follows the ritualistic directives is: “and it shall be forgiven him” (4:20,26,31,35; 5:10,13,16,18). Hence, though serving as a **symbol**, the Old Testament ritual cleansings resulted in literal, actual cleansing. The fact that the rituals contained **symbolic** value did not nullify or militate against their purification purpose. Why? Because spiritual cleansing and forgiveness of sin occur **in the mind of God** at the moment **He** chooses to forgive. He chose to forgive those pre-Christian people (based on the forthcoming blood of Christ—Romans 3:25; Revelation 13:10) **when** they obeyed the specifications He devised as the point in time when He chose to forgive them. Those who dismiss baptism as mere after-the-fact symbolism that **follows** forgiveness (see Endnote 44 on p. 25), if they had been living under the Mosaic covenant—to be consistent—would have taken Moses and God to task for forgiving sin coincident with mere physical purifications and animal sacrifices. They would have chided God for leaving the impression that human obedience has anything to do with forgiveness. Similarly, faith and repentance are moments in time when humans experience an internal sense of well-being, a release from an old way of life or belief system, and a change of mind and direction. But **actual**, literal forgiveness occurs in the mind of God at the point in time which **He** designates. The only way for a person **legitimately** to feel forgiven and enjoy the euphoria of divine acceptance and approval is if the individual ascertains from Scripture when that moment in time occurs—as stipulated by divine authority. For an excellent discussion on when forgiveness occurs, particularly as it relates to the mind of God, see J.W. McGarvey (1892), *New Commentary on Acts of Apostles* (Cincinnati, OH: Standard), 1:243-262—“But forgiveness, pardon, is not an act which takes place within the soul of the person who is guilty; it takes place **within the mind of the person who forgives**.... [T]he whole inward change which the sinner is required

to undergo, must take place **before** sin can be forgiven” (pp. 244-245, emp. added).

- ² Notice the wording of this verse. In the context of chapter 12, the Holy Spirit is spoken of as the Agent that provided the Corinthians with miraculous abilities (“gifts”): “But one and the same Spirit works all these things, distributing to each one individually **as He wills**” (12:11). In verses 8-9, “through the Spirit,” “through the same Spirit,” and “by the same Spirit” are equivalent expressions that refer to the action taken by the Holy Spirit. They do not refer to the state of being in the Spirit. The verse does not say the Corinthians were baptized “into the Spirit.” It says they were baptized “into one body.” It was “by” (NIV, NASB, RSV) the one Holy Spirit that this act was achieved. But the way the Holy Spirit accomplished that act was by Paul—who spoke by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit—instructing the Corinthians to be baptized in Acts 18:8. That baptism was **water** (not Spirit) baptism. (See the frequent occurrence of “water” in the conversion accounts as well as other contexts (Acts 8:36,38,39; 10:47; Matthew 3:16; Ephesians 5:26; Hebrews 10:22; 1 Peter 3:21). See J.W. McGarvey (1910), *Biblical Criticism* (Cincinnati, OH: Standard Publishing), pp. 253-256.
- ³ It is beyond the scope of this study to examine the attempts over the centuries to identify sprinkling and pouring with baptism. Suffice it to say that the original language is clear on this subject, even as it is decisive on the design of baptism. The Greek terms βάπτισμα (baptism), βαπτίζω (baptize), and βαπτιστής (baptizer) are from a root which means to “dip,” “immerse,” “submerge.”
- ⁴ It is particularly noteworthy that for the greater part of the two millennia since the establishment of the Christian religion, commentators and expositors recognized the divine purpose of water baptism. See the compilation of the views of a host of scholars and churchmen in bygone years by J.W. Shepherd (1894), *Handbook on Baptism* (Nashville, TN: Gospel Advocate). Even Martin Luther believed that water baptism was necessary to be saved: “[B]aptism is no plaything, but is instituted by God himself; and, moreover, it is solemnly and strictly commanded that we be baptized or **we shall not be saved...**; the world is full of sects exclaiming that baptism is **merely an outward form** and that outward forms are of no use.... Therefore, expressed in the simplest form, the power, the effect, the benefit, the fruit and **the purpose of baptism is to save**. No one is baptized that he may become a prince, but, as the words declare, **that he may be saved**. But to be saved, we know very well, is to be **delivered from sin, death, and Satan**, and to enter Christ’s kingdom and live forever with him”—(1908), *Luther’s Large Catechism*, trans. John Lenker (Minneapolis, MN: The Luther Press), pp. 159,162). It has become popular to dismiss this viewpoint by

labeling it “baptismal regeneration”—as if those who espouse this view think that forgiveness is achieved by some mystical power in the H₂O, or that salvation is not fully dependent on the redemptive activity of Christ on the cross. However, one can fully believe that salvation relies completely on the undeserved, unmerited grace of God, and **also** believe that baptism precedes salvation—**even as faith itself precedes salvation**. Man’s inability to atone for his own sins does not translate into an inability to comply humbly with God’s pre-conditions of undeserved forgiveness. Indeed, the issue is not **whether** water is the cleansing agent—we all agree it is not. Christ’s blood is the one and only cleansing agent. Rather, the issue is **when** Christ’s blood cleanses the sin-stained soul. The New Testament answer is: when the penitent, confessing believer submits to water immersion. If the Israelites could receive the free gift of Jericho (Joshua 7:2) with the city walls falling down as a divine response to their “faith”—but only “**after** they were encircled for seven days” (Hebrews 11:30), without the gift being earned by their marching for seven days, then people today can receive the free gift of salvation from Christ by faith—but only **after** they are baptized into Christ. Observe the comparison in Appendix A.

⁵ I am not suggesting that God’s inspiring activity through human agents excluded the style, vocabulary, experiences, etc. of the human authors. Rather, the inspiration of the Bible was such that God incorporated the peculiarities of the human writers while making certain that their finished products were what He wanted written. See, for example, John 16:12-13; Ephesians 3:1-5; 1 Thessalonians 2:13; 2 Thessalonians 2:15; 2 Timothy 3:16; 1 Peter 1:10-12; 2 Peter 1:16-21; 3:15-16; et al. See also the category “Inspiration of the Bible” at ApologeticsPress.org.

⁶ The reader who is unfamiliar with Greek need not be concerned with the occurrence of terms like “accusative” and “genitive,” since an understanding of them is not necessary to grasp the points being made regarding the essentiality of baptism.

Matthew

28:19-20



“Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age. Amen” (Matthew 28:19-20).



This declaration of Jesus just prior to His exit from the Earth constitutes the “marching orders” for the apostles in promulgating the spread of Christianity in the first century. Embedded within this “Great Commission” is one of the key prerequisites to being saved: water baptism. The precise wording expressed by Jesus provides clarification in ascertaining the essentiality of baptism.

Greek Present Participles

Consider Matthew’s use of participles in this passage. In Greek, a participle indicates action as it relates to the main verb.¹ **Present** participles indicate action that occurs **at the same time** as the action of the main verb. Consider the following affirmations of this important point by prominent Greek grammarians:

J. Gresham Machen [early 20th-century Presbyterian theologian, professor of New Testament at Princeton Seminary, founder of Westminster Theological Seminary, author of the Greek grammar *New Testament Greek for Beginners*]—“The present participle, therefore, is used if the action denoted by the participle is represented as taking place **at the same time as the action denoted by the leading verb**, no matter whether the action denoted by the leading verb is past, present or future.”²

Ray Summers [20th-century professor of New Testament and Greek at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, and Baylor University, author of

the Greek grammar *Essentials of New Testament Greek*—“The time of action in participles is indicated in the relation of the action of the participle to the action of the main verb.... The present participle indicates action which is **contemporaneous with the action of the main verb.**”³

H.E. Dana and Julius Mantey [20th-century Baptist seminary professors of New Testament Interpretation, authors of the Greek grammar *A Manual Grammar of the Greek New Testament*—“**Simultaneous action relative to the main verb** is ordinarily expressed by the present.”⁴

A.T. Robertson [early 20th-century eminent professor of New Testament at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, author of *Short Grammar of the Greek New Testament* as well as *A Grammar of the Greek New Testament in the Light of Historical Research*—“The present participle gets its time from the principal verb.”⁵

James Hadley [19th-century professor of Greek at Yale, member of the American Committee for the revision of the New Testament and president of the American Oriental Society; first rate linguist, with knowledge of Greek, Latin, Sanskrit, Hebrew, Arabic, Armenian, and several Celtic languages]—“The participles denote **time relatively to that of the verb on which they depend.** The present and perfect participles denote time relatively *present*, the aorist participle time relatively *past*, the future participle time relatively *future.*”⁶

William Goodwin [19th-century classical scholar and Eliot professor of Greek at Harvard University, first director of the American School for Classical Studies at Athens, president of the American Philological Association]—“The tenses of the participle...are present, past, or future *relatively* to the time of the verb with which they are connected.”⁷

William Mounce [21st-century New Testament Greek scholar, chaired the ESV translation committee, directed the Greek Program at Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary, and author of *Basics of Biblical Greek*—“[T]he time of the participle is relative to the time of the main verb. The present participle describes an action occurring **at the same time as the main verb.**”⁸

Raphael Kuhner [19th-century German classical scholar educated at the University of Göttingen, taught in the Hanover Lyceum, produced a large, two-volume Greek grammar translated by William Jelf, with an enlarged third edition in four volumes produced by Friedrich Blass and Bernhard Gerth]—“The action or state denoted by the participle is, therefore, **usually prior**

to that denoted by the verb with which it is connected, **sometimes coincident.**"⁹

James Moulton [early 20th-century philologist and Greek scholar, Tutor at Didsbury College, Fellow of King's College, Cambridge, Greenwood Professor of Hellenistic Greek and Indo-European Philology at Manchester University, Doctor of Letters, University of London. Produced *Prolegomena*, the first volume in the highly acclaimed series *A Grammar of New Testament Greek*]"—"the linear action in a participle, connected with a finite verb in past or present time, **partakes in the time of its principal.**"¹⁰

While many more could be cited,¹¹ these observations from respected Greek grammarians of the last two centuries demonstrate a simple but certain truth regarding the use of participles in the Greek language of the New Testament. Robison demonstrated the same usage among the apostolic fathers.¹²

Before turning to the Greek grammar of Matthew 28:19-20, consider the following examples in English that illustrate the function of the present participle as it relates to the main verb:

Example #1: "Go make pancakes, mixing the batter in the porcelain bowl, pouring it on the griddle."

"Make (pancakes)" serves as the main verb of the sentence. "Mixing" (the batter) and "pouring" (on the griddle) are present participles. They refer to action that occurs at the same time as the main verb. In other words, "mixing the batter" and "pouring it on the griddle" describe **how** to achieve the action of the main verb. Mixing the batter and pouring it on the griddle do not refer to action that is **subsequent** to the action of the main verb. They do not occur **after** the pancakes are made. Rather, they represent actions that are contemporaneous with the action of the main verb.

Example #2: "Go clean the yard, mowing the lawn, raking the leaves."

The main verb of this sentence is "clean (the yard)" followed by the two present participles "mowing" and "raking." Being present participles, "mowing" and "raking" represent action that occurs **simultaneous** with the action of the main verb. The father is not instructing his son to clean the yard, and then after doing so, to subsequently mow the yard and rake the leaves.

Rather, mowing the yard and raking the leaves indicate how the action of the main verb (clean the yard) is to be achieved.

Turning now to the Greek grammar of Matthew 28:19-20, our Lord uttered an imperative directive couched in the main verb *matheteusate* from *matheteuo*—"to make disciples."¹³ The apostles were to go throughout the world and "make disciples." Jesus clarified this directive with two **present** participles: "teaching" and "baptizing." Southern Baptist scholar of New Testament Greek A.T. Robertson says these two participles in this passage are "modal participles,"¹⁴ i.e., they identify the manner, means, or method by which the action of the main verb is accomplished. Samuel Green agreed, listing Matthew 28:19 as an example of the "modal" use, "setting forth the manner in which the given action was performed."¹⁵ Dana and Mantey state that the "Modal Participle" "may signify the manner in which the action of the main verb is accomplished."¹⁶ Hence, they pinpoint the mode by which the action of the main verb is achieved (also "manner or means").¹⁷

Observe that the English reader might be tempted to interpret Jesus' command to mean that the apostles were **first** to make disciples, i.e., convert people to Christianity, and **then** baptize them, and then **after** baptizing them to teach them additional Christian doctrine. However, the Greek grammar of the passage, i.e., Matthew's inspired Greek translation of Jesus' (perhaps Aramaic) remarks, weighs heavily against this interpretation and clarifies succinctly Jesus' intended meaning.¹⁸

The main verb of the sentence, "make disciples," is followed by two present participles that represent actions that occur **at the same time** as the action of the main verb. "Teaching" (*didaskontes*) and "baptizing" (*baptidzontes*) are actions that occur simultaneous with "making disciples," i.e., they indicate what Jesus meant when He directed the apostles to go throughout the nations and convert people. To make disciples, the apostles were required to teach people the Gospel, including the necessity of observing all of Jesus' commands, and then to baptize them in water. Those individuals who complied with these two actions were thereby made disciples.¹⁹ Alexander Bruce, 19th-century Scottish theologian and chair of Apologetics and New Testament Exegesis in the Free Church Hall in Glasgow, who authored the commentary on

Matthew in Nicoll's series *The Expositor's Greek Testament*, wrote: "baptism the condition of discipleship = make disciples by baptizing."²⁰ In his commentaries on the Greek Testament, another 19th-century scholar, English churchman, theologian, and textual critic, Henry Alford, specifically noted concerning Matthew 28:19-20: "Both these present participles are the **conditioning components** of the imperative aor. preceding."²¹ In other words, being taught and baptized are **the conditions** for becoming a disciple. As Matthew Poole explained: "make disciples...must be first by preaching and instructing them in the principles of the Christian faith.... I cannot be of their mind, who think that persons may be baptized before they are taught.... They were first to preach and to baptize amongst the Jews, and then thus to disciple all nations."²² Hence, John Lightfoot explained: "*Make disciples*: Bring them in by baptism.... When they are under baptism, they are no longer under heathenism; [baptism] puts a difference between those who are under the discipleship of Christ, and those who are not."²³ Or as British Baptist scholar and professor of New Testament Interpretation G.R. Beasley-Murray noted: "the participles describe the manner in which a disciple is made.... It is when a hearer believes and is baptized that he becomes a full disciple; which is the same as saying that a disciple is made such *in baptism by faith*.... Baptizing belongs to the means by which a disciple is made."²⁴

American theologian, ordained Presbyterian minister, and graduate of Princeton Theological Seminary, Albert Barnes, explained the import of the participles in his commentary: "This word properly means *disciple*, or *make disciples of*. This was to be done, however, by teaching, and by administering the rite of baptism."²⁵ R.C.H. Lenski, Lutheran scholar whose 12-volume series of commentaries on the New Testament (from a traditional Lutheran perspective) contains a literal translation of the Greek texts, observes: "Two participles of means then state how all nations are to be made into disciples: by baptizing them and by teaching them."²⁶ Professor of New Testament Studies at Dallas Theological Seminary, founder and executive director of the Center for the Study of New Testament Manuscripts, Daniel Wallace, insists that the two participles (baptizing and teaching)

should not be taken as attendant circumstance. First, they do not fit the normal pattern for attendant circumstance participles (they are present tense and follow the main verb). And second, they obviously make good sense as participles of *means*: i.e., **the means by which the disciples were to make disciples.**"²⁷

R.T. France, New Testament scholar and Principal of Wycliffe Hall, Oxford, explains that "*Baptizing* and 'teaching' (v. 20) are participles dependent on the main verb, *make disciples*; they further specify what is involved in discipleship."²⁸ And A. Lukyn Williams insightfully observes: "The imperative aorist *matheteusate* is, as it were, decomposed by the two following present participles, 'baptizing' and 'teaching'.... The present participle denotes **the mode of initiation** into discipleship. **Make them disciples by baptizing them.**"²⁹ Or as Norrisian Professor of Divinity at Cambridge and Lord Bishop of Winchester, Edward Harold Browne, explained in the well-respected *Smith's Dictionary of the Bible*: "Make disciples of all nations **by baptizing them**... [T]hey were to be made disciples, admitted into the fellowship of Christ's religion, **by baptism.**"³⁰ And Heinrich Meyer, noted German Protestant theologian, in his *Kritisch-exegetischer Kommentar zum Neuen Testament*, observed that it is in the "baptizing" where "discipling" "is to be consummated, not something that must be done *after* the *matheteusate*."³¹

In view of these decisive linguistic considerations, examine the following three sentences together:

- "Go make pancakes, mixing the batter in the porcelain bowl, pouring it on the griddle."
- "Go clean the yard, mowing the lawn, raking the leaves."
- "Go make disciples..., baptizing them..., teaching them...."

Now ask and answer three questions—based on the grammar:

- Can pancakes be made without mixing batter and pouring the batter on the griddle? Answer: No.
- Can the yard be cleaned without mowing the lawn and raking the leaves? Answer: No.
- Can disciples of Christ be made without teaching and baptizing them? Answer: No.

The Greek Preposition *Eis*

Another grammatical factor in Matthew 28:19-20 concerns the occurrence of the preposition *eis* in the phrase "baptizing

them in (*eis*) the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit" (ESV). The standard meaning of the underlying Greek preposition means "into" and is generally distinguished from the preposition *en* ("in"). The translation of "into" is given in the American Standard Version, the margin of the English Standard Version, and others (e.g., Beck, Weymouth, et al.).

While it is true that *eis* and *en* are etymologically related and sometimes even interchanged,³² they are not synonymous. In his classic work on the Greek idiom of the New Testament, C.F.D. Moule (leading scholar of the New Testament, Professor of Divinity at Cambridge for 25 years) noted that "where *en* = *in*, *eis* would rather = *into*," and contrasted with *pros*, "*eis* tends to include the idea of *entry*."³³ Nigel Turner observed that Matthew "is more careful than any NT author to preserve the distinction between *eis* and *en*."³⁴ A.T. Robertson insisted that in its use of *eis* in Matthew 28:19, "the notion of sphere is the true one."³⁵ In his volume on Greek syntax, Nigel Turner insists that even with potential confusion between the two prepositions, "in Mt...we can always presume that *eis* has its full sense even where one might suspect that it stood for *en* (e.g., Mt 28¹⁹ baptism *into* the name, i.e. **a relationship as the goal of baptism**)."³⁶ R.T. France agrees: "The *eis* which introduces the baptismal formula in Matt 28:19 and in most of the other NT baptism texts is perhaps to be understood as drawing attention to **the new relationship and allegiance into which the one baptized is thus introduced**"³⁷—"implying entrance into an allegiance."³⁸

Marvin Vincent was a Presbyterian minister and professor of New Testament Exegesis and Criticism at Union Theological Seminary in New York City. In his multi-volume work *Word Studies in the New Testament*, Vincent provides this somewhat lengthy commentary on *eis* in Matthew 28:19—

Rev., correctly, "*into* the name." Baptizing into the name has a twofold meaning. 1. *Unto*, denoting *object* or *purpose*.... 2. *Into*, denoting *union* or *communion with*.... Baptizing into the name of the Holy Trinity implies a spiritual and mystical union with him.... When one is baptized into the name of the Trinity, he professes to acknowledge and appropriate God in all that he is and in all that he does for man.³⁹

The *Abingdon Bible Commentary* notes: “Baptizing into the name of means baptizing them so that they are **entered as the possession of the Father.**”⁴⁰ Alford offers a comparable assessment: “It is unfortunate again here that our English Bibles do not give us the force of this εἰς. It should have been **into....** It imports, not only a *subjective recognition* hereafter by the child of the truth implied in *to onoma* [“the name”—DM]..., but **an objective admission into the covenant of Redemption—a putting on of Christ.**”⁴¹ Milligan described the shift as “our transfer from the kingdom of darkness **into** the Kingdom or Church of Christ.”⁴²

Summary: Though these linguistic experts vary in their terminology, they are unanimous in their recognition of the significance of *eis* in Matthew 28:19 as it relates to the **design** of baptism. A person has not entered into a new relationship and allegiance with God, or come into union or communion with God, or gained admission into the covenant of redemption, or put on Christ, and is not a possession of the Father (different ways to say the same thing) **until** the act of baptism. Compare these linguistic observations as compiled in Appendix C. Use of the Greek preposition “into” indicates that when one is baptized in water, the individual is being transferred from one sphere or realm into another, from not having a relationship with deity into having one. Hence, water immersion is unmistakably the dividing line between the lost and the saved, the unforgiven and the forgiven, the non-Christian and the Christian.

Onoma

Another nuance in Matthew 28:19-20 to be considered is the occurrence of the term *onoma* (“name”) in the phrase “baptizing them in the name (*onoma*) of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit” (ESV). While the term has a variety of shades of meaning in usage, “in the name of” frequently is used in Scripture as a parallel expression to “by **the power or authority of**” (e.g., Act 4:7). Hans Bietenhard, Swiss Reformed theologian and Professor of New Testament at the University of Bern, noted that the formula “in the name of Jesus” means “according to his will and instruction.”⁴³ Specifically, in Matthew 28:19, “The literal meaning is that baptism symbolically⁴⁴ assigns the person baptized to Christ **for forgiveness of sins.**”⁴⁵

W.E. Vine, English biblical scholar and theologian, defined *onoma* in its use in Matthew 28:19 as “in recognition **of the authority of** (sometimes combined with the thought of relying or resting on).”⁴⁶ A.T. Robertson cited the use of *onoma* in Matthew 28:19 as another example where “name” has “the idea of **‘the authority of’**”⁴⁷—“a common one in the Septuagint and the papyri for **power or authority**.”⁴⁸ Joseph Thayer was a biblical scholar, late Professor of sacred literature at Andover Seminary and Professor of New Testament Criticism in the Harvard Divinity School, who served as a member of the American Bible Revision Committee resulting in the American Standard Version, and also produced an influential Greek lexicon at the time. Delineating one usage of *onoma* as “chiefly Hebraistic,” Thayer explains the meaning of Matthew 28:19 as, “by baptism to bind any one to recognize and publicly acknowledge the **dignity and authority** of one.”⁴⁹ He defines *baptidzo* with *eis onoma* as “to profess the name of one whose follower we become.”⁵⁰ Referring back to verse 18, Meyer keys into this notion of authority and notes that “*all nations* should be brought under **His government**, and made subject to His sway.”⁵¹ Boles well notes the significance of “name”:

The name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit means **the combined authority of the Godhead**. To be baptized into this is to be brought by baptism into **actual subjection to the combined authority of heaven**. To be baptized into the name of these three **brings one into covenant relation** with the Godhead.⁵²

Submitting to authority is closely related to the notion of submitting one’s self to the ownership of another in order to become his possession, as noted by Crain: “The phrase ‘into the name of’ indicates becoming the possession of the triune God.”⁵³ F.F. Bruce agrees:

I suggest that *eis to onoma* implies **a transference of ownership**.... This is noteworthy in the baptismal formulae of the New Testament: baptism “into the name” of the Triune God (Matt. 28.19), or “into the name of the Lord Jesus” (Acts 8.16; 19.5; cf. 1 Cor. 1.13,15), is the sign [indicator—DM] that He is Lord and that **the baptized person belongs to Him**.⁵⁴

Similarly, James Moulton, British philologist and professor of Classical Greek and other languages at the University of

Manchester, and George Milligan, biblical scholar and Kimmer at Warwick University, made the following remarks concerning Matthew 28:19—

The phrase **eis (to) onoma tinos** is frequent in the papyri with reference to payments made “to the account of any one”.... The usage is of interest in connexion with Mt 28¹⁹, where the meaning would seem to be “baptized into **the possession of the Father**, etc.”⁵⁵

Likewise Alexander Souter similarly explained: “When the preposition εἰς with a noun in the accus. follows, it appears to indicate that through this ceremony the baptized person **becomes the property** of the person indicated after εἰς.”⁵⁶ The classic lexicon most recently revised by Frederick Danker says that “into the name” means that “[t]hrough baptism...those who are baptized become the possession of and come under the dedicated protection of the one whose name they bear.”⁵⁷

A. Lukyn Williams, English New Testament scholar at Cambridge and Principal of Moore Theological College in New South Wales, explained that the translation of “in” came from the influence of the Latin Vulgate “which does not give the right force to the expression.”⁵⁸ Instead, the use of *eis*

signifies into **the power and influence of the Holy Trinity**, into faith in the three Persons of God, and the duties and privileges consequent on that faith, into the family of God and obedience unto its Head. The “into” shows the end and aim of the consecration of baptism.... So being baptized into the Name of God implies **being placed in subjection to and communion with God himself, admitted into covenant with him.**⁵⁹

Seventeenth-century biblical commentator Matthew Poole explained “in the name” as meaning “in the **authority**, or...into the **profession** of the trinity of the persons in the one Divine Being...obliging them to worship and serve God the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost.”⁶⁰ Meyer explains:

Here, where the *baptidzein eis to onoma* is regarded as that through which the *matheteuein* is operated, and through which, accordingly, the **introduction into spiritual fellowship with**, and ethical dependence upon Christ is brought about, it must be understood as denoting that by baptism the believer passes into that new phase of life in which he accepts the *name of the Father (of Christ) and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit as the sum of his creed and confession.*⁶¹

Observe, again, that all of these scholars are in essential agreement as to the **design** of baptism as it relates to the use of “name” in Matthew 28:19. Whether the significance pertains to transference of **ownership** of the baptized individual, or thereby becoming a **possession** of God, or being placed in **subjection** to and **communion** with God, or being **admitted** to His covenant, or being introduced into spiritual **fellowship** with Him, the design of baptism remains the same. Barnes summarizes:

So to be baptized in the name of the Father, or unto the Father, means publicly, by a significant rite, to receive his system of religion; to bind the soul to obey his laws; to be devoted to him; to receive, as the guide and comforter of the life, his instructions, and to trust to his promises. To be baptized unto the Son, in like manner, is to receive him as the Messiah—our Prophet, Priest, and King—to submit to his laws, and to receive him as a Saviour.⁶²

Summary

Drawing together the linguistic insights generated by these two features of the Greek, observe that “baptizing them in (*eis*/into) the name (*onoma*/authority) of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit” refers to the transference of the individual into the sphere of the authority of deity. As McGarvey observed:

The name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit means the **combined authority** of all the manifestations of God. To be baptized into this, is to be **brought by baptism into actual subjection to it**. He that is baptized is brought into subjection **by that act** to the Father, to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit.⁶³

While deity actually wields authority over the entire Universe (cf. vs. 18; Ephesians 1:21; Colossians 1:15ff.), no human has willingly placed himself under that jurisdiction or submitted to that authority **until** he submits to water immersion. A person submits himself to the authority of the Godhead when, having been taught the Gospel generating faith, repentance, and oral confession, he then is baptized into that sphere of authority. Conversely, until a person enacts the divinely designated means by which a person places himself under God’s authority, he remains under the authority and power of Satan. Ownership has not been transferred to deity.

Conclusion

Matthew 28:19-20 teaches that a person is neither a **disciple** of Christ, nor in submission to the **authority** of God, **until** that person has been baptized in water. The unsaved person **must** pass through the waters of baptism in order to become a disciple of Christ and submit himself to the authority of deity. As British Baptist G.R. Beasley-Murray stated emphatically: “In the New Testament... baptism is conversion-baptism. Conversion was **fulfilled** and expressed in baptism. **Baptism was conversion**...assumed in the Missionary Commission of Matt. xxviii. 18-20.”⁶⁴ Or as Schlatter explained: “The apostolic preaching **culminated** in the offer of baptism; the primitive sermon was a baptismal sermon. Its purpose was not merely the acceptance of an idea: **it demanded a definite act.**”⁶⁵ The person who thinks he became a Christian,⁶⁶ a disciple of Christ, and was saved the moment he “believed” in Jesus—before and without being baptized—was mistaken and did not become a disciple of Christ in accordance with Jesus’ own directive.

Endnotes

- ¹ “The participle has not time in itself. Time with the participle is purely relative; it gets its time from the verb with which it is used”—William Davis (1923), *Beginner’s Grammar of the Greek New Testament* (New York: Harper & Row), p. 99; cf. John Hud-dilston (1961), *Essentials of New Testament Greek* (New York: Macmillan), p. 73.
- ² J. Gresham Machen (1923), *New Testament Greek for Beginners* (Toronto: Macmillan), pp. 105-106, emp. added.
- ³ Ray Summers (1950), *Essentials of New Testament Greek* (Nashville, TN: Broadman Press), pp. 89-90, emp. added.
- ⁴ H.E. Dana and Julius Mantey (1955), *A Manual Grammar of the Greek New Testament* (Toronto: Macmillan), p. 230, emp. added.
- ⁵ A.T. Robertson (1909), *Short Grammar of the Greek New Testament* (New York: A.C. Armstrong & Son), p. 197.
- ⁶ James Hadley (1885), *A Greek Grammar for Schools and Colleges* (New York: D. Appleton), p. 272, italics in orig., emp. added.
- ⁷ William Goodwin (1893), *A Greek Grammar* (Boston: Ginn & Company), p. 275, italics in orig.
- ⁸ William Mounce (2003), *Basics of Biblical Greek* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan), p. 255, emp. added.

- ⁹ Raphael Kuhner (1872), *Grammar of the Greek Language*, trans. B.B. Edwards & S.H. Taylor (New York: D. Appleton & Co.), p. 471, italics in orig., emp. added.
- ¹⁰ James H. Moulton (1906), *A Grammar of New Testament Greek: Prolegomena* (Edinburgh: T.&T. Clark), second edition, p. 126, emp. added.
- ¹¹ e.g., Ernest Burton (1898), *Syntax of the Moods and Tenses in New Testament Greek* (Edinburgh: T.&T. Clark), p. 54; H.P.V. Nunn (1973 reprint), *A Short Syntax of New Testament Greek* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), p. 123; Jeremy Duff (2005), *The Elements of New Testament Greek* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), p. 85.
- ¹² Henry Robison (1913), *Syntax of the Participle in the Apostolic Fathers* (Chicago: University of Chicago), pp. 11ff.
- ¹³ James Moulton (1919), *A Grammar of New Testament Greek: Accidence and Word Formation* (Edinburgh: T.&T. Clark), 2:400.
- ¹⁴ A.T. Robertson (1934), *A Grammar of the Greek New Testament in the Light of Historical Research* (Nashville, TN: Broadman), p. 1128.
- ¹⁵ Samuel Green (1886), *Handbook to the Grammar of the Greek Testament* (New York: Fleming H. Revell), p. 332.
- ¹⁶ p. 228. Also Curtis Vaughan and Virtus Gideon (1979), *A Greek Grammar of the New Testament* (Nashville, TN: Broadman), pp. 157,160—"The circumstantial participle (sometimes called 'adverbial') defines **the circumstances under which the action of a verb takes place....** The circumstantial participle may be **modal**, denoting **the manner in which the action of the main verb is effected.**" Classical scholar Herbert Weir Smyth agreed: "The circumstantial participle expresses simply circumstance or manner in general. It may imply various other relations, such as time, manner, means, cause, purpose, concession, condition, etc.... The time denoted by the participle is **only relative to that of the governing verb;**" "The action set forth by the present participle is generally coincident (rarely antecedent or subsequent) to that of the leading verb"—(1963), *Greek Grammar* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press), pp. 457,419.
- ¹⁷ See also Burton, p. 172—"The participle expressing manner or means often denotes the same action as that of the principal verb.... [A]s respects its modal function it is a participle of manner or means." Also Cleon Rogers Jr. and Cleon Rogers III (1998), *The New Linguistic and Exegetical Key to the Greek New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan), p. 66.
- ¹⁸ "Two or more participles...unconnected by καί, are frequently... joined to one principal verb"—George Winer (1870), *A Treatise on the Grammar of the New Testament Greek*, trans. W.F. Moulton (Edinburgh: T.&T. Clark), p. 433. Lange notes that "there is no

καί before διδάσκοντες, so that *baptizing* and *teaching* are not strictly coordinate, as two successive acts”—John Lange (1884), *A Commentary on the Holy Scriptures: Matthew* (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons), 1:558. Again, in other words, both occur coincident with “make disciples.”

- ¹⁹ Word order in Greek is far more flexible than in English (“The freedom of the Greek from artificial rules and its response to the play of the mind is never seen better than in the order of words in the sentence”—Robertson, 1934, p. 417), which explains the sequence of the participle “baptizing” occurring before the participle “teaching,” even though in actual point of time a person logically would have to be taught before he could be baptized. One beauty of Koine Greek is the way participles minimize this confusion by deriving their “time” from the action of the principal verb. Again, Robertson noted concerning aorist participles: “It is needless to press the point...that the order of the participle is immaterial” (p. 861). Since both participles in this instance are **present** participles, **both** refer to activity that must be associated with the action of the main verb. Though they **follow** the verb, their action cannot occur **after** the action of the main verb. (A future participle would more appropriately serve that function). **Both** actions must occur in concert with “make disciples.” No linguistic justification exists for assigning the action of one of the present participles (“baptizing”) as occurring concurrently with the leading verb while assigning the action of the other present participle (“teaching”) as occurring subsequent to the action of the leading verb. Note further, as a point of clarification, that the two present participles do not indicate simultaneous action with **each other**—but rather both are contemporaneous with **the leading verb**. Some writers demonstrate confusion on this point by assigning the “teaching” to post-baptism indoctrination. While the New Testament certainly requires new converts to continue their study and instruction **after** their conversion, Jesus’ use of **present** participles demonstrates that He was referring to the teaching that is initially necessary to enable a person to become His disciple. Both “baptizing” and “teaching” are necessary in order to become a disciple of Christ. New Testament scholar William Hendriksen succinctly summarized the point: “In such a construction it would be completely wrong to say that because the word *baptizing* precedes the word *teaching*, therefore people must be baptized before they are taught.... The concepts ‘baptizing’ and ‘teaching’ are simply two activities, in co-ordination with each other, but both subordinate to ‘make disciples.’ In other words, by means of being baptized and being taught a person becomes a disciple”—William Hendriksen (1973), *Exposition of the Gospel According to Matthew* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker), p. 1000, italics in orig. Though Carson sends mixed signals in this regard, he at

least states plainly that “*matheteuo* entails both preaching and response.... The NT can scarcely conceive of a disciple who is not baptized or is not instructed. Indeed, the force of this command is to make Jesus’ disciples responsible for making disciples of others, **a task characterized by baptism and instruction**”—D.A. Carson (1984), *Matthew in The Expositor’s Bible Commentary*, ed. Frank Gaebelin (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan), 8:597. Stanley Porter explains that “the syntax probably indicates that the action of the two participles is logically concurrent in that the two actions of baptizing and teaching indicate, at least in part, what it means to make disciples,” and so inserts into his “interpretative translation” just before “baptizing” the word “including” (pp. 251-252). Though he ends up applying “teaching” to post-baptism instruction in obedience, he rightly concludes: “The command to make disciples is defined by two further prominent concepts, grammaticalized by two participles: baptism and teaching”—(2015), *Linguistic Analysis of the Greek New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker), p. 253. Note further that Mark’s wording of the “Great Commission” places “preach the Gospel” parallel to Matthew’s “make disciples.” So where Matthew has make disciples by teaching and baptizing, Mark has save people by preaching the Gospel to them, causing them to believe and be baptized. Matthew and Mark intended to say the same thing. (See chart in Appendix B). **Observe in summary:** Even if a solid linguistic case could be made proving that “teaching” refers to post-conversion teaching that follows baptism, nevertheless, **the design of baptism remains the same**, since the “baptizing” occurs simultaneous with “make disciples,” i.e., baptism is essential to salvation, pinpointing the moment when a penitent believer becomes a disciple of Christ.

²⁰ Alexander Bruce (no date), *The Expositor’s Greek Testament*, ed. W. Robertson Nicoll (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans), 1:339.

²¹ Henry Alford (1874), *Alford’s Greek Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1980 reprint), 1:306, emp. added.

²² Matthew Poole (no date), *A Commentary on the Holy Bible: Matthew-Revelation* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson), 3:146.

²³ John Lightfoot (1979 reprint), *A Commentary on the New Testament from the Talmud and Hebraica: Matthew-Mark* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker), pp. 379-380, italics in orig.

²⁴ G.R. Beasley-Murray (1976 reprint), *Baptism in the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans), pp. 88-89, italics in orig. It is surely eye-opening for renowned Baptist pastor and President of the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in the late 19th century, John Broadus, to acknowledge the undeniable grammatical function of the present participles in this passage (“disciple by baptizing... by teaching”; and so many understand it”) only to dismiss the clear import of the language in order to evade the contradiction

- between his personal doctrinal belief and the words of our Lord. John Broadus (1886), *Commentary on the Gospel of Matthew* (Philadelphia, PA: American Baptist Publication Society), p. 594.
- ²⁵ Albert Barnes (1956 reprint), *Notes on the New Testament: Matthew and Mark* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker), p. 323, italics in orig.
- ²⁶ R.C.H. Lenski (1943), *The Interpretation of St. Matthew's Gospel* (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg), p. 1173. Or as Johann Albrecht Bengel noted: "The verb, μαθητεύειν, signifies *to make disciples*; it **includes** baptism and teaching"—(1858), *Gnomon of the New Testament* (Edinburgh: T.&T. Clark), 1:489, italics in orig., emp. added. Commenting on "make disciples," Eiselen notes: "*Make disciples*. This describes a comprehensive duty of which baptizing and teaching form a part"—Frederick Eiselen, ed. (1929), *The Abingdon Bible Commentary* (New York: Abingdon-Cokesbury Press), p. 995, italics in orig.
- ²⁷ Daniel Wallace (1996), *Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan), p. 645, italics in orig., emp. added.
- ²⁸ R.T. France (1985), *The Gospel According to Matthew* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans), 2002 reprint, p. 414, italics in orig.
- ²⁹ A. Lukyn Williams (1961 reprint), "Matthew," *The Pulpit Commentary*, ed. H.D.M. Spence and J.S. Exell (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans), p. 645, italics in orig., emp. added.
- ³⁰ Frederick Meyrick (1868), "Baptism," in *William Smith's Dictionary of the Bible*, rev. and ed. H.B. Hackett (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1971 reprint), 1:236,240, emp. added. Also A.J. Maas (1898), *The Gospel According to Matthew* (St. Louis, MO: B. Herder), p. 315.
- ³¹ Heinrich Meyer (1881), *Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament: The Gospel of St. Matthew* (Edinburgh: T.&T. Clark), p. 301, italics in orig.
- ³² Scholars have debated endlessly the nuances of meaning to be found in the parallel expressions "in the name," "on the name," and "into the name." While it makes sense to permit each preposition to maintain its own usual, central thrust and thereby convey a variety of nuances, so far as this study is concerned, it is enough to note that the **design** of each is the same, i.e., to demonstrate the altered status of the individual from lost to saved, from non-Christian to Christian. *Eis* vividly portrays this transference. Cf. C.F.D. Moule (1977 reprint), *An Idiom-Book of New Testament Greek* (New York: Cambridge University Press), second edition, p. 50; F.J. Foakes Jackson and Kirsopp Lake (1933), *The Beginnings of Christianity: The Acts of the Apostles* (London: Macmillan), p. 124—"A convert knew perfectly well that when he said that he had been baptized in the name of Jesus he meant that someone had said 'I baptize you in the name of Jesus' or something similar, and that **in consequence he had attained the way of Salvation.**"

- ³³ p. 67, italics in orig.; cf. Nigel Turner (1963), *Syntax*, in *A Grammar of New Testament Greek*, ed. James Moulton (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark), 3:254.
- ³⁴ Nigel Turner (1976), *Style*, in *A Grammar of New Testament Greek*, ed. James Moulton (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark), 4:42. Carson agrees with this observation: “Matthew...apparently avoids the confusion of *eis* (strictly ‘into’) and *en* (strictly ‘in’) common in Hellenistic Greek; and if so, the preposition ‘into’ strongly suggests **a coming-into-relationship-with or a coming-under-the-Lordship-of....** It is a sign both of **entrance into Messiah’s covenant community** and of pledged **submission to his lordship**” (p. 597, emp. added).
- ³⁵ 1934, p. 592.
- ³⁶ 1963, 3:255, italics in orig., emp. added.
- ³⁷ R.T. France (2007), *The Gospel of Matthew* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans), p. 1116, italics in orig., emp. added.
- ³⁸ France, 1985, p. 414.
- ³⁹ Marvin Vincent (1946 reprint), *Word Studies in the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans), 1:149-150, italics in orig. Also Maas, pp. 315-316.
- ⁴⁰ Eiselen, p. 995, italics in orig., emp. added; also Alan M’Neile (1965), *The Gospel According to St. Matthew* (New York: St. Martin’s Press), p. 436.
- ⁴¹ Alford, 1:307, italics in orig., 2nd emp. added.
- ⁴² Robert Milligan (1975), *Exposition and Defense of the Scheme of Redemption* (Nashville, TN: Gospel Advocate), p. 405.
- ⁴³ Hans Bietenhard (1976), “*onoma*,” *The New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology*, ed. Colin Brown (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan), 2:654.
- ⁴⁴ Observe that the insertion of the word “symbolically” constitutes subjective interpretation rather than objective linguistic analysis. The same may be said for the theory that maintains that, since a person already has received the saving grace of God by which sins have been cleansed the moment he believes, then baptism serves the purpose of providing an **outward** demonstration or public declaration that the person has **already** been saved. The claim is that baptism is a **symbol**—a visible expression of the forgiveness already received at the point of faith. Hence, baptism is “an outward sign of an inward grace,” a post-conversion “testimony” or “public profession” that the person is already saved, like a “badge” or “uniform” worn by a policeman—merely an outward indication of what the wearer has already become. For example, after praising Mantey’s “causal” *eis* concept, Kenneth Wuest states: “Thus, we have the scriptural meaning of water baptism. **It is the testimony of the person to the fact of his salvation.** The only proper recipient of water baptism therefore is one who has

received the Lord Jesus as his personal Saviour, and is trusting in His precious blood for salvation from sin”—(1943), *Treasures from the Greek New Testament for the English Reader* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans), p. 78, emp. added. The only problem with such theologizing is that the New Testament makes no distinction between **actual** forgiveness and an alleged post-salvation “**symbolical**” forgiveness. If a person is forgiven, it would be superfluous to “symbolize” that forgiveness after-the-fact. Once a person dismisses the plain and self-evident import of the New Testament’s repetitive declaration that baptism is for the remission of sins, it follows that he must invent an alternative purpose for baptism. The “symbol,” “testimony,” “picture,” and “badge” concepts are undoubtedly creative and as good as any that might be fabricated to avoid the obvious fact that the New Testament posits remission of sin **coincident** with water baptism and not before. The only problem is that no shred of biblical evidence, grammatical or otherwise, exists to substantiate them. Baptist scholar J.W. Willmarth rightly asked: “Where is the example of the use of εἰς to denote a relation between an act as a symbol and some past event or accomplished fact, which such symbol is intended to set forth as emblem or declaration or commemoration?” “If it be but a MERE symbol, or object lesson, or a profession of accomplished facts, what meaning is there in language? or how shall we ever hope to understand the Gospel, as it fell from inspired lips, clothed with human words?”—J.W. Willmarth (1877), “Baptism and Remission,” *The Baptist Quarterly*, ed. Henry Weston (Philadelphia, PA: American Baptist Publication Society), July, 11:299,317, capitals in orig. Or as J.W. McGarvey explained: “It is a common assumption that Saul’s sins had been *really* forgiven before his immersion, and Ananias required him only to *formally* wash them away. But this is a mere combination of words to hide the absence of an idea. How can a man *formally* do a thing which has already been *really* done, unless it be by going through a *form* which is empty and deceptive? If Saul’s sins were already washed away, then he *did not* wash them away in immersion, and the language of Ananias was deceptive. But it is an indisputable fact, that at the time Ananias gave him this command he was still unhappy, and, therefore, unforgiven. Immediately after he was immersed, he was happy; and the change took place in the mean time, which connects it with his immersion”—(1872), *Commentary on Acts of Apostles* (Lexington, KY: Transylvania Printing & Publishing), seventh edition, p. 135, italics in orig. Albrecht Oepke, associate professor and New Testament Chair at the University of Leipzig, in his discussion of “the saving significance of baptism” and its “connection with purification from the guilt of sin,” debunks the “symbol” idea: “The significance of baptism thus depends on the fact that it is a **real action** of the holy God in relation to sinful

man. Hence both a superstitious and also a **purely symbolical understanding** are excluded.... To baptism as a mere rite or realistically developed symbol no such incomparable efficacy could be ascribed in the NT world of thought"—from his article "βάπτω, βαπτίζω" in Gerhard Kittel, ed. (1964), *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans), 1:540. Or as J.J. Van Oosterzee explained: "Baptism is styled 'laver of regeneration,' not because it *obligates* to regeneration, nor because it is the *symbol* of regeneration, but because it is really the *means* of regeneration, if truly desired and received in faith (which is tacitly assumed in respect to those adult Christians who by their own free act were baptized)"—(1870), *The Epistle of Paul to Titus* (New York: Charles Scribner), p. 20, italics in orig.

The premiere passages in the New Testament that assign symbolic value to baptism simply do not expound the post-conversion concept. True, baptism is, indeed, a symbol. **But what does baptism symbolize?** It symbolizes: (1) Christ's death, burial, and resurrection, as per Romans 6:3-4; (2) the act of "cutting off" as in circumcision (sin vs. skin), as per Colossians 2:11; and (3) the waters of the Noahic Flood, as per 1 Peter 3:21. How could anyone get out of these explicitly stated symbolic meanings that **baptism symbolizes past forgiveness** that was achieved **prior** to being immersed? Jettisoning theological presuppositions enables the honest exegete to conclude that the Bible nowhere expounds a post-forgiveness role for baptism. Quite the contrary, the symbolism which the New Testament explicitly associates with water baptism (i.e., Christ's burial, cutting of skin, and Flood waters) further verifies the **essentiality** of immersion as a mandatory **prerequisite** to forgiveness. See Dave Miller (2003), "Is Baptism a Symbol?" Apologetics Press, <http://apologeticspress.org/APContent.aspx?category=11&article=1232&topic=379>.

⁴⁵ Bietenhard, 2:655, emp. added.

⁴⁶ W.E. Vine (1966 reprint), *An Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words* (Old Tappan, NJ: Revell), p. 100, emp. added; cf. Wesley Perschbacher, ed. (1990), *The New Analytical Greek Lexicon* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson), p. 294.

⁴⁷ 1934, p. 649, emp. added. Paul undoubtedly intended to key into this concept when he chided the Corinthians for their divisive ways by posing three critical questions, the third of which was: "Or were you baptized in (*eis*-into) the name of Paul?" (1 Corinthians 1:13). The question obviously echos Matthew 28:19. Paul sought to prick the Corinthians with the fact that when they were baptized in water, they were placing themselves under (*eis*-into) the authority of Christ—not Paul, Apollos, Cephas, or anyone else. Observe also that his remarks in 1 Corinthians 1:10-17 further underscore the absolute essentiality of water baptism to salvation:

“For it has been declared to me concerning you, my brethren, by those of Chloe’s household, that there are contentions among you. Now I say this, that each of you says, ‘I am of Paul,’ or ‘I am of Apollos,’ or ‘I am of Cephas,’ or ‘I am of Christ.’ **Is Christ divided? Was Paul crucified for you? Or were you baptized in the name of Paul?**” (vss. 11-13). What did Paul mean when he used the expression to be “of” someone (“I” [Ἐγὼ] with the genitive of the person)? He alluded to an authoritative positioning of a person beneath another. To be “of” another means to have been saved by and come under the jurisdiction of that other and, hence, to “belong to” (Lenski, p. 42; cf. ISV,NRSV,RSV) or “follow” (NIV,CJB,CEV,ESV,GNT,NCV,WEB) that person. This relationship is inherent in the three questions Paul asks the Corinthians—questions that pinpoint **essential prerequisites** to being counted “of” someone. First, in order to be “of” someone, that someone must accordingly be qualified for others to follow him, devote themselves to him, and place themselves under his exclusive rule, Lordship, and control. That person must be “undivided.” To be undivided means that he must have no rivals (e.g., Paul, Apollos, etc.), or competing factions, he must be your sole Savior Who is singular, unique, and unsurpassed by all others. His followers constitute a single body, of which He is the only Head. Hence, the indivisible Christ makes no allowance for other heads, lords, or bodies. He possesses “right over all” (Alford, 2:477). Your loyalty must be directed to Christ alone. Second, that person must be **crucified** for you. Third, you must be **baptized into his name**. As discussed in the section on *onoma* (pp. 16ff.), to be baptized into the name entails submitting oneself to the authority of the one named, or as explained by John Locke, “to enter himself a Disciple of him into whose Name he was baptized, with Profession to receive his Doctrine and Rules, and **submit to his Authority**”—(1751), *A Paraphrase and Notes on the Epistles of St. Paul to the Galatians, I&II Corinthians, Romans, and Ephesians* (London: S. Birt, J. Walthoe, et al.), p. 94, emp. added. (Also Macknight, p. 144; Robertson, *Word Pictures*, 4:75).

In view of these realizations, three additional questions are in order: (1) Is Jesus’ unique, indivisible status (i.e., His divine identity) **essential** to salvation? Certainly. (2) Is Jesus’ crucifixion **essential** to salvation? Absolutely. (3) Is baptism in His name **essential** to salvation? If the answer to the first two questions is “yes,” the third must be as well. Since the text, by implication, answers all three of these questions in the affirmative, it further follows that a person is not “of Christ” unless and until he is baptized into His name. Baptism is **so** important to salvation, Paul was glad he had baptized so few, **so that he did not contribute to the division afflicting the Corinthian church**. Due to the divisive climate in the church at Corinth, Paul ran the risk of leaving the impression that

baptism was disconnected from salvation in Christ. As Willmarth explained: “lest the faith and reverence due to Christ might be ‘divided’—and a part transferred to the distinguished administrator” (p. 313). “We should note how inseparably connected in Paul’s thought were the sacrifice of the cross and the baptism which makes us partakers in its benefits”—J.W. McGarvey (1916), *Thessalonians, Corinthians, Galatians and Romans* (Cincinnati, OH: Standard), p. 54. Indeed, as Paul stressed later in the same epistle, the Corinthians had been **baptized** into one body—the **body of Christ** (12:13). Chapter 12:12 is a virtual commentary on the “schisms” (1:10—σχίσματα): “For as the body is one and has many members, but all the members of that one body, being many, are one body, so also is Christ.” Even as Christ is undivided, so His body (the church) is to be undivided. Far from minimizing the importance of baptism, or proving that baptism is unessential to salvation, quite the opposite is the case. 1 Corinthians 1:13 proves the **essentiality** of baptism. Without a divine Lord, His crucifixion, and water baptism, **there could be no Christians**. No one could be “of Christ.”

⁴⁸ A.T. Robertson (1930), *Word Pictures in the New Testament* (Nashville, TN: Broadman Press), 1:245, emp. added.

⁴⁹ Joseph Thayer (1977 reprint), *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker), p. 447, emp. added.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 94.

⁵¹ p. 301, italics in orig., emp. added.

⁵² H. Leo Boles (1952), *The Gospel According to Matthew* (Nashville, TN: Gospel Advocate), pp. 564-565, emp. added. See also Lange (1884), 1:557—“a baptism under **the authority of**, and unto **the authority of** the triune God.” Also G.G. Findlay (no date), *St. Paul’s First Epistle to the Corinthians in The Expositor’s Greek Testament*, ed. W. Robertson Nicoll (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans), p. 766—“‘The name’ connotes the nature and **authority** of the bearer.” For more discussion of the concept of authority, see Dave Miller (2012), *Surrendering to His Lordship* (Montgomery, AL: Apologetics Press).

⁵³ Sellers Crain (2011), *Truth for Today Commentary: Matthew 14-28* (Searcy, AR: Resource Publications), p. 484.

⁵⁴ F.F. Bruce (1963), *The Books and the Parchments* (Westwood, NJ: Fleming H. Revell), p. 66, emp. added.

⁵⁵ James Moulton and George Milligan (1930), *Vocabulary of the Greek New Testament Illustrated from the Papyri and Other Non-literary Sources* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1982 reprint), p. 451, first emp. in orig., second emp. added.

⁵⁶ Alexander Souter (1917), *A Pocket Lexicon to the Greek New Testament* (Oxford: Clarendon Press), p. 46. Souter served as

professor of New Testament Greek and Exegesis at Mansfield College, Oxford, and later succeeded William Ramsay as Regius Professor of Humanity at the University of Aberdeen. He published an edition of the New Testament Greek text on which the English Revised Version of 1881 was based (the British precursor to the ASV).

⁵⁷ Frederick Danker, rev. and ed. (2000), “ὄνομα,” *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and other Early Christian Literature* (Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press), p. 713.

⁵⁸ p. 645.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, emp. added.

⁶⁰ 3:146, emp. added.

⁶¹ p. 302, italics in orig., emp. added. Cf. David Schneider (2017), “Re-considering the Greek Preposition “EIS” in the Baptismal Theology of Matthew 28 and Romans 6,” *Concordia Theology*, <https://googl/6dDhgW>—“Baptized ‘into the name’ pictures the person being transferred from outside God’s name to inside the name—God’s family—with all of the family blessings and responsibilities.”

⁶² p. 323. Cf. Lars Hartman (2013), *Approaching New Testament Texts and Contexts: Collected Essays II* (Tubingen, Germany: Mohr Siebeck), pp. 145ff. See also Murray Harris (1978), “Prepositions and Theology in the Greek New Testament,” in Colin Brown, ed., *The New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan), 3:1209, who summarizes three views: “it may denote a transference of ownership” in which “the person being baptized passes into the possession of the Triune God,” or it can denote “to endow a person, through baptism, with the benefits of the salvation accomplished by Jesus Christ,” or “denoting the fundamental reference or purpose of some thing, rite or action.” Observe that all three of these views presuppose that baptism precedes salvation. Cf. Wilhelm Heitmüller (1903), *Im Namen Jesu* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht).

⁶³ J.W. McGarvey (1875), *The New Testament Commentary: Matthew and Mark* (Delight, AR: Gospel Light Publishing), p. 254, italics in orig., emp. added.

⁶⁴ G.R. Beasley-Murray (1966), *Baptism Today and Tomorrow* (New York: St. Martin’s Press), pp. 93-94.

⁶⁵ Adolf von Schlatter (1955), *The Church in the New Testament Period*, trans. Paul Levertoff (London: SPCK Publishing), p. 26.

⁶⁶ Johannes Lindblom believed that μαθητεύσατε (“make disciples”—DM) could just as rightly be rendered Χριστιανούς ποιήσατε (“make Christians”—DM) in (1919), *Jesu missions-och dopbefallning, Matt. 28:18-20, tillika en studie över det kristna dopets ursprung* (Stockholm: Svenska Kyrkans Diakonistyrelses Bokförlag), p. 132.

Mark 16:16



“Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned” (Mark 16:16, ESV).



Mark’s wording of what many call the Great Commission differs in wording but not in substance with Matthew’s (28:18-20) and Luke’s (24:46-47). Though Mark’s expression lies within a disputed section of Mark, it contains no doctrine that is not taught elsewhere in the New Testament.¹ In harmony with all other passages on baptism, Jesus specified in verse 16 the essentiality of both faith and water immersion as prerequisites to salvation. Consider the following linguistic observations on the Greek grammar of the verse that confirm this fact.

Greek Aorist Participles

Aorist participles ordinarily indicate action that is **antecedent** to the action of the leading verb. A host of Greek grammarians and scholars so affirm. For example, in his popular Greek grammar, J. Gresham Machen defines the use of the aorist participle: “In accordance with the principle...that the tense of the participle is relative to the time of the leading verb, the aorist participle denotes action **prior to the action denoted by the leading verb**, whether the action denoted by the leading verb is past, present or future.”² William Mounce explains: “Whereas the present participle indicates an action occurring at the same time as the main verb, the aorist participle generally indicates an action occurring **before the time of the main verb**.”³ Baptist grammarian Ray Summers stated: “The aorist participle indicates action which is **antecedent to the action of the main verb**.”⁴ In his *Short Grammar of the Greek New Testament*, A.T. Robertson stated: “The aorist participle does **not** express **subsequent** action.”⁵ In his massive *A Grammar of the Greek New Testament in the Light of Historical Research*,

Robertson again emphasized: “*Subsequent Action not Expressed by the Aorist Participle*. Some writers have held this as possible, though **no satisfactory examples have been adduced**.”⁶ Highly respected 19th century Greek scholar Raphael Kuhner explained: “The Aor. Part. **always** denotes past time, and hence stands in contrast with the Perf. Part., since the former describes an action as **absolutely past**.”⁷ Moulton was even more insistent. After noting that the aorist participle “naturally came to involve past time relative to that of the main verb,” he forcefully maintained that there is “**no evidence for that of subsequent action...either in the NT or outside**” and that subsequent action is “so flatly out of agreement with the normal use of the aorist participle that the possibility of it could only **introduce serious confusion into the language**.”⁸ Writing concerning the aorist participle in Acts 16:6, professor of New Testament Exegesis at the University of Zurich Paul Schmiedel observed: “[I]t has to be maintained that the participle must contain, if not something antecedent to ‘they went,’...at least something synchronous with it, **in no case a thing subsequent to it**, if all the rules of grammar and all sure understanding of language are not to be given up.”⁹ In his doctoral dissertation, Robison demonstrated that “[t]he aorist participle is not used in the Apostolic Fathers to express action **subsequent** to that of the principal verb.”¹⁰

The leading verb in Mark 16:16 is “will be saved” (*sothesetai*). Both “believes” (*pisteusas*) and “is baptized” (*baptistheis*) are aorist participles. Hence, both believing and being baptized are actions that **precede** salvation. In fact, according to the very precise Greek grammar that the Holy Spirit selected to report Christ’s declaration, both actions **must** precede the action of the leading verb and neither can express **subsequent** action. H.B. Swete was an English biblical scholar who became Regius Professor of Divinity at Cambridge, succeeding B.F. Westcott. In his commentary on the Greek text of Mark, Swete commented specifically on the aorist participles of Mark 16:16: “[T]he aorist participles describe acts which are **past** in relation to the time of the principal verb, for **both** the acceptance of the Gospel and the ministration of baptism **precede salvation**.”¹¹

Observe further that—based on the Greek—if a person insists that baptism **follows** forgiveness of sins, he must likewise

insist that **believing follows** forgiveness. On the other hand, if belief precedes salvation—so must baptism. The Greek will not allow a person to have one without the other, since **both** are aorist participles. Further, Ernest De Witt Burton, chief of the department of New Testament literature and interpretation at the University of Chicago, editor of the *American Journal of Theology*, and president of the University of Chicago, in his *Syntax of the Moods and Tenses in New Testament Greek*, insisted that the aorist participle would not be used “if the writer desires distinctly to indicate that the doer of the action will perform it in time **subsequent** to that of the principal verb, **the Aorist being incapable in itself of suggesting subsequence or futurity.**”¹² Hence, baptism must **precede—not follow**—being saved.

English Grammar

Apart from the Greek grammar of this passage, a careful examination of the English rendering of the Greek likewise confirms the same conclusion. See Appendix D. Mark 16:16 constitutes a declarative statement in which the pronoun “He” composes the simple subject, and “will be saved” (a future indicative passive verb) serves as the simple predicate. “Who” is a relative pronoun used to mark a relative, subordinate (in this case, restrictive) clause, having the same referent as the element of the main clause which it modifies. “Who” answers the question: who is the “he” that will be saved? “And” is a coordinating conjunction that links two or more items of equal grammatical status.¹³ Hence, “believes” and “is baptized” are co-equal in their standing in relation to the action of the main verb “will be saved.” Both belief and baptism share the precise same grammatical/syntactical status, making them equally necessary to be saved. Grammatically, if belief is required in this verse, so is baptism. If baptism is not required in this verse, neither is belief.

The second clause of the verse consists of the same simple subject pronoun “He.” The simple predicate “will be condemned” is a future tense verb. Once again, the relative pronoun “who” identifies the “who” that will be condemned: the one who does not believe.

The English reader may well question the omission of the necessity of baptism in the second clause and ask why only unbelief is mentioned as that which condemns. Indeed, the omission of baptism in the second clause is frequently used as justification for the claim that baptism is unessential to salvation.¹⁴ However, logically, the omission is to be expected since, in the words of Jesus, “He who does not believe **is condemned already**” (John 3:18). It would have been unnecessary and redundant for Jesus to also mention a failure to be baptized since belief and baptism do not occur simultaneously. That is, belief **precedes** baptism in actual sequence of time and action. Hence, if a person fails to believe, **he is unqualified to be baptized**. Baptizing an unbeliever is ineffectual—he must first believe. As Alford explained: “Unbelief...shall condemn a man, whether *baptized* or *unbaptized*.”¹⁵ It would be grammatically and logically superfluous to add the negation of baptism. Consider these grammatically parallel statements which illustrate the point:

- He who **enrolls** in school and **completes course requirements** will graduate with a diploma. He who does not **enroll** in school will remain uneducated.
- He who **consumes** food and **digests** it will live. He who does **not eat** will die.
- He who **signs a release** and **undergoes surgery** for the removal of cancer will live. He who does **not sign a release** will die.
- He who **picks up the water bucket** and **pours it on the flames** will quench the fire. He who does not pick up the bucket will burn to death.

There is no grammatical or logical reason to include the second requirement in the second clause in each of these examples. If a person refuses to enroll in school, he cannot complete course requirements. If a person refuses to eat, he cannot digest. If a person refuses to sign a surgical release, he cannot undergo surgery. If a person refuses to pick up the bucket of water, he cannot quench the fire. Swete agreed: “There is no need to repeat the reference to baptism: *apistas* carries with it the neglect of the sacrament of faith, but **in itself** it is sufficient to secure condemnation.”¹⁶ Bible scholar J.W. McGarvey cinched the point: “[T]he fact that baptism is not mentioned in stating

who shall be condemned, can never remove it from the place it occupies in stating who shall be saved.”¹⁷

Even a child can easily grasp the meaning of Mark 16:16, since theological bias and later teaching are responsible for much of the confusion in the religious world and the rejection of the clear meaning of the Bible. What child would question the necessity of performing both actions as prerequisites to receiving the reward in the following sentence?

- He who believes and is baptized will receive a bag of candy.

What adult would quibble with the wording or question the necessity of performing both actions as prerequisites to receiving the reward in the following sentence?

- He who believes and is baptized will receive \$10 million.

See the contrast between what **Jesus said** and what **men say** Jesus said in Appendix F. If Jesus wanted to communicate to us that a person must both believe and be baptized before that person can be saved, how else could Jesus have worded it—**other than the way He did?**

Conclusion

In order to be saved, Jesus said a person must both believe and be baptized before salvation is granted. The person who believes in Jesus and concludes that he is thereby saved, and then only submits to water baptism thinking he is **already** saved, is a person who has not complied with the instruction of Jesus. He has been baptized for a reason that differs from the one given by our Lord in this verse (cf. Acts 19:1-5). Both the Greek and English grammar of Mark 16:16 demonstrate that both belief and baptism precede salvation. A person is not saved until that person both believes and is baptized.

Endnotes

¹ For a discussion of the textual criticism surrounding the authenticity of the passage, see David Hester (2015), *Does Mark 16:9-20 Belong in the New Testament?* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock); Dave Miller (2005), “Is Mark 16:9-20 Inspired?” *Reason & Revelation*, 25[12]:89-95, <http://apologeticspress.org/apPubPage.aspx?pub=1&issue=572&article=433>; Dave Miller (2015), “The Strongest Argument Against Mark 16:9-20,” *Reason & Revelation*,

- 35[5]:50-51, <https://www.apologeticspress.org/APContent.aspx?category=13&article=5151&topic=103>.
- ² pp. 116-117, emp. added. "The Aorist Participle is most frequently used of an action antecedent in time to the action of the principal verb"—Burton, p. 63.
- ³ William Mounce (1993), *Basics of Biblical Greek* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan), p. 262, italics in orig., emp. added.
- ⁴ p. 89, emp. added. Also Smyth, p. 420.
- ⁵ 1909, p. 197, emp. added. Also Davis—"The aorist participle does not express subsequent action" (p. 104).
- ⁶ 1934, p. 861, italics in orig., emp. added.
- ⁷ Raphael Kuhner (1870), *An Elementary Grammar of the Greek Language* (New York: Ivison, Phinney, Blakeman & Co.), 20th edition, p. 202, emp. added.
- ⁸ 1906, pp. 130-131, 132, 133, emp. added.
- ⁹ Paul Schmiedel (1901), "Galatia," in *Encyclopaedia Biblica*, ed. T.K. Cheyne and J. Sutherland Black (New York: Macmillan), p. 1599, emp. added. See also Burton, p. 63. For more on the aorist participle and synchronous action, see Endnote 5 on pp. 69ff.
- ¹⁰ p. 517, emp. added.
- ¹¹ Henry Swete (1905), *The Gospel According to St. Mark* (London: Macmillan), pp. 404-405, emp. added. "The aorist participle never stands for the future participle"—Winer (1870), p. 431; and as Robertson notes, "so-called antecedent aorists do not have to precede the principle verb in position in the sentence" (1934, p. 860).
- ¹² p. 60, emp. added.
- ¹³ Ronald Carter and Michael McCarthy (2006), *Cambridge Grammar of English: A Comprehensive Guide* (New York: Cambridge University Press), p. 315.
- ¹⁴ A recent attempt to evade the force of Jesus' words has been to allege the existence of a so-called "negative inference fallacy." The claim is made that simply because Jesus said, "He who believes and is baptized will be saved," does not mean that those who are **not** baptized will be lost. To so insist would be to commit a logical fallacy by stating a "negative inference." But such thinking is a diversion that sidesteps the obvious import of Jesus' words. For Jesus to state unequivocally that those who believe and are baptized will be saved means that both belief and baptism are necessary to salvation. No further statement need be made to validate that necessity. It is not necessary for Jesus to tell us we will be lost for failing to do any number of things. All He needs to do is tell us **what to do to be saved**. If we do not do what He said to do to be saved, obviously, we won't be saved. It so happens, however, that the Bible states forthrightly that failure to be


baptized will cause one to be excluded from the kingdom (John 3:5; cf. Luke 7:30). Consider these parallel passages: (1) Romans 10:9-10 state the necessity of both faith and confession as prerequisites to salvation. But verse 10 attributes “shame” only to the one who does not believe, stated positively: “Whoever believes on Him will not be put to shame.” Does the fact that a failure to “confess” is not stipulated as a cause for “shame” mean that confession is not necessary to salvation? Of course not. The fact is that, like Mark 16:16, failure to perform the first prerequisite disqualifies the individual from performing the second (John 3:18); (2) 2 John 9 states: “Whoever transgresses and does not abide in the doctrine of Christ does not have God. He who abides in the doctrine of Christ has both the Father and the Son.” This verse parallels Mark 16:16 in reverse order. Stated positively: “He who **abides** in the doctrine of Christ has both the Father and the Son.” Stated negatively: “Whoever transgresses and **does not abide** in the doctrine of Christ does not have God.” It would have been unnecessary to state that failure to abide in Christ’s doctrine results in the absence of God. Merely stating the necessity of abiding in Christ’s doctrine in order to have the Father and Son is sufficient to establish the essentiality of abiding. Even so, stating the necessity of both belief and baptism in Mark 16:16 is sufficient to establish their essentiality to salvation. The Bible is filled with examples where God stipulates conditions that must be met **before** He imparts potential blessing. One instance is seen in Joshua 6 where the prerequisites stipulated by God for bringing down the walls of Jericho were (1) march around the city once a day for six days, (2) march around the city seven times on the seventh day, (3) the priests were to blow a long blast on their trumpets on the seventh day, (4) and then the people were to shout. Were all four of these actions necessary? Were all four of these actions **prerequisite** to the walls falling down? Did God or Joshua have to state that failure to comply with any one of these stipulations would result in a failure of the walls falling? The fact is that the omission of any one would have resulted in a failure to achieve the desired objective. Indeed, the so-called “negative inference fallacy” is completely irrelevant to the question of whether a person must be baptized before he can be saved. It is a distraction from what is obviously the case. If Jesus said a person must believe and be baptized to be saved, that settles it! What’s more, there are numerous **other** passages that assert the same necessity of water immersion. See also “Sharp’s Rule” in Appendix E.

¹⁵ 1:436, italics in orig.


¹⁶ p. 405, emp. added.

¹⁷ 1875, p. 374.

Acts 2:38



“And Peter said to them, ‘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’” (Acts 2:38, ESV).



Over the years, the meaning and application of Acts 2:38, as it relates to the necessity of water baptism, has long been a prominent point of contention between those who believe that water immersion precedes forgiveness of sin and those who do not. But, apart from the fact that the meaning of the passage in virtually every English translation is self-evident on the face of it, the Greek grammar is decisive in settling its import.

The Greek Preposition *Eis*

As briefly noted in the analysis of Matthew 28:19-20, the usual, normal import of *eis* with the accusative is prospective. [See Appendix G for a graphic showing the spatial import of New Testament Greek prepositions.] A host of Greek scholars so affirm. For example, in the widely acclaimed Greek lexicon most recently revised and edited by Frederick Danker, Acts 2:38 is cited as a passage where remission of sins is “the purpose given” for baptism, and the phrase properly means “for forgiveness of sins, so that sins might be forgiven.”¹ In his article appearing in *The Baptist Quarterly*, Baptist scholar J.W. Willmarth explains:

The radical signification of εἰς is **into the space within**. It is used to express motion or movement from without, terminating and resting within; and also, naturally, to express simply tendency towards, but towards the within,...but **always** with the idea of motion or tendency, literal or figurative, **from without to within**.²

Respected Greek scholar Raphael Kuhner notes that the preposition “denotes the *effect, consequence, result*, of the

action of the verb.”³ In his *A Grammar of the Idiom of the New Testament*, George Winer sites Acts 2:38 as an example where *eis* identifies “the purpose and end in view.”⁴ Heinrich Meyer indicated that “*eis* denotes the *object* of the baptism, which is the remission of the guilt contracted in the state before *metanoia* (“repentance”—DM).”⁵ Albrecht Oepke cites Acts 2:38 as a place where *eis* is used “to denote the aim sought and accomplished by baptism.”⁶ Indeed, “John baptizes, and Jesus sheds His blood, for the forgiveness of sins.”⁷ Linguistic authorities can be cited endlessly on this undeniable point of grammar.⁸ [See Appendix H for a comparison of how modern English translations show consistency and unanimity in their translation of *eis* in Acts 2:38. For a sampling of highly qualified modern specialists in the Greek language and their assessment of *eis* in Acts 2:38, see Appendix I.]

Nevertheless, despite this overwhelming solidarity, in more recent times some have alleged that the English preposition “for” in the phrase “for the remission of sins” (*eis aphesin ton hamartion*) means “because of.” They say baptism is performed because of sins already forgiven when they believed. The **English** word “for” certainly has as one of its meanings, in addition to a prospective thrust, the retrospective force of “because of.” As an example, a convict on death row may well be executed “for murder,” i.e., because of the murder he committed previously. He would not be executed in order for him to commit murder, but because he had already committed murder. Hence, it is argued, that a person is baptized—not in order to receive forgiveness of sins—but because he has already received remission of sins.

New Testament “Causal” Use?

Apart from the fact that the bulk of Greek scholarship for the past 2,000 years has not subscribed to this recent, novel notion, the validity of this line of thought is thwarted by the original language which the Holy Spirit selected to communicate His Word. The **Greek** preposition *eis* that underlies the English word “for” does not offer the same latitude inherent in the English word “for,” though some few grammarians have alleged a so-called occasional “causal” function of the preposition.⁹ The most prominent proponent of this allegation was Julius

Mantey who co-authored *A Manual Grammar of the Greek New Testament* with H.E. Dana first published in 1927.¹⁰ Mantey acknowledged that *eis* has as its root meanings “within, in” with the resultant meanings “into, unto, to, for”—meanings which he admitted are “very common”¹¹ (an understatement to be sure). Yet he went on to postulate a “remote meaning” of “because of”—even though he acknowledged that the expression in Acts 2:38 “**may mean** for the purpose of the remission of sins.”¹² Verses that he offered as “forceful evidence for a causal use of this preposition” are Matthew 12:41, Luke 12:32 (he meant Luke 11:32), and Matthew 3:11. Many years later, in an article he wrote in 1951, he claimed that “there are at least nine NT passages in which *eis* could reasonably be translated causal.”¹³ In addition to the three just noted, he included Matthew 14:31, Mark 15:34, Romans 4:20, Romans 11:32, Titus 3:14, and Hebrews 12:7. A careful examination of each of these alleged instances of a so-called “causal *eis*” quickly dispels the claim.

Matthew 3:11¹⁴

“I indeed baptize you with water unto [*eis*] repentance, but He who is coming after me is mightier than I, whose sandals I am not worthy to carry.” Mantey explained: “Did John baptize that they might repent, or because of repentance?”¹⁵ It is certainly true that John required repentance from individuals before he would baptize them. Repentance must precede baptism. However, before surrendering the integrity of the language by resorting to the fabrication of an imaginary meaning for a prevalent Greek preposition,¹⁶ why not consider carefully **what the Holy Spirit may have intended by His use of *eis*** in this verse? In what way could a person be baptized “into repentance”? The answer lies in the fact that he could be baptized **into the course of life demanded by the repentance**. No doubt a specie of the figure of speech known as Metonymy of the Cause in which “the organic cause or instrument is put for the thing effected by it,”¹⁷ “repentance” is explicitly mentioned in place of the lifestyle that would result from the repentance. The Greek word for “repentance” (*metanoia*) literally means “a change of mind.” Repentance in the New Testament refers to a change of mind that **inevitably results in a change of life**.¹⁸

This very point occurs in the context. John had just insisted that the Jewish authorities “bear fruits worthy of repentance” (vs. 8). Hence, calling upon them to be baptized “into repentance” would naturally be understood by them to mean that the baptism that John administered, though preceded by repentance, nevertheless, demanded that the one to be baptized understand that the lifestyle he would be required to live **following** his baptism would be one that exemplified **penitent living**.¹⁹ Otherwise, baptism would be superfluous. In fact, John **refused** to baptize those who did not demonstrate their intention to alter their lifestyle after their baptism (vss. 7ff.).

Matthew 12:41 and Luke 11:32

“The men of Nineveh will rise up in the judgment with this generation and condemn it, because they repented at [eis] the preaching of Jonah; and indeed a greater than Jonah is here.” The causal defender asks, “Did they repent **in order to** get Jonah to preach, or did they repent **because of** Jonah’s preaching?” Observe that Jesus here (and in the parallel in Luke 11:32) stressed the same teaching that John emphasized in Matthew 3:11. In both passages, the true import of the Bible doctrine of repentance is illustrated. God has never been pleased with mere good intentions. Mental intention is certainly necessary, but unless it is acted upon, it is of no spiritual value in God’s sight. Hence, even as John called upon his audience to repent (change their thinking), be baptized for the remission of sins, and then conduct themselves in harmony with their intentions, so Jesus spotlighted the behavior of the Ninevites as an example to place before essentially the same audience that John addressed: the Pharisees.

Jonah preached a succinct, simple, but demanding message to pagan Gentiles. What was the result? Did they offer mere oral platitudes that paid lip service to religion—like the Pharisees? No, they truly repented. But, apart from Jesus informing us of their repentance, how do we know they repented, seeing that the Bible terms for repentance are not used in the Jonah account to describe their response?²⁰ Because we are informed what, precisely, they **did** after hearing Jonah’s preaching: they proclaimed a fast, put on sackcloth, the king covered himself in sackcloth, sat in ashes, and sent forth a

decree to all the Ninevites requiring abstinence from food and drink, and made loud entreaties to God. Verse 10 summarizes: “Then God saw their works, that they turned from their evil way; and God relented from the disaster that He had said He would bring upon them, and He did not do it.” Observe that their post-repentance activities are stylized “works” and that these extensive enactments were evidence of their repentance. Hence, they “repented **into** the preaching of Jonah.” Having been convinced by Jonah’s preaching to the point that they changed their thinking (i.e., repented), they then coupled their repentance with genuine compliance with the demands that Jonah laid before them.²¹ As McGarvey noted: “their repentance...brought them into the condition which the preaching demanded.”²²

Matthew 14:31

“And immediately Jesus stretched out His hand and caught him, and said to him, ‘O you of little faith, why (*eis*) did you doubt?’” The advocate of a causal *eis* naturally asks: Did Peter sink in order to doubt, or did he sink **because of** his doubt? It is true that Peter’s doubt preceded his sinking. But, once again, the biased mind is missing the rich tenor of what Jesus impressed upon Peter by His penetrating question—which Matthew relates to us using the linguistic precision characteristic of the Greek language in general, and the Greek preposition in particular. Look carefully at Jesus’ question: εἰς τί ἐδίστασας = literally, “into what you doubted?”²³ Allowing the normal meaning of the preposition to express itself yields Jesus’ pungent meaning: “Peter, what did you hope to gain by your action? What did you think would be the outcome of your hesitation to trust Me? Where would it lead you and how would it end?” Jesus was not quizzing Peter about the **cause** of his doubt, but the **outcome** of his doubt. Jesus could not have been asking Peter the cause of his doubt—since He explicitly identified the cause: “little faith.” Rather, He was pressing Peter to contemplate the negative **result** that would ensue from his doubt: how could his doubt enable him to accomplish his intended **purpose** of walking on the water? There is no “causal” *eis* in this verse.

Mark 15:34

“And at the ninth hour Jesus cried out with a loud voice, saying, ‘Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani?’ which is translated, ‘My God, My God, why (*eis ti*) have You forsaken Me?’” Mantey explains the meaning of Jesus’ words as “Why (or, *because of* what) have you forsaken me?”²⁴ Yet, similar to Matthew 14:31, in this verse Jesus again used the interrogative pronoun *ti* following *eis*—literally “into what?” Once again, Mantey misses the significance of the query. In literally quoting Psalm 22:1, Jesus was calling attention to the goal, purpose, outcome of His incredible sacrifice. “Into what have you forsaken me?” refers to the destination to which Jesus’ suffering was taking Him. He endured the cross **in order to achieve** remission/atonement.

Romans 4:20

“He did not waver at (*eis*) the promise of God through unbelief, but was strengthened in faith, giving glory to God.” Mantey asserts that this passage ought to be translated: “but because of the promise of God he did not waver in unbelief.”²⁵ However, once again, no justification exists for such a strained interpretation when the normal force of the preposition clarifies the intended meaning. The passage is not assigning the reason that Abraham did not waver in unbelief to the promise of God. Rather, Paul indicated that Abraham was looking intently toward the fulfillment of God’s promise with complete expectation.

Fulfillment of the promise of God was yet future. To that promise Abraham looked forward, allowing it to serve as a catalyst for maintaining his confidence that God would eventually “perform” (vs. 21) His stated will. The characteristic literalness of the ASV comes closer to capturing the richness of the preposition with its rendering: “yet, looking **unto** (*eis*) the promise of God, he wavered not through unbelief, but waxed strong through faith, giving glory to God.” Abraham was not looking backwards to the time that God made the promise. Rather, he was looking forward to the promised outcome of his faith.

Romans 11:32

“For God has committed them all to (*eis*) disobedience, that He might have mercy on all.” In this verse, which ends Paul’s argumentation regarding his theme—the Gospel is God’s

power to save people—(which began in 1:16-17), he notes that God **counts** (“committed,” NKJV; “shut up,” ASV; “consigned,” ESV) all as disobedient, referring to the sinful status that God assigns to all men. God considers them all to be within (into) a disobedient condition—a spiritual condition into which they have plunged themselves. God reckons them, or places them in His own mind, **into** the realm or prison of disobedience and lostness. No causal sense here either.

Titus 3:14

“And let our people also learn to maintain good works, to meet (*eis*) urgent needs, that they may not be unfruitful.” This verse is not referring to past “urgent needs” as if it should be translated “because of urgent needs.” Rather, it is looking forward to (*eis*-into) future needs. Use of the word “meet” in the NKJV and NASB underscores this meaning. In fact, the NIV renders it “**in order that** they may provide for” and the RSV has “**so as to help** cases of urgent need.” Both show the usual prospective thrust of the preposition.

Hebrews 12:7

“If you endure chastening, God deals with you as with sons.” The English reader will not easily recognize the occurrence of *eis* in the NKJV rendering (where “if” is a textual variant). The original consists of three words, *eis maideian hupomenete*, which literally means “into chastisement you endure.” The writer does not mean to say, “**because of** chastisement you endure.” The NASB captures the prospective thrust of the preposition with its rendering: “It is for (*eis*) discipline that you endure” (also ESV and RSV). The persecution that the Christians were enduring was that **into** which they had been plunged in order to chastise them. The word “chastisement” refers to the training, correction, discipline, and nurturing that is necessary to fashion fit servants of God—individuals equipped and prepared for holy living. All Christians are called upon to endure, persevere, bear up under, and learn from the hardship and suffering into which they will inevitably be thrust. If they do not endure, they are illegitimate (vs. 8). Once again, the normal, usual import of *eis* yields a richly meaningful admonition.

Summary

Observe that in each of these instances of an alleged “causal” *eis*, by retaining the normal, usual thrust of the Greek preposition, a meaning rises from the text that is richer, more vivid, and more instructive than could possibly be conveyed by a so-called “causal” use. Indeed, the original Greek readers would have so understood the import of the preposition. The fact is that *eis* **never** has a causal, or retrospective, function.²⁶ Rather, it always has a **prospective** thrust. The equivalent English term is “into.” It always has its primary, basic, accusative thrust: unto (archaic), into, to, toward, in the direction of.²⁷ This is the natural and normal meaning of the Greek preposition. In his *Handbook to the Grammar of the Greek Testament*, Baptist minister and bibliophile, president of the Baptist Union at Portsmouth, England, having received his D.D. from the University of St. Andrews, Samuel Green defines the prepositional direction of *eis* as “to the interior” and gives the following eight meanings: “(1) of place, *into*; (2) *unto*, *to*; (3) *towards*, *against*; (4) *in order to*, *for*; (5) *into*, a state; (6) *for*, *as*, of equivalence; (7) of time, *during*, or *up to*; (8) ‘constructio praegnans.’”²⁸ No “causal” use is given. Such is the case with the vast majority of grammarians.²⁹ Indeed, when A.T. Robertson gave wholehearted endorsement to a prospective *eis* in Matthew 26:28 while inconsistently claiming the same use in Acts 2:38 “remains a matter for the interpreter to decide,”³⁰ prominent Greek lexicographer Frederick Danker laid bare the linguistic duplicity: “Why these latter passages, but not Matthew 26:28, should be left to the mercy of the interpreter is not discussed.”³¹

“Causal” Use Outside the New Testament?

Interestingly, in the first of two articles written by Mantey appearing in the *Journal of Biblical Literature*, Mantey began the first article by boldly conceding: “None of the Greek lexicons translate *eis* as causal. And the only Greek grammar that does, as far as we know, is *A Manual Grammar of the Greek New Testament*.”³² Of course, the sole grammar to which he referred is the one that Mantey himself co-authored with H.E. Dana. Despite this telling admission, Mantey nevertheless

attempted to bolster his stance by insisting that the “causal” use of *eis* is not only verifiable from the nine New Testament passages that he championed (which we just examined), but that instances of the same usage are discernible in Hellenistic Greek literature, specifically the writings of Polybius and Josephus. However, Ralph Marcus took Mantey to task by respectfully but firmly insisting: “I must state flatly that he has been mistaken in his construing and rendering of all these passages.”³³ Marcus then analyzed the instances set forth by Mantey in order to demonstrate their true linguistic import. His analysis carries significant scholarly credibility since, at the time, Marcus served as professor of Hellenistic Culture at the University of Chicago, and as a faculty member in the Department of Oriental Languages and Literatures, Classics, and the Federated Theological Faculty. Mantey’s rebuttal to Marcus offered additional alleged instances of a “causal” sense in Hellenistic Greek.³⁴ Marcus then offered in another article a thorough and convincing rebuttal of each instance cited by Mantey and concluded:

Prof. Mantey has been so intent upon showing that his interpretation of *εἰς* in this and other NT passages is supported by examples of causal *εἰς* in non-biblical Greek that he has (unwittingly) misconstrued the non-biblical passages. He has also, I think, confused cause with purpose. It is quite possible that *εἰς* is used causally in these NT passages but the examples of causal *εἰς* cited from non-biblical Greek contribute **absolutely nothing** to making this possibility a probability. If, therefore, Prof. Mantey is right in his interpretation of various NT passages on baptism and repentance and the remission of sins, he is right for reasons that are **non-linguistic**.³⁵

Had the Holy Spirit intended to say that baptism is “because of” or “on account of” past forgiveness, **He could have used the Greek preposition that conveys that very idea: *dia*** with the accusative. We must not go to the text, decide what we think it means, and assign a grammatical meaning that coincides with our preconceived theology—an “unnatural and unauthorized meaning.”³⁶ We must begin with the grammar and seek to understand every text in light of the normal, natural, ordinary meaning of the grammatical and lexical constructions chosen by the Holy Spirit—and then bring our theology into line with

God’s Word. Davis and Willmarth provide a fitting summary of the evidence for an alleged “causal” *eis*:

A study of standard Greek lexicons, dictionaries, and grammars of the past two hundred years from throughout the entire theological spectrum shows, on the one hand, that “causal” *eis* in Acts 2:38 is without a real grammatical foundation and, on the other hand, “purposive” *eis* in Acts 2:38 is firmly established.... Therefore, the whole case for “causal” (*eis*) in Acts 2:38 and baptism “because of the forgiveness of sins” is left without real foundation either in Greek grammar or biblical theology.³⁷ Such methods of interpretation are unworthy of Christian scholars.³⁸

A Precise Syntactical Parallel:
Matthew 26:28

A decisive, conclusive blow is dealt to the causal quibble by examining Matthew 26:28 where virtually the same grammatical construction as Acts 2:38 is found. On the occasion of the institution of the Lord’s Supper before Jesus’ death, He urged the disciples to partake of the fruit of the vine with this admonition: “For this is My blood...which is shed for many **for the remission of sins.**” Placing the two verses in juxtaposition with each other shows the obvious congruity:

Matthew 26:28	<i>eis aphesin hamartion</i>	“into remission of sins”
Acts 2:38	<i>eis aphesin ton hamartion humon</i>	“into remission of the sins of you”

Jesus’ blood, the blood of the covenant, was undeniably shed for many “in order to acquire remission of sins.” This is the natural and normal meaning of the Greek preposition—toward, in the direction of, into. Jesus did **not** shed His blood **because** remission had already been achieved. He shed His blood in order to achieve/accomplish remission of sins.

Observe further regarding Acts 2:38, if repentance is not “because of” remission of sins, neither is baptism. Peter told his hearers to do both things. The act of baptism (connected to the act of repentance by the coordinate conjunction) cannot be extricated from the context of remission of sins on the basis of linguistic considerations.

Agreement in Person and Number

In addition to the “causal” quibble, some have insisted that baptism is not for the remission of sins in view of the fact that Peter’s declaration makes a grammatical distinction between person and number. The command to “repent” is a second person plural verb, whereas the verb “be baptized” is third person singular. These two commands are followed by the prepositional phrase “for the remission of (your) sins.” The claim is made that due to the fact that the two verbs differ with each other in terms of person and number, they cannot both be modified by the same prepositional phrase. They further contend that the prepositional phrase modifies the first verb (“repent”)—not the second verb (“be baptized”). They then conclude that Peter commanded all the people on that occasion to repent of their sins in order to be forgiven of sins. Then they were to be baptized after their forgiveness as a post-conversion action. Observe that this allegation assumes that *eis* in the phrase “for the remission of sins” is not “causal.” The point of the allegation is to make repentance both necessary to and preceding forgiveness, while baptism is not necessary to and follows forgiveness.

PERSON	NUMBER	
	Singular	Plural
1st	I	we
2nd	you/thou	you/ye
3rd	he/she/it	they

The fact is that, in both English and Greek, it is perfectly acceptable for a prepositional phrase (in this case, “for the remission of sins”) to modify the two verbs in the sentence, though the verbs differ with each other in number and person. Here are two English examples:

1. The preacher announces to the visitors in the worship assembly: “Please remain (**2nd person plural**) after our worship service and let each one of you retire (**3rd person singular**) to our multipurpose room for (preposition—in order to) the enjoyment of your (**2nd person plural**) meal we have prepared.
2. A mother addresses her three children who have been playing in the sprinkler: “All of you go (**2nd person plural**) into the house, remove (**2nd person plural**) your wet clothes, and each one of you put (**3rd person singular**) your wet clothes in the laundry room in order to (preposition) receive your (**2nd person plural**) cookie.”

Observe that in the first example, the prepositional phrase is attached to **both** prerequisites—remaining after the service (i.e., not leaving the premises) as well as moving from the auditorium to the downstairs multipurpose room where the food is to be served. In the second example, in order to receive the cookie, the children must perform three actions: (1) enter the house, (2) remove their wet clothes, and (3) place the clothes in the laundry room. All three imperative verbs—though they differ in person and number—are modified by the same prepositional phrase “in order to receive your³⁹ cookie.” The important point to grasp as regards Acts 2:38 is that precisely the same audience may be addressed by a speaker though person and number changes in the verbs are utilized, and followed by a modifying preposition phrase.

Are there instances in the Greek of this grammatical construction in which the speaker addresses the same group of people using two or more verbs that change person and number? Instances are abundant in the New Testament as well as the Greek Old Testament (Septuagint). Here are examples in both the New Testament and Old Testament:⁴⁰

1. 1 Corinthians 16:1-2

“Now concerning the collection for the saints, as I have given orders to the churches of Galatia, so you (**2nd person plural**) must do also: On the first day of the week let each one of you (**3rd person singular**) lay something aside, storing up as he may prosper).”

2. Acts 3:26

“To you (**2nd person plural**) first, God, having raised up His Servant Jesus, sent Him to bless you (**2nd person plural**), in turning away every one of you (**3rd person singular**) from (**preposition**) your iniquities.”

3. 1 Thessalonians 4:3-4

“...you should abstain (**2nd person plural**) from sexual immorality; that each of you should know (**3rd person singular**) how to possess his own vessel in (**preposition**) sanctification and honor.”

4. Exodus 16:29

“Let every man remain (**2nd person plural imperative**) in his place; let no man (**3rd person singular imperative**) go out of his place on the seventh day.”

5. Joshua 6:10

“Now Joshua had commanded the people, saying, ‘You shall not shout (**2nd person plural imperative**) or make any noise with your voice (**3rd person singular imperative**).”

6. 2 Kings 10:19

“Now therefore, call (**2nd person plural imperative**) to me all the prophets of Baal, all his servants, and all his priests. Let no one be missing (**3rd person singular imperative**), for I have a great sacrifice for Baal.”

There is absolutely no syntactical justification for claiming that the 2nd person plural imperative and the 3rd person singular imperative cannot refer to the same subject. The feature is a normal idiomatic usage that is common in Greek. Some grammarians refer to it as the “distributive imperatival usage.”⁴¹ The point of this rhetorical device is that, in addition to admonishing or commanding as a collective whole the entire group that is being addressed, added emphasis is being given to stress that the command applies to each and every individual within the group.⁴²

Many renowned denominational grammarians and lexicographers have acknowledged the above facts. Some examples: Baptist Greek scholar A.T. Robertson notes several idiomatic Greek uses in which agreement in person and number does not exist between subject and verb.⁴³ Many others have done the same over the years. Referring to the prepositional phrase “for the forgiveness of sins,” famed Baptist Greek scholar H.B. Hackett stated: “we connect naturally with both the preceding verbs. This clause states the motive or object which should induce them to repent and be baptized. It enforces the entire exhortation, not one part of it to the exclusion of the other.”⁴⁴ Further, Liddell notes that in regard to the word *hekastos* (“each one”), “the singular from its collective sense is frequently joined with a plural Verb.”⁴⁵ Thayer agrees.⁴⁶ Yale Greek professor James Hadley astutely addressed the very features of grammar that occur in Acts 2:38—

With two or more subjects connected by *and*, the verb is in the plural. If the subjects are of different persons, the verb is in the first person rather than the second or third, and in the second person rather than the third.... A collective subject denoting *persons*, may have its verb in the *plural*.... Such words as ἕκαστος *each*,...may have the construction of collectives.⁴⁷

In addition to noting lengthy lists of Greek authorities who have weighed in on the point of grammar as to whether the phrase “for the remission of sins” is to be construed with both verbs, J.W. Roberts, who received his Ph.D. in Classical Languages from the University of Texas, summarized:

There is no grammatical or logical impossibility, despite the difference in person and number of the verbs, in the expression “for the remission of sins” referring to the actions of both verbs.... Taken in the plain and simple statement of its context, it can mean only that Peter promised remission or forgiveness of sins to those who would repent and be baptized. Surely it must be hard for those who are set against this simple fact to “kick against the pricks.”⁴⁸

[NOTE: For a listing of modern specialists in the Greek language and their assessment of person and number in Acts 2:38, see Appendix I. See also the comparison chart showing concurrence between Acts 2:21, 2:38, and 3:19 in Appendix J.]

Conclusion

Acts 2:38 is hardly a difficult verse to understand. It is only made so by those with an agenda—a bias that forces them to harmonize the verse with their theological preconceptions. A simple reading of the verse in virtually any English translation makes clear the originally intended meaning. This fact remains unobscured by all the technical grammatical and syntactical contortions. After reading the verse, even a child can see that in order to receive the remission of sins, a person must both repent and be baptized.⁴⁹

Endnotes

¹ Danker, pp. 164,290.

² 11:298.

³ 1870, p. 220, italics in orig.

⁴ George Winer (1869), *A Grammar of the Idiom of the New Testament* (Andover: Warren Draper), p. 397; cf. p. 360—“of (direction) motion *towards* a point: *into* εἰς, *towards*”; p. 361—“*Design* and *aim* expressed by *to* are denoted by...εἰς or πρὸς with the Acc.”; p. 396—“Εἰς...used tropically, of *ideal* relations, it denotes any *aim* or *end*.” Also his 1840 work *A Grammar of the Idioms of the Greek Language* (Philadelphia, PA: Herman Hooker), p. 317,

where he lists Acts 2:38 as an instance where *eis* means “of the aim and purpose.”

⁵ Heinrich Meyer (1877), *Critical and Exegetical Handbook to the Acts of the Apostles* (Edinburgh: T.&T. Clark), 1:93.

⁶ Albrecht Oepke (1964), “βάπτω, βαπτίζω” *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, ed. Gerhard Kittel, trans. Geoffrey Bromiley (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans), 1:539.

⁷ Albrecht Oepke (1964), “εἰς” *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, ed. Gerhard Kittel, trans. Geoffrey Bromiley (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans), 2:429.

⁸ E.g., longtime professor of the Greek language and literature at Dartmouth, Alpheus Crosby (1871), *A Compendious Grammar of the Greek Language* (New York: Woolworth, Ainsworth, & Co.), pp. 323—“INTO the space within”; R.C.H. Lenski (1961), *The Interpretation of the Acts of the Apostles* (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg), pp. 106-108; Thayer, p. 94—“εἰς, to mark the element into which the immersion is made.... εἰς ἄφεσιν ἁμαρτιῶν, to obtain the forgiveness of sins, Acts ii.38”; Moule lists Acts 2:38 and Mark 1:4 as instances where *eis* means *with a view to*, or *resulting in* (p. 70); Spicq refers to the baptism of Mark 1:4 as “a bath of conversion,” explaining: “Water baptism is a means of realizing this conversion, and its goal—something altogether new—is a washing, ‘the remission of sins’”—Ceslas Spicq (1994), *Theological Lexicon of the New Testament* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson), 1:242; Hermann Cremer noted that “we must understand **a washing whose design**, like that of the theocratic washings and purifications, was *to purge away sin* from him on whom it was performed,” and that the baptism of John and Christian baptism “both aim at the (remission of sins)” (p. 127), with *eis* in Acts 2:38 indicating “the *relation* into which the baptized were placed” (p. 128)—(1895), *Biblico-Theological Lexicon of New Testament Greek* (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons), emp. and italics in orig.; et al.

⁹ Well-known and respected for his Greek linguistics, George Winer bemoaned the all-too-often maltreatment by philologists of the New Testament’s use of prepositions by assigning them a wider latitude than the language of the original writers permits. Hence, he insisted: “In treating of prepositions it is necessary, in the first place, **to seize with clearness and precision the true primary meaning of each from which all its applications emanate as from a common centre**, and **to trace back to this** all the various shades of meaning the preposition may have assumed” (p. 359). Observe that an alleged “causal” *eis* completely abandons the “true primary meaning” and “common center” of the Greek preposition.

- ¹⁰ A Baptist seminarian who later defended the same contention was Ray Summers who served as a professor of New Testament and Greek at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, and later served as Chairman of the Religion Department at Baylor University. See his 1948 article “The Retrospective Use of the Greek Preposition ‘EIS,’” in the SBTS school publication *Southwestern News*, 6:4, January. The article was meticulously and soundly refuted in two articles written by G.C. Brewer (1949), “The Retrospective Use of the Greek Preposition ‘Eis,’” and “Dr. Summers and the Preposition ‘Eis,’ Again,” *Gospel Advocate*, 91:291-292, May 12 and 91:516-517, August 18.
- ¹¹ H.E. Dana and Julius Mantey (1927), *A Manual Grammar of the Greek New Testament* (Toronto, Canada: MacMillan), p. 103.
- ¹² *Ibid.*, p. 104.
- ¹³ J.R. Mantey (1951), “The Causal Use of *Eis* in the New Testament,” *Journal of Biblical Literature*, 70[1]:45-48, March, p. 46.
- ¹⁴ Cremer insisted that expressions pertaining to remission of sins in Matthew 3:11, Mark 1:4, and Acts 2:38 are essentially equivalent expressions and that baptism “was in all cases **a washing unto purification from sin**” (pp. 127-128).
- ¹⁵ 1951, p. 104.
- ¹⁶ Since *eis* occurs over 1,700 times in the Greek New Testament (see Murray J. Harris [2012], *Prepositions and Theology in the Greek New Testament: An Essential Reference Resource for Exegesis* [Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan], p. 32, who notes 1,768 occurrences of *eis* in the New Testament), and always with the accusative case, one would think that a person would tread lightly before postulating a mere handful of alleged exceptional instances where the thrust is supposedly retrospective rather than its usual prospective import—especially so when every single one of the alleged “causal” uses can be understood to have their normal prospective meaning. Grasping for some other explanation, without clear grammatical precedent, surely arises from theological bias—to which A.T. Robertson essentially fell prey (1934, pp. 389,592,595). See the convincing analysis of Robertson’s vacillation in Frank Van Dyke (1948), “The Design of Baptism,” *Gospel Advocate*, pp. 122-123, February 5.
- ¹⁷ See, for example, E.W. Bullinger (1968 reprint), *Figures of Speech Used in the Bible* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker), p. 545.
- ¹⁸ See the parallel term *metamelomai* in Matthew 21:29 and 2 Corinthians 7:8. Compare Judas’ behavior: “When Judas, his betrayer, saw that he was condemned, he **repented and brought back the thirty pieces of silver** to the chief priests and the elders” (Matthew 27:3, RSV). Using the idiomatic language of Matthew 3:11, one

could say that Judas “**returned** to the chief priests and elders **into repentance**,” that is, seeing Jesus unjustly condemned due to his own role in the plot, Judas repented/changed his mind, and then he acted in harmony with that change by going back to the Jewish leaders and returning the money—the fruits of his repentance.

¹⁹ Paul declared the same necessity to King Agrippa, noting how he preached to the Gentiles “that they should repent, turn to God, and **do works befitting repentance**” (Acts 26:20). As Spicq explains: “the good works are carried out in the desire to set past offenses aright and live better. John’s baptism ‘by repentance’ is received with feelings of contrition **in preparation for the remission of sins** (Matt 3:11)—1:242. Willmarth explained: “Those baptized by John were indeed required to repent, but **also to stand pledged unto repentance, thenceforward to have a changed heart and life...**present as well as **prospective** repentance being required” (p. 308, italics in orig.).

²⁰ The verb *metanoeo* (to repent) is used twice in the context in the LXX to refer—not to the Ninevites’ repentance—but to God’s change of mind regarding His intention to punish the Ninevites (3:9-10). On the other hand, the term used three times in Jonah 3:8-10 (*apostrepho*) means “to turn away” and is used to refer both to God turning away from His anger and the Ninevites turning away from their evil.

²¹ G.C. Brewer (1955), *Contending for the Faith* (Nashville, TN: Gospel Advocate), p. 162—“it means that they repented *into* the preaching of Jonah—that is, into that state or condition required by the preaching of Jonah” (italics in orig.). Or as Baptist scholar J.W. Willmarth noted: “the idea is the direction of the mind of the hearer to the preaching” (p. 298).

²² 1875, p. 113.

²³ τί is an interrogative pronoun meaning “What?” and ἐδίστασας is a second person singular aorist active indicative verb from διστάζω which means “to doubt, waver, hesitate.” Robertson notes that in Matthew 14:31 “purpose again is expressed by εἰς τί”—1934, p. 739. Observe: purpose—not cause.

²⁴ 1951, p. 46.

²⁵ Dana and Mantey (1927), p. 104.

²⁶ “*Eis* never has the retrospective sense; it never looks backward—never”—Brewer, “Retrospective,” p. 292.

²⁷ “The preposition εἰς, meaning *into*...always takes the accusative... the case of *motion toward* a place”—Machen (1923), p. 40, italics in orig.

²⁸ pp. 242-245, italics in orig. Also Wallace, *Grammar*, p. 369.

- ²⁹ E.g., Goodwin, *Grammar*, p. 256; Liddell and Scott note four basic uses of *eis*, but “causal” is not among them—Henry Liddell and Robert Scott (1996), *A Greek-English Lexicon* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, revised), p. 491; Moulton and Milligan, pp. 186-187; Perschbacher, pp. 120-121; William Mounce (2006), *Complete Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan), p. 1133.
- ³⁰ 1934, p. 595.
- ³¹ Frederick W. Danker (1993), *Multipurpose Tools for Bible Study* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press), p. 146.
- ³² 1951, 70[1]:45.
- ³³ Ralph Marcus (1951), “On Causal *Eis*,” *Journal of Biblical Literature*, 70[2]:129, June.
- ³⁴ J.R. Mantey (1951), “On Causal *Eis* Again,” *Journal of Biblical Literature*, 70[4]:309-311, December.
- ³⁵ Ralph Marcus (1952), “The Elusive Causal *Eis*,” *Journal of Biblical Literature*, 71[1]:44, March, *emp. added*. Harris agreed: “Mantey has not adduced any convincing example from extra-biblical Hel. Gk.”—“Prepositions,” 3:1187,1208. Also Wallace: “Marcus ably demonstrated that the linguistic evidence for a causal *εἰς* fell short of proof” (*Grammar*, p. 370).
- ³⁶ Willmarth, p. 306.
- ³⁷ J.C. Davis (1981), “Another Look at the Relationship Between Baptism and Forgiveness of Sins in Acts 2:38,” *Restoration Quarterly*, 24[2]:88.
- ³⁸ Willmarth, p. 304.
- ³⁹ In his 1996 article “Baptism and Forgiveness in Acts 2:38,” *Bibliotheca Sacra*, 153:53-62, January-March, Luther McIntyre Jr. argued that “your” in the prepositional phrase (though a textual variant) “for the remission of your sins” is a 2nd person plural genitive and therefore “the concord between verb and pronoun requires that the remission of sins be connected with repentance, not with baptism” (p. 55). Yet the use of “your” in this example demonstrates that the 2nd person plural pronoun refers to all the children and is associated with all three verbs.
- ⁴⁰ My thanks to Kippy Myers for his scriptural examples in Kippy Myers (1983), “Person and Number in Acts 2:38,” *Gospel Advocate*, 652, November 3.
- ⁴¹ “In this distributive imperatival usage, the speaker attaches such tremendous importance to the command that he makes it clear with the third person singular imperative that not a single member of the group is exempt”—Carroll Osburn (1983), “The Third Person Imperative in Acts 2:38,” *Restoration Quarterly*, 26[2]:83.

⁴² See also Zechariah 7:10. Osburn notes instances of the same idiomatic usage in apocryphal literature and the apostolic fathers (p. 84).

⁴³ 1934, pp. 403ff.

⁴⁴ H.B. Hackett (1870), *A Commentary on the Original Text of the Acts of the Apostles* (Boston, MA: Gould & Lincoln), p. 69.

⁴⁵ Henry Liddell (1889), *A Lexicon* (Boston, MA: Ginn & Co.), p. 203.


⁴⁶ p. 192.

⁴⁷ p. 204, italics in orig.


⁴⁸ J.W. Roberts (1948), "Acts 2:38—A Study in Syntax," *Gospel Advocate*, July 22, pp. 704,705. See the lengthy listings of Greek scholars in bygone times who stated emphatically the fallacious nature of this attempt to avoid the force of the plain language of Scripture, provided in: J.B. Briney (1891), "Baptism: Its Action, Subject, and Import," in *The Old Faith Restated*, ed. James Garrison (St. Louis, MO: Christian Publishing Co.), pp. 223-227; J.W. Shepherd (1972 reprint), *Handbook on Baptism* (Nashville, TN: Gospel Advocate), pp. 339ff.; L.B. Wilkes (1895), *Designs of Christian Baptism* (Louisville, KY: Guide Printing and Publishing), pp. 184-193.

⁴⁹ A discussion of the "gift of the Holy Spirit" is beyond the purview of this book. However, a brief word regarding the reception of the Spirit by Cornelius in Acts 10 is in order. Some allege that baptism is nonessential since Cornelius received the Spirit before his baptism. The fact is that the reception of the Spirit by Cornelius **had nothing to do with his salvation**. Rather, it was a divine demonstration to the Jews that Gentiles were fit candidates for salvation. Peter recounted the episode in chapter 11 which, unlike chapter 10, reports the events "in sequence" (καθεξῆς—Danker, p. 490; "in order," ESV, vs. 4; cf. Luke 1:3). Peter was **just beginning** to tell them what to do to be saved when he was interrupted by God baptizing the Gentiles in the Holy Spirit (11:15). The term "began" (ᾠξασθαι) means "to **initiate** an action," "to denote what one **begins** to do" (Danker, p. 140). It "indicates that a thing was but **just begun when it was interrupted** by something else" (Thayer, p. 78). So they had not yet heard "words by which you and all your household will be saved" (11:14). Hence, they were still **unbelievers**—since faith comes by hearing God's words (Romans 10:17). God put His miraculous stamp of approval on the Gentiles as fit recipients of the Gospel, convincing the Jews of Gentile eligibility to enter the kingdom. Peter put closure on the entire incident by declaring: "'Can anyone forbid water....'" (Acts 10:47-48). He did not say, "Can anyone forbid these to accept Jesus as their personal Savior?" Water baptism is so important that Peter immediately called for its implementation as the culminating act of conversion.

Acts 16:34



“And he brought them out and said, ‘Sirs, what must I do to be saved?’ So they said, ‘Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved, you and your household.’ Then they spoke the word of the Lord to him and to all who were in his house. And he took them the same hour of the night and washed their stripes. And immediately he and all his family were baptized. Now when he had brought them into his house, he set food before them; and he rejoiced, having believed in God with all his household” (Acts 16:30-34).



This passage is frequently cited as “proof” that forgiveness of sin by the blood of Christ is achieved at the very moment a person “believes.” “Believe” is then defined as a person mentally “accepting” Christ as Lord and Savior. However, a careful study of the entire account of the conversion of the Roman jailer in Philippi, keeping in mind the Greek, yields quite a different conclusion.

When an earthquake rocked the prison where Paul and Silas were fastened in stocks, the jailer assumed his prisoners had escaped. In view of the fact that Roman law would have required the jailer’s life as the penalty for losing the prisoners who had been placed in his charge,¹ he drew his sword and was about to take his own life. But Paul called out loudly, encouraging the jailer to refrain from harming himself, reassuring him that no prisoner had escaped. Calling for a light, he ran into the prison and fell down trembling before Paul and Silas. Then, bringing them out of the prison, the jailer asked Paul and Silas, “Sirs, what must I do to be saved?”

What did the jailer mean by this statement? As a heathen Roman,² he no doubt had been exposed to Greek/Roman mythology his entire life. Christianity had been introduced into Macedonia only days earlier when Paul arrived in Philippi

(16:12).³ So it is unlikely that he possessed more than a cursory understanding of the Christian notion of salvation from sin. But events occurred in those days leading up to his conversion that may account for the jailer's question.

Now it happened, as we went to prayer, that a certain slave girl possessed with a spirit of divination met us, who brought her masters much profit by fortune-telling. This girl followed Paul and us, and cried out, saying, "These men are the servants of the Most High God, who proclaim to us **the way of salvation.**" And this she did **for many days** (Acts 16:16-18).

Observe that the demon within the girl announced to the citizens of Philippi over a period of "many days" the fact that Paul and Silas were representatives of the one true God, and that they possessed the information that would show people "the way of salvation." In all likelihood, the jailer would have heard this declaration either firsthand or through the reports of friends, neighbors, relatives, or other townspeople.

When Paul finally expelled the demon from the girl, her irate masters assaulted him and Silas, dragged them before the magistrates of the city, and subjected them to the legal proceedings that ultimately landed them in the prison where they encountered the jailer. It is not out of the realm of possibility that the jailer was privy to these proceedings, which surely would have included reference to their alleged identity as "servants of the Most High God" who had information pertaining to "the way of salvation."

A third means by which the jailer could have come into possession of sufficient information that would account for the phrasing of his question can be seen in verse 25: "But at midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the prisoners were listening to them." Before falling asleep (vs. 27), the jailer may well have heard the hymns that Paul and Silas sang—songs that surely would have included references to God, Christ, and salvation (cf. Ephesians 5:19).

These three circumstances may account for the jailer's request to be informed about salvation—albeit, even then, his understanding must have been very piecemeal and extremely deficient. Paul's response to the jailer's question was: "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved, you and your household" (vs. 31). What did Paul mean by this statement?

If he meant what many within Christendom think he meant, that is, if the jailer already knew who Jesus was, and if Paul was urging him simply to believe (i.e., simply to “accept Christ into his heart as his personal savior”), then we should next expect the text to provide the jailer’s response—something to the effect that the jailer accepted Jesus Christ as his Savior, or that he believed on Jesus right then and there and was saved.

However, to the contrary, the text says: “Then they spoke the word of the Lord to him” (vs. 32). Why? Didn’t Paul just do that by telling the jailer to “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ”? Apparently not. Paul later wrote that “faith comes by hearing... the word of God” (Romans 10:17). So the jailer needed to hear additional information, i.e., the Gospel, that would enable him to know **what it means to believe on Jesus**. It follows, then, that the directive, “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ” was simply a broad, sweeping statement intended to redirect the jailer’s thinking away from his religious attachment to the pagan gods of Greek/Roman mythology toward the true object of belief: Christ. It was a way to reorient the jailer’s thinking in the direction of Jesus, as contrasted with his own pagan notions—roughly equivalent to saying, according to Clarke, “Receive the religion of Christ.”⁴ Simply telling the jailer (or anyone today) to “believe on Jesus” does not provide sufficient information on **how** to believe, i.e., what is involved in that belief, since “believe” can mean different things. In other words, there is **more** to “believing on Jesus” for salvation than simply **affirming in one’s mind that Jesus is Lord and Savior** (a fact readily conceded even by Satan and the demons—Genesis 3:15; Matthew 4:3,6; Luke 22:31; Hebrews 2:14; James 2:19; Revelation 12:4ff.).⁵

It was only in speaking the Word of the Lord to the jailer that he could understand who Christ is, what Christianity is about, and the proper response to the preached Word—i.e., what it means to “believe on the Lord Jesus Christ.” As Matthew Henry noted: “He was, for aught that appears, an utter stranger to Christ, and therefore it is requisite he should be told who this Jesus is, that he may believe in him.”⁶ Since the jailer **could not be saved before** Paul spoke the Word of the Lord to him, observe the sequence of events that the text reports immediately after the Word was spoken to him:

(1) The jailer took Paul and Silas “the same hour of the night and washed their stripes.” Here is evidence of repentance (cf. Matthew 3:8). Here is evidence that the jailer was convinced by the information that had been given to him, to the extent that he wanted to make things right. That is repentance—a change of mind resulting in appropriate outward actions (Matthew 21:29; 2 Corinthians 7:10). Remember that repentance **precedes** salvation.

(2) The text then states: “And immediately he and all his family were baptized.” Three aspects of this sentence are noteworthy. First, if baptism is unnecessary to salvation, why even mention it with regard to the conversion of the jailer? Why not simply proceed in the narrative to the outcome of conversion—i.e., some indication that he was now saved? If baptism is nonessential, instead of reading, “And immediately he and all his family **were baptized**,” one would expect the text to read, “And immediately he and all his family **accepted Jesus as their personal Savior**.” Second, where did the jailer get the idea that he needed to be **baptized**? It had to have been included in Paul’s “speaking the word of the Lord” to him (cf. the eunuch in Acts 8:35-36). But if the jailer could not be saved until Paul “spoke the word of the Lord” to him, and if Paul included in that “word of the Lord” the doctrine of baptism, then it follows that the jailer’s salvation was conditioned in part on baptism. Third, why “immediately” (παρὰχρῆμα, cf. Luke 1:64)? Many within Christendom wait a week, a month, or longer before baptizing believers. Why was the jailer baptized **immediately** in the middle of the night? The implication is that baptism is more crucial and more urgent than many today think.

(3) At this point in Luke’s narrative, we are informed that the jailer brought Paul and Silas into his home, and then he set food before them. Next, we are informed that the jailer “rejoiced” (vs. 34). When does the text indicate that the jailer manifested signs of joy and happiness (that naturally follow conversion)—before or after baptism? **After** baptism. In fact, every time rejoicing is explicitly alluded to in the conversion accounts of Acts, it always **follows** baptism (e.g., 2:46—“gladness”; 8:39—“rejoicing”).⁷

(4) Everything up to this point leads one to the conclusion that baptism was part and parcel of the jailer’s conversion, and

preceded his salvation as the culminating act. But an understanding of Greek provides the clincher to this conclusion. Look carefully at the phrase in verse 34: “having believed in God,” as rendered by the NKJV, ASV, and NASB. The NIV renders it “because he had come to believe in God,” while Mounce has “having placed his faith in God,” and the KJV simply has “believing in God.” Here is a clear, explicit indication that the jailer was now a **saved** believer. However, at what point, precisely, did this saved condition occur?

The Greek Perfect Participle

In the Greek, the expression “having believed” (*pepisteukos*) is in the perfect tense. There is no English tense corresponding to the Greek perfect which focuses on result. It is unique in its ability to provide precision on certain matters. Consider the following brief explanation of the meaning of the perfect tense by Greek grammarians Dana and Mantey:

The perfect is the tense of **complete action**. Its basal significance is **the progress of an act or state to a point of culmination** and the existence of its **finished results**. That is, it views action as a **finished product**.... It implies a **process**, but views that process as **having reached its consummation and existing in a finished state**.⁸

Baptist Greek scholar Ray Summers offered another helpful explanation of the Greek perfect tense:

[I]t indicates a completed action with a resulting state of being. The primary emphasis is on the **resulting state of being**. Involved in the Greek perfect are three ideas: an action in *progress*, its coming to a point of *culmination*, its existing as a *completed result*. Thus it implies a process but looks upon the process as **having reached a consummation** and existing as **a completed state**.⁹

In light of the thrust of the Greek perfect tense, Luke was making the point that the jailer went through “a process”¹⁰ of several actions before it could be stated that he was then in possession of a saving faith in God. His initial belief that came as a result of hearing the Word of the Lord preached to him, led to his repentance (as evinced by his attending Paul and Silas’ wounds), and then culminated in his baptism in water—bringing his faith to a **“resulting state of being.”**¹¹ Only at this point could the Greek perfect tense be used to indicate

that the jailer now stood in “**a completed state**”¹² of “having believed.” Luke was careful to refrain from labeling the jailer as a “believer” until all of the prerequisites to salvation had been completed, his faith thus “**having reached its consummation and existing in a finished state.**”¹³ This observation was acknowledged by R.J. Knowling while professor of New Testament Exegesis at King’s College in London: “[T]he word *pepisteukos*, perfect participle, shows that this fullness of joy was caused by his **full** profession of belief; it was the joy of the Holy Ghost which **followed** his baptism.”¹⁴

This understanding of the conversion account of the Philippian jailer is in perfect concord with the other conversion accounts given in Acts (e.g., Acts 2:38; 3:19; 8:12-13,36-39; 9:18; 10:47-48; 16:15; 18:8; 19:5). Until a person’s initial consent to the facts of the Gospel message leads him to repent of his sins and be baptized, his faith is **incomplete**. The New Testament designates water immersion as **the point in time** when God cleanses the sin-stained spirit of the penitent believer by the blood of Christ, thereby bringing faith to its “point of culmination”¹⁵ and salvific consummation.

Endnotes

¹ See William Ramsay (1897), *St. Paul the Traveller and the Roman Citizen* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1962 reprint), p. 222; cf. Acts 12:19.

² “The expression *πεπιστ. τῷ θεῷ* (“having believed in God”—DM) could only be used of a converted *heathen*, not of a *Jew*” (italics in orig.)—Alford, 2:184.

³ Cf. Ramsay, p. 215.


⁴ Adam Clarke (no date), *The New Testament of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ* (New York: Abingdon-Cokesbury Press), 5:819. Cf. George Williams (1960), *The Student’s Commentary on the Holy Scriptures* (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel), p. 840—“Now, willing to hear, the Gospel was preached to him and to all that were in his household.”

⁵ If the notion of “faith only” were true, one would not expect to encounter unsaved believers in the New Testament. But that is precisely what we find in John 8 where those who are said to “believe on Him” (ἐπίστευσαν εἰς αὐτόν, vs. 30-31) are declared by Jesus to have the devil as their father (vs. 44). Also, in John 12, some of the Jewish leaders are said to “believe on Him” (ἐπίστευσαν εἰς αὐτόν) but refused to confess (οὐχ ὡμολόγουν), in direct violation of Matthew 10:32. Also Simon (Acts 8:13,22-23).


⁶ Matthew Henry (1961), *Commentary on the Whole Bible* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan), p. 1702.

- ⁷ Likewise, six verses occur in the New Testament in which baptism and salvation are mentioned in the same verse; in every case, baptism precedes salvation: Mark 1:4; 16:16; Luke 3:3; Acts 2:38; 22:16; 1 Peter 3:21.
- ⁸ 1927, p. 200, emp. added. Also Wallace, p. 572.
- ⁹ 1950, p. 103, italics in orig., emp. added.
- ¹⁰ Dana and Mantey, p. 200; Summers, p. 103. In his discussion of “Sergius Paullus and His Relation to Christian Faith,” Sir William Ramsay notes the force of the term “believe” in Acts, concluding that Luke uses the word “as the first stage in a process,” with the second stage consisting of “turning to the Lord” (Acts 11:21) which includes baptism. He notes Luke’s use of the same perfect tense term *πεπιστευκότες* used in Acts 16:34, citing Acts 21:20,25; 19:18—(1915), *The Bearing of Recent Discovery on the Trustworthiness of the New Testament* (London: Hodder & Stoughton), pp. 164-166. If initial (“first stage”) “belief” precedes “turning to the Lord,” then a person is **not** saved at the point of faith only. Since the Greek Perfect conveys process completed, what was the “process” that the jailer experienced that enabled Luke to declare his completed state of belief? All we can rely upon to answer this question is what the Bible tells us. Either the Bible is silent regarding this process that led up to his completed belief, or the text actually records the process. As a matter of fact, the Bible specifically articulates the details of that process. First, the jailer “fell down trembling before Paul and Silas” (vs. 29). This act alone indicates a spiritual awakening preceding belief. Second, he asked for further information about their religion (vs. 30). He must have **listened intently** to “the word of the Lord” that was then spoken to him, taking it in and processing the information. Third, he proceeded to attend to their wounds—which were “many” (vss. 23,33). Fourth, he insisted on acting on the teaching he had received, which included being baptized in the middle of the night (vs. 33). The subsequent social amenities, including a meal, transpired after his spiritual concerns were addressed. All of these details, meticulously reported by Luke, explicitly clarify the “process” that led to his completed state of saving faith. Cf. Wayne Jackson (2005), *The Acts of the Apostles* (Stockton, CA: Christian Courier Publications)—“It is very important to notice that the participle, ‘having believed in God,’ encompassed the immersion.... the state at which they arrived as a consequence of their obedience” (pp. 198,417).
- ¹¹ Summers, p. 103. Cf. Wallace’s “Resultative Perfect” (p. 574).
- ¹² Ibid, Cf. James 2:22—“faith completed by works” (ESV).
- ¹³ Dana and Mantey, p. 200. Observe that if Luke had desired to refer to the jailer’s belief in its initial occurrence when Paul and Barnabus “spoke the word of the Lord to him” (vs. 32), he could have used the aorist participle to indicate point/punctiliar action in the past. See Moulton, *Prolegomena*, p. 109; Moule, pp. 5,10ff.
- ¹⁴ R.J. Knowling (no date), *The Expositor’s Greek Testament: The Acts of the Apostles*, ed. W. Robertson Nicoll (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans), 2:353, italics in orig., emp. added.
- ¹⁵ Dana and Mantey, p. 200.

Acts 22:16



"So I said, 'What shall I do, Lord?' And the Lord said to me, 'Arise and go into Damascus, and there you will be told all things which are appointed for you to do.' And since I could not see for the glory of that light, being led by the hand of those who were with me, I came into Damascus. Then one, Ananias, a devout man according to the law, having a good testimony with all the Jews who dwelt there, came to me; and he stood and said to me, 'Brother Saul, receive your sight.' And at that same hour I looked up at him. Then he said, 'The God of our fathers has chosen you that you should know His will, and see the Just One, and hear the voice of His mouth. For you will be His witness to all men of what you have seen and heard. And now why are you waiting? Arise and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on the name of the Lord'" (Acts 22:10-16).



In order to arrive at a complete portrait of the conversion of the apostle Paul, one must examine all three accounts that the Holy Spirit provided: Acts 9:1-19, Acts 22:6-16, and Acts 26:12-18. The account in Acts 22 is given by Paul himself, after being taken into custody by the commander of the Roman garrison in Jerusalem in response to the street disturbance generated by hostile Jews, resulting in mob action against Paul on the basis of false accusations and assumptions. Before being whisked away to the barracks, Paul persuaded the Roman commander to allow him to address the mob. In that speech, he recounted some of the details of his conversion to Christ. It was Ananias who relayed Christ's instructions to Paul, including the requirement to "arise and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on the name of the Lord."

The Adverbial Participle

The Greek grammar that the Holy Spirit selected by which to express Himself on this occasion is a further key to allowing the Bible to interpret itself. In verse 16, the Holy Spirit utilized two participles and two verbs that clarify His intended meaning, marvelously interwoven into a splendid depiction of the culminating activity of conversion:

The Grammar of Acts 22:16

WORD	TENSE	VOICE	PART of SPEECH	TRANSLATION
<i>anastas</i>	aorist	active	participle	“having arisen”
<i>baptisai</i>	aorist	middle	imperative verb	“get yourself baptized”
<i>apolousai</i>	aorist	middle	imperative verb	“get your sins washed away”
<i>epikalesamenos</i>	aorist	middle	participle	“having called for yourself”

An adverbial participle is a participle that is used as an adverb to modify the verb. “Calling” is an adverbial participle of manner. It shows the **manner** in which the main verbs are accomplished.¹ The verbs (“baptized” and “wash away sins”)—joined by the coordinate conjunction “and” (*kai*)—are “causative middles”² in the aorist tense. They relate to the aorist middle of the participle of manner that follows (“calling”). Hence, a literal (though awkward) translation would be: “Having arisen, get yourself³ baptized and get your sins washed away, having called for yourself on the name of the Lord.”⁴ In other words, Ananias was telling Paul that the way to accomplish “calling on the Lord” was to be baptized and have his sins washed away.⁵ This admonition harmonizes perfectly, for instance, with Peter’s quotation of Joel 2:32 on the day of Pentecost in which “whoever calls on the name of the Lord” in Acts 2:21 paraphrases “repent and...be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ” in verse 38.⁶

In Denial

Consider how A.T. Robertson, though renowned for his Greek scholarship, correctly expounded the grammatical nuances of this verse in the following words: “*Be baptized (baptisai)*. First aorist middle (causative), not passive, Get thyself baptized.... Cf. I Cor. 10:2. Submit yourself to baptism. So as to *apolousai*, Get washed off as in I Cor. 6:11.”⁷ Observe the grammatical admission: submitting oneself to water baptism is **the point at which sins are washed off**. Robertson’s allusion to 1 Corinthians 6:11 and 10:2 further strengthens this admission. The Corinthians had been “washed,” “sanctified,” and “justified” (6:11)—an obvious allusion to their forgiveness at conversion, and the Israelites had been “baptized into Moses” (10:2)—in that they entered into a new relationship with Moses as their leader and lawgiver.

Yet, incredibly, having thus pinpointed and acknowledged the unmistakable import of the Greek grammar which links water baptism with the washing away of sins, Robertson’s theological bias was simply too much for him. He felt compelled to dodge the obvious implication of the essentiality of water baptism as a prerequisite to salvation by offering a counteractive “explanation:”

It **is possible**, as in 2:38, to take these words as teaching baptismal remission or salvation by means of baptism, but to do so is **in my opinion** a complete subversion of Paul’s vivid and picturesque language. As in Rom. 6:4-6 where baptism is the picture of death, burial and resurrection, so here baptism pictures the change that had already taken place when Paul surrendered to Jesus on the way (verse 10). Baptism here pictures the washing away of sins by the blood of Christ.⁸

This fabricated “picture” dodge (discussed in Endnote 44 on p. 25) departs from the exegetical analysis of the Greek grammar altogether, launching Robertson into the realm of uncertainty and human opinion—evident from his use of phrases like “it is possible” and “in my opinion.” Though he concedes that it is possible that the verse carries the same import as Acts 2:38, does he take the grammar of the passage and explain how the grammar itself does not support the necessity of baptism? No, he does not. He completely abandons and sidesteps the force of the grammar that he, himself, has just expounded so

accurately. Instead, he shifts the reader's attention to another passage for which he provides no Greek grammatical analysis.⁹ He offers Romans 6:4-6 (which will be discussed on p. 75) as the key to understanding the Acts passages. He insists that in the Romans passage, baptism is "the picture of death, burial and resurrection."¹⁰ Hence, in Acts 22:16, Robertson claims baptism merely "**pictures** the washing away of sins by the blood of Christ." Not **actual** washing away of sins, not **literal** washing away of sins, but simply a "picture" of washing away of sins.

Summary

Observe that the grammar of the passage is decisive. But to avoid the obvious and plain meaning of the grammar selected by the Holy Spirit, one must concoct the "picture" idea.¹¹ One must also ignore the multiple indications that negate the notion that Paul was saved while on the road to Damascus.¹² Such obvious bias imposed upon the text of Acts is rather recent and does not represent the scholarship from the second century forward. The early church readily recognized the essentiality of baptism to salvation. Hence, commentators in earlier centuries were forthright in their pronouncements. Consider, for example, a few 19th century theologians. German Lutheran theologian Gotthard Lechler, Professor Ordinarius of Historical Theology at the University of Leipzig, together with German preacher Karl Gerok noted that baptism "confers purification from sin and forgiveness of sins.... [H]oly baptism was valued in the apostolic Church. It was no external ceremony, but a means of grace for the washing away of sins, and the first entrance into the Church of Jesus."¹³ Hermann Olshausen, Professor Extraordinarius at the University of Königsberg, remarked: "It need only be remarked that in xxii.16, the words ἀπόλουσαι τὰς ἁμαρτίας σου ["wash away your sins"—DM] plainly represent baptism as the act of cleansing from sin, as the ἄφεσις τῶν ἁμαρτιῶν ["remission of sins"—DM]."¹⁴ German Protestant churchman Rudolf Stier offered a particularly astute analysis of the grammar in his commentary, providing a fitting summary that ties together the insights gleaned from the Greek: "By this calling...is meant the confession of the name by baptism to or in this name; so that **all three expressions, baptism, washing away, calling, denote together one and the same thing.**"¹⁵

Endnotes

- ¹ Robertson identifies the “Circumstantial Participle,” noting that some grammarians label it the “adverbial participle” (p. 1124). He lists several “varieties” of the circumstantial participle including “manner (means)” (1934, p. 1125), further observing that “it is not always clear where manner shades off into means” (p. 1128). Under the category “Circumstantial Participle,” Goodwin lists “*Means, manner, and similar relations, including manner of employment*” together as one type of relation (*Grammar*, p. 335). Burton labels this usage as “The Adverbial Participle of Manner, describing the manner in which the action denoted by the verb is done” (p. 171). Also F. Blass, A. Debrunner, and Robert Funk (1961), *A Greek Grammar of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press), p. 215. Cf. Carl Moll’s discussion of similar construction in Hebrews 2:10 (pp. 51-53) where “the Aor. Part. sometimes denotes almost or quite purely, ‘way and manner’”—“The Epistle to the Hebrews” in John Lange (1870), *A Commentary on the Holy Scriptures* (New York: Charles Scribner), 8:53.
- ² Robertson (1934), pp. 332,808; Blass, Debrunner, Funk, p. 166; Dana & Mantey, p. 162; Lenski, *Acts*, p. 909; Moulton, *Prolegomena*, p. 163. Cf. Moule, p. 26.
- ³ Or perhaps “allow yourself to be.” Lange renders it: “*baptize thyself, or rather, cause thyself to be baptized, or, suffer (some one) to baptize thee*”—John Lange (1867), *A Commentary on the Holy Scriptures: Acts* (New York: Charles Scribner), 4:400, italics in orig. The aorist middle participle conveys the idea of “having called (on the name of the Lord) **for himself**” (cf. Machen, p. 114). “[T]he Middle is, strictly speaking, never used without some sort of reference to the subject”—Alexander Buttmann (1873), *A Grammar of the New Testament Greek* (Andover: Warren F. Draper), p. 193. See Knowling, 2:459—“the convert in ‘getting baptised’ was conceived as doing something for himself, not merely as receiving something.” Dana & Mantey, p. 157—“The middle voice is that use of the verb which describes the subject as participating in the result of the action.... [T]he middle stresses the agent. It, in some way, relates the action more intimately to the subject.” Or as Baptist theologian and Professor of Biblical Literature in Newton Theological Institute H.B. Hackett stated: “One of the uses of the middle is to express an act which a person procures another to perform for him”—(1870), *A Commentary on the Original Text of the Acts of the Apostles* (Boston, MA: Gould & Lincoln), p. 364. Cf. Winer, 1869, p. 254—“the Middle frequently denotes an action that takes place **by order or with the permission** of the subject.” See also William Simcox (1890), *The Language of the New Testament* (New York: Thomas Whittaker), pp. 96-97. Also Blass, pp. 186-187, Machen, p. 57, Robertson, p. 804, Moulton,

Grammar, p. 153, and F.F. Bruce (1988), *The Book of Acts* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans), p. 418—"get yourself baptized," which Perschbacher defines as "to cleanse one's self" (p. 46). Observe further that the actions of the two aorist imperative middle verbs occur simultaneously, as Lange notes: "*Let thyself be baptized, and (thereby) wash off thy sins*" (4:401, italics in orig., emp. added). Or as Stier notes: "*Be baptized, and thus wash away thy sins*" (p. 380, italics in orig., emp. added). And Spicq: "a person is purified of sins **by** 'calling upon his name'" (2:45).

⁴ My thanks to Tom Gaumer for this rendering.

⁵ As noted in the discussion on Mark 16:16, aorist participles ordinarily indicate action that is **antecedent** to the action of the main verb. The aorist participle never indicates action **subsequent** to the main verb. Hence, in Acts 22:16, one might be tempted to think that the participle "calling" refers to action that precedes the action of the verbs "be baptized" and "wash away your sins"—as if salvation occurs at the point of "calling" and then baptism **follows** forgiveness. However, this premature conclusion faces the grammatical reality that the action of "calling" (with accompanying forgiveness) would **also** therefore **precede** "wash away your sins." This reality forces the person, who has already decided that baptism **follows** forgiveness, to concoct the notion that "wash away your sins" must be "symbolical" or a post-salvation "picture." (See Endnote 44 on p. 25 for a response to this "picture/symbol" novelty). However, this artificial invention does not allow the Greek grammar selected by the Holy Spirit to speak for itself. What's more, even if the aorist participle is to be taken in its common usage of antecedent action, baptism in this verse still occurs **coincident with or prior to** the washing away of sin.

A more likely intention of the Greek grammar is that the aorist participle here is being used in its other fairly common usage of **coincident action**. In his discussion of tense and the aorist participle in his grammar, Robertson notes that "Antecedent Action" is "the usual idiom with the circumstantial participle" and that "this is indeed the most common use of the aorist participle" (1934, p. 860). However, he then offers the following title for the next paragraph of his discussion: "But Simultaneous Action is Common also," noting: "It is a very common idiom (chiefly circumstantial) in the N.T." (p. 860). He also explains: "The aorist participle of simultaneous action is in perfect accord with the genius and history of the Greek participle.... [W]hen the verb precedes the aorist participle it is nearly always the participle of coincident action.... Acts is particularly rich in examples of the coincident aorist participle which **follows** the verb.... It is in point of fact a characteristic of Luke's style to use frequently the coincident par-

ticiples (both aorist and present) placed **after** the principal verb" (p. 1113, emp. added). He adds that in the ancient Greek, "the action was especially likely to be coincident if the principal verb was also aorist" (p. 1114). All of these particulars are precisely what we find in Acts 22:16. Goodwin agrees: "The aorist participle in certain constructions (generally with a verb in the aorist) **does not denote time past** with reference to the leading verb, but expresses time **coincident** with that of the verb" (*Grammar*, p. 276, emp. added). See also Moulton, *Grammar*, pp. 130-131.

Grammarians are in agreement on this point. For example, in his *Prolegomena*, Moulton refers to the "Aorist Participle of Coincident Action" and states: "In many cases, especially in the NT, the participle and the main verb denote *coincident* or *identical* action" (pp. 130-131, italics in orig.). Hadley affirms: "The aorist participle, when joined to a principal verb in the aorist, is sometimes used **without the idea of past time**, to denote an action **coinciding in time** with the other" (p. 272). In his astute presentation before the American Philological Association, Yale professor of Greek T.D. Seymour noted that when the aorist participle is connected with a finite verb in the aorist, "it is clear that the action represented by the participle **coincides in time** with the action represented by the finite verb" (p. 89, emp. added). Noting "the circumstantial participles, those which express a circumstance of time, means, cause, concession, or condition," Seymour further underscored the "virtual **equivalence** of the expressions with the participle or finite verb.... The connection often marks distinctly the **coincidence of time** between the acts expressed by the participle and finite verb"—indeed, they are "simultaneous" (pp. 93-94)—T.D. Seymour (1882), "On the Use of the Aorist Participle in Greek," in *Transactions of the American Philological Association* (Cambridge: John Wilson & Son), 12:88-96. Lenski agreed: "The action being expressed by the aorist participle, 'calling on his name,' is either simultaneous with that of the aorist imperatives or immediately precedes it, **the difference being merely formal**" (p. 909, emp. added). See also Schmiedel, p. 1599; William Jelf (1861), *A Grammar of the Greek Language* (Oxford: John Henry and James Parker), 2:74 (P405/5); J.N. Madvig (1880), *Syntax of the Greek Language*, trans. Henry Browne (London: Rivingtons), p. 169 (P183/Rem 2). In his doctoral dissertation submitted to the Department of Biblical Greek in the Graduate Divinity School at the University of Chicago, Charles Williams provides an extensive analysis of the function of tense in the participle in the book of Acts, noting: "The aorist participle usually refers to action antecedent to that of the principal verb. Of the 588 cases in the Book of Acts 540 refer to antecedent action." He then lists 23 aorist participles in

Acts that are “doubtful as to their time-relation,” and includes in that listing the aorist participles in 22:16—(1909) *The Participle in the Book of Acts* (Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press), p. 35. **So which is it—antecedent or coincident?** This ambiguity is clarified by the following additional explanations.

Goodwin removes another layer, taking us deeper into the grammar to reveal a further significant nuance: “An aorist participle denoting that in which the action of a verb of past time consists may express time **coincident** with that of the verb, **when the actions of the verb and the participle are practically one**”—William Goodwin (1893), *Syntax of the Moods and Tenses of the Greek Verb* (Boston, MA: Ginn & Co.), p. 52, emp. added. But how may they be “practically one”? In a remarkable article appearing in *The Bibliotheca Sacra* in 1884, W.G. Ballantine offered the results of his extensive analysis of the New Testament’s use of predicative participles when the leading verb is in the aorist. His Rule 3 provides the most sensible explanation for the significance of the grammar of Acts 22:16—“[V]ery frequently a writer wishes to make by a participle an additional assertion, not of a contemporaneous or precedent act, but *of the same act*; **having asserted the effect or nature of the action he wishes to add its outward form, or the converse**. In every such case the *aorist* participle is used”—W.G. Ballantine (1884), “Predicative Participles with Verbs in the Aorist,” *The Bibliotheca Sacra*, 41:787-788, October, italics in orig., emp. added. Hence, the aorist participle “calling” is simply another way to refer to the verbs “get yourself baptized” and “get your sins washed away.” In other words, all three expressions—“calling,” “baptized,” “washing away sins”—occur **coincidentally or simultaneously** due to the fact that they are referring to **one and the same act**. Ballantine offers several examples of this Rule, including Acts 10:33 where the aorist verb “done well” and the aorist middle participle “come” are the same act; Acts 25:13 where the aorist verb “came” defines the aorist middle participle “greet”; and 1 Timothy 1:12 where the aorist middle verb “counted” is equivalent to the aorist middle participle “putting.” For more examples see Ballantine’s article, pp. 788ff. Cf. Philippians 2:7 where Jesus “emptied” Himself **by** “taking” the form of a servant, and Matthew 19:22 where the young man expressed his sorrow **in the act of** going away. Goodwin hints at this grammatical feature when he refers to one relation of the circumstantial participle as “That *in which* the action of the verb *consists*” (p. 336, italics in orig.). However, it is Ernest DeWitt Burton that brings these insights into culminating clarity, thereby laying bare the grammatical underpinnings of Acts 22:16. Burton was an American biblical scholar who served as the head of the Department of New Testament

Literature and Interpretation at the University of Chicago, Editor of the *American Journal of Theology*, President of the Chicago Society of Biblical Research, and the third President of the University of Chicago. In his *Syntax of the Moods and Tenses in New Testament Greek*, Burton explained: “The participle expressing manner or means often denotes **the same action** as that of the principal verb, **describing it from a different point of view**. In this case the participle is as respects its tense a Participle of Identical Action, while as respects its modal function it is a participle of manner or means” (p. 172, emp. added). Here, then, is his definition of “The Aorist Participle of Identical Action”: “The Aorist Participle agreeing with the subject of a verb not infrequently **denotes the same action** that is expressed by the verb.... An Aorist Participle of Identical Action most frequently accompanies an Aorist verb, **both verb and participle thus describing the action** indefinitely as **a simple event**” (pp. 64-65). Burton offers possibilities for the different points of view between the verb and the participle: “It may be the relation of fact to method...; of outward form to inner significance or quality...; or of act to purpose or result” (p. 55). All three of these points of view fit nicely with Acts 22:16, as illustrated by Appendix K.

To summarize these grammatical features, what are we to conclude? Recalling the words of Ballantine, the aorist participle “calling” (on the name of the Lord) is the “effect or nature” of the “outward forms” of getting baptized and getting sins washed away. Or, recalling the words of Burton, the participle “calling” is the “fact,” the “inner significance or quality,” the “purpose or result,” and being baptized and getting sins washed away is the “method,” the “outward form,” and the “act.” **The act of baptism is the precise moment when an individual calls on the Lord’s name and receives remission of sins.**

- ⁶ See the chart comparing Acts 2:21 and Acts 2:38 in Appendix L. Baptist professor and theologian H.B. Hackett acknowledged this scriptural comparison. He commented on the Acts 22:16 phrase “wash away thy sins”: “This clause states a result of the baptism, in language derived from the nature of that ordinance. It answers to εἰς ἄφεσιν τῶν ἁμαρτιῶν [“for the remission of sins”—DM] in Acts 2, 38, i.e. submit to the rite in order to be forgiven” (p. 364). He also insisted that ἐπικαλεσάμενος τὸ ὄνομα αὐτοῦ [“calling on His name”—DM] supplies essentially the place of ἐπὶ τῷ ὀνόματι Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ [“on the name of Jesus Christ”—DM] in 2, 38” (p. 365). Hence, “calling on the name of the Lord” appropriately describes baptism since it is to be enacted “in the name of” Christ (by His authority). What’s more, confession of the name of Christ is required just prior to baptism (Romans 10:9-10; 1 Timothy 6:12-13).

⁷ 1930, *Word Pictures*, 3:391, italics in orig.

⁸ Ibid., 3:392-392, emp. added.

⁹ R.C.H. Lenski asks the question: “Was Paul to submit to a mere symbolic ceremony?” (*Acts*, p. 910). He then insists: “With its water that was sanctified by the Word baptism was *to wash away* all this guilt, all these sins. This washing away is the ἄφεσις [“remission”—DM] of 2:38” (p. 910, italics in orig.). He then takes Robertson to task for his “picture” concoction: “R. does not seem to see that he contradicts Ananias. Whereas Ananias says, ‘Let thyself *actually* be baptized’ (aorist), ‘let thyself *actually* be washed of thy sins’ (again aorist), R. changes the latter and substitutes, ‘Let a picture be made of the washing away of thy sins.’ It may be interesting to enact a picture, but that is about all. As βάπτισαι [“be baptized”—DM] = a real baptism and not the mere picture of one, so ἀπόλουσαι [“wash away”—DM] = a real washing and not the mere picture of one” (p. 910, italics in orig.).

¹⁰ Ibid., p. 392. We shall see (beginning on p. 75) that, granting this symbolic representation, such symbolism does not discount or exclude remission of sins simultaneous with baptism.

¹¹ Again, see Endnote 44, p. 25.

¹² If Saul was saved while on the road to Damascus, he did not seem to know it. His first use of the term “Lord” was in the question: “Who are You, Lord?” One cannot seriously think Saul was recognizing and confessing Jesus as Lord when, in fact, he was requesting clarification of His identity. When Jesus identified Himself, He couched His answer to Saul’s question in the form of formal accusations: (1) “I am Jesus whom you are persecuting,” and (2) He further accused Saul of “kicking against the goads,” i.e., resisting Jesus by opposing Christianity (e.g., *Acts* 8:1). No evidence of salvation at this point. Saul then “trembled” and was “astonished” (vs. 6). Is this evidence of salvation? Surely not. He was a frightened, confused man. However, he apparently at this point was convinced of the identity of Jesus, so much so that he cried out: “What do you want me to do?” (vs. 6). The only plausible, logical conclusion to draw from that question is that he was asking Jesus what he needed to do to be forgiven for having persecuted Him. If the doctrine of “faith only” is true, Jesus should have said: “Accept me as your personal Savior,” or “Just believe.” [Note: It is interesting that the phrase: “Accept Jesus as your personal Savior” is found **nowhere** in the New Testament, nor anything even remotely akin to it.] Instead, in answer to Saul’s plea for a way out of his sinful predicament as a persecutor of Jesus, Jesus told him to go into the city of Damascus “and you will be told **what you must do**,” i.e., to be saved. If Saul was saved while on the road to Damascus, his salvation certainly was a most unpleasant

occurrence. For the text indicates that he was “trembling” (vs. 6), “without sight” (vs. 9), had to be “led by the hand and brought into Damascus” in his blinded condition (vs. 8), and “neither ate nor drank” (vs. 9) **for three days**. Does that sound like a saved man? Does that sound like a man who is **joyous** in Christ and rejoicing that his sins had been washed away?

The Acts 9 account of Saul’s conversion simply notes that his baptism came immediately after he received his sight back—proof that he was unsaved up to that point. He was still being punished for his past conduct. It was only when he went into the city to receive more explicit instructions that his faith led to repentance (another equally necessary **prerequisite** to salvation—Luke 13:3; Acts 2:38; 3:19; 17:30; et al.) and baptism. It is in chapter 22 that Paul states explicitly **when and how his sins were washed away**, by grammatically linking baptism and washing of sins with calling on the name of the Lord. Observe that Paul could not have been saved on the road to Damascus since it was not until he arrived in Damascus that Ananias (1) restored Paul’s sight, and (2) declared that Paul still had sins that needed to be washed away. Indeed, one has to go through hermeneutical gymnastics, dismissing the plain import of language, in order to discount the clear teaching of this verse.

¹³ G.V. Lechler and K. Gerok (1864), *Theological and Homiletical Commentary on the Acts of the Apostles* (Edinburgh: T.&T. Clark), pp. 317,321.

¹⁴ Hermann Olshausen (1860), *Biblical Commentary on the Gospels and on the Acts of the Apostles* (Edinburgh: T.&T. Clark), p. 357.

¹⁵ p. 380, emp. added.

Romans

6:3-4



“Or do you not know that as many of us as were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death? Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life” (Romans 6:3-4).



Like the other passages on baptism, these verses are self-explanatory and their meaning is plain to any reader who does not allow theological bias to short-circuit the passage’s self-evident import.¹

The Greek Preposition *Eis*

The Holy Spirit’s use, once again, of *eis* speaks forcefully regarding the sphere, locus, realm, or relationship into which water immersion places the individual. Concerning this verse, for both “into Christ” and “into death,” Robertson states: “the notion of sphere is the true one.”² According to Paul’s inspired declaration, to be baptized **into** Christ Jesus means to be baptized **into** His death. Observe that baptism places one in Christ (see also Galatians 3:27 on pp. 79 ff.). It also places one into Christ’s death. But it is the death of Christ that makes salvation/forgiveness possible. To be baptized into Christ’s death, therefore, is to be transferred into, or brought into contact with, the very means by which sin may be forgiven. Without the death of Christ, there is no forgiveness of sin. Baptism **into** that death is the divinely designated means by which that forgiveness may be accessed.³ See Appendix M where Christ’s death, His atoning blood shed on the cross, and the waters of baptism all converge in one’s burial with Christ. The sinner is permitted the incredible privilege of participating **with** Christ in the reenactment of the atoning event by dying to the love and practice of sin, being buried (“with Him”) in

water, and rising from the waters of baptism by coming forth a new creature to live a **new life**.⁴

Reenacting the “Form” of Doctrine

Observe further that baptism, i.e., immersion or burial in water, mimics or reenacts the burial of Christ.⁵ See Appendix O for an illustration of this reenactment. How may one participate in and receive the benefits of Jesus’ death, burial, and resurrection? We are buried with Him **through** (*dia*) baptism **into** (*eis*) death. This reenactment is specifically identified as “that form of doctrine” (vs. 17). Danker defines the term “form” (τύπος) as “a kind, class, or thing that suggests a model or pattern, *form, figure, pattern*” and gives Romans 6:17 as an example: “pattern of teaching.”⁶ It is unlikely that Paul had in mind the totality of Christian doctrine that encompasses the whole of the New Testament.⁷ Nor would he have referred to their ongoing obedience to God in their daily Christian living. Contextually, he had been discussing the commencement of their Christian lives **at conversion**. They had “obeyed from the heart,” “obeyed” being an aorist active indicative verb. “The aorist indicative expresses the simple occurrence of an action in past time,”⁸ “merely occurrence at some former time,”⁹ presenting “the action as attained...as a ‘point,’ and hence is called ‘punctiliar.’”¹⁰ The grammar is clearly referring back to the day the Romans became Christians.¹¹ What “form,” “model,” or “pattern” did they “obey” at that time? They literally conformed themselves to a concise, precise form of teaching, i.e., the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ which was modeled or reproduced in the very act of their baptism (cf. Philippians 3:10—“conformed to His death”). Verse 18 then notes: “And having been set free from sin...” The aorist passive participle, ἐλευθεροθέντες (“to free, or set free”), is properly rendered “having been freed” and refers to that same conversion event. The Romans were released from their sins **when** they re-enacted the death, burial, and resurrection in baptism.¹²

Summary

The centrality of baptism as accentuated by Paul in this passage is not to be cavalierly dismissed as merely “post-salvation symbolism.” He forcefully pressed precisely the same concepts

to the church in Colossae (see Appendix P). The significance attached to baptism in Romans 6:3-4 is unquestionably integral to the atoning event.

Endnotes

- ¹ A recent attempt to avoid the obvious allusion in this passage to water baptism is the claim that it refers to Holy Spirit baptism. However, whatever the Romans were baptized into, they were “raised” out of it. If they were baptized in the Holy Spirit, they were raised up out of Him and no longer in Him. If they were baptized **in water**, they went down into it and came up out of it—which harmonizes with the rest of Scripture (cf. Acts 8:38-39). Further, water baptism can and must be administered by men. They are commanded to administer it (e.g., the imperatives in Matthew 28:19-20 and Mark 16:15). But men cannot administer Holy Spirit baptism. They can only administer water baptism. The “one baptism” of Ephesians 4:5, like Romans 6, is water baptism.
- ² 1934, p. 592.
- ³ In his *Prolegomena*, Moulton gives the sense as “by this baptism into his death” (p. 84). Milligan explains further: “And just so the man who is, by the Divine arrangement, baptized *into* the death of Christ is made to realize and to enjoy all the blessing and benefits of his death. And hence we see why it is and how it is that Baptism is for the remission of sins. It procures for us pardon, **not by virtue of any intrinsic efficacy in itself**, abstractly considered, but simply by bringing us, through the Divine arrangement, into contact with that blood which cleanses from all sin” ([1975], p. 407, italics in orig., emp. added).
- ⁴ Observe that “newness of life” (ASV, NASB, KJV, NKJV, RSV,ESV) or “a new life” (NIV) **follows** baptism. Those who maintain that a person is saved **prior to** baptism place themselves in the untenable position of achieving newness of life the moment a person “accepts Jesus,” but then receiving newness of life a second time **after** baptism. The Bible simply does not countenance such confusion and double-talk. See Appendix N.
- ⁵ Some have claimed that if a person “dies to sin” before baptism, then that person is saved **before** baptism since “he who has died has been **freed from sin**” (Romans 6:7). In truth, however, the expression found in Romans 6:6 (“our old man was crucified”) refers to the biblical doctrine of **repentance**—the “change of mind” that must occur within a person prior to baptism. Another metaphor used in Scripture to refer to the same change is seen in Hebrews 10:22 in the phrase “having our hearts sprinkled from an evil con-

science” (see Endnote 4, p. 87). Since one cannot literally sprinkle anything on one’s heart/mind, this is a figurative expression that refers to a person changing his attitude about sin—cleansing his mind concerning the desire to practice sin. Hence, a person must “die to sin” in the sense that he has changed his thinking about sin and disobedience, making a mental commitment to cease sin. He dies to the love and practice of sin. As Paul explained to the Galatians: “And those who are Christ’s have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires” (Galatians 5:24). Observe, however, that while a person dies to sin at that moment in his own mind, he is not **forgiven** of sin by God at that point. Actual forgiveness occurs **in the mind of God** (see Endnote 1 on p. 6) when the penitent believer allows himself to be lowered into the watery grave of baptism. That is **the moment** he contacts the blood of Christ which was shed in Christ’s death. Hence, Romans 6:3-4 explains that when we are baptized in water, we are baptized **into Christ’s death**—the contact point for forgiveness. Being “buried with Him through baptism into death” is the point at which we are cleansed of sin, thus enabling us to “walk in newness of life.” According to the sequence stipulated in the passage, we cannot have “newness of life” until **after** we come up out of the waters of baptism.

⁶ *Lexicon*, p. 1020, italics in orig.

⁷ Vincent states: “*Form* of teaching, however, seems to point to a special and precisely defined type of Christian instruction” (3:71, italics in orig.). Robertson admits: “It is hardly proper to take ‘form’ here to refer to Paul’s gospel (2:16), possibly an allusion to the symbolism of baptism which was the outward sign of the separation” (*Word Pictures*, 4:364).

⁸ Goodwin, *Syntax*, p. 16.

⁹ Winer, *Idiom*, p. 264.

¹⁰ Dana and Mantey, pp. 193-194.

¹¹ Denny explains the significance of the aorists: “It is the time when they became Christians, a time really fixed by their acceptance of the Gospel in faith, and outwardly marked by baptism. Baptism is the visible point of separation between the two servitudes—to sin and to God”—James Denny (1946), *St. Paul’s Epistle to the Romans* in ed. W. Robertson Nicoll, *The Expositor’s Greek Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans), 2:636.

¹² The same was true with the Colossians. After comparing baptism to circumcision (in the matter of “cutting”) as the point at which they put off their sins (2:11) by being baptized (2:12), he next notes they thereby had been “made alive” and forgiven of their trespasses (2:13).

Galatians

3:26-27



“For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ” (Galatians 3:26-27).



“Faith” can have two possible meanings in verse 26: (1) the subjective faith that each individual is required to muster in order to be accounted a believer, or (2) **the** faith, i.e., Christianity, the Gospel, or the Christian system—the “one faith” of Ephesians 4:5 (cf. Acts 14:22; 16:5; Ephesians 4:13; Galatians 1:23; Jude 3). Commentators vary in their opinions.¹ The latter understanding is supported by the repetitious use of the article (four times in verses 23,25,26)—“**the** faith”—and the context’s contrast between the Old Law as the “guardian/custodian” (vs. 24—παιδαγωγός) which lasted until the arrival of Christ (cf. Romans 10:4). The matter need not be resolved so far as this discussion is concerned since, either way, the significance of baptism remains the same.

Four features of the Greek construction of this passage are helpful in understanding the design of water immersion. First, “for” (γάρ/gar) is a particle/conjunction “used to express **cause, clarification, or inference**”—a “marker of cause or reason.”² As in classical usage, it “introduces the **reason or cause** of what precedes...frequently in **explanation** of that which is implied in the preceding clause.”³ Kuhner indicates it “may express: (a) a *ground or reason*, (b) an *explanation*, (c) a *confirmation or assurance*.”⁴ All three of these meanings fit the passage. Hence, verse 27 **explains** or **clarifies** verse 26.⁵ The putting on of Christ in baptism in verse 27 is the **ground or cause** of the Galatians being “sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus.” Paul offered the Galatians **confirmation** and **reassurance** that they were sons of God by faith on the basis of the fact that

they had been baptized into Christ and had put on Christ. As Lenski observes, with his use of “an explanatory ‘for,’...Paul points the Galatians to their baptism as the date when they received ‘the faith’ into their hearts.”⁶ Hence, to become a son of God “through faith” does not exclude or precede water baptism. A believer **becomes** a son of God at the point and in the act of baptism.⁷

Second, Paul uses the preposition *eis* as he did in Romans 6:3-4, once again to indicate the realm or sphere into which baptism transfers and places the individual. As Baptist scholar Willmarth explained: “‘Into’ is a possible translation here in the same sense as in Rom. vi. 3. In these two passages εἰς signifies either purpose, direction of mind, ‘unto Christ,’ or the result of the action; viz, **coming into a relation or condition, coming to be ‘in Christ.’**”⁸ Or as Eadie noted: “into union and communion with Him.”⁹

Third, “put on” is a translation of the Greek term *enduo*—to dress, clothe, wear, array, put on.¹⁰ In this case, the verb is second person aorist middle indicative: “have clothed yourselves” (NASB, NIV). The idiom of being clothed with spiritual principles or persons occurs repeatedly in Scripture. Zion would be clothed with her children (Isaiah 49:18). The worthy woman of Proverbs 31 was clothed with “strength and honor” (vs. 25). One can be clothed with “shame” (Job 8:22; Psalm 132:18), “righteousness” (Job 29:14; Psalm 132:9), and “salvation” (Psalm 132:16; Isaiah 61:10). The Lord is “clothed with honor and majesty” (Psalm 104:1). Christians are to clothe themselves with “the armor of light” and “the whole armor of God” (Romans 13:12; Ephesians 6:11), as well as the “new man/self” (Ephesians 4:24; Colossians 3:10).¹¹ Burton explains that “the idiom...referred to an act in which one entered into actual relations.”¹² Eadie expands: “The classical passages clearly show, that when one man is said to put on another, the full assumption of his nature or character is meant—the personation of him in thought and action.”¹³ Specifically rejecting baptism as a badge, uniform, or “symbolic picture,” Lenski insists, “He who puts on Christ becomes partaker of his salvation.... To put on Christ is to receive justification.”¹⁴ Or as A.R. Fausset explained: “ye *did*, in that very act of being

baptized into Christ, *put on*, or cloth yourselves with, Christ; so the *Greek* expresses.”¹⁵

Fourth, the verbs in verse 27 are both aorist verbs. Consequently, they describe activity that occurs coincident with each other. The “baptized into Christ” and the “put on Christ” happen at the same time. As Eadie noted: “Both verbs are aoristic, and the two acts are marked as identical in point of time.”¹⁶

Summary

Like Romans 6:3-4, this passage forcefully affirms the criticality and essentiality of water baptism. Baptism is the moment in time when the unsaved penitent believer enters into Christ. Prior to that moment, the individual is, at the very least, spiritually naked and, at the very worst, still clothed in his garb of sin (what Romans 6 labels “the old man of sin”). How can a person possibly be in a state of salvation **until and unless** he has been **clothed with Christ**? To ask is to answer.

Endnotes

¹ E.g., John Dow (1929), *The Abingdon Bible Commentary: Galatians* (New York: Abingdon-Cokesbury Press), p. 1215; R.E. Howard (1965), *Beacon Bible Commentary* (Kansas City, KS: Beacon Hill Press), p. 66.

² Danker, p. 189, emp. added.

³ Liddell and Scott, p. 838, emp. added.

⁴ Kuhner, p. 512, italics in orig.

⁵ “This verse confirms, and at the same time explains, the statement of the previous verse”—John Eadie (1869), *A Commentary on the Greek Text of the Epistle of Paul to the Galatians* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1979 reprint), p. 285.

⁶ R.C.H. Lenski (2001 reprint), *The Interpretation of St. Paul's Epistles to the Galatians, to the Ephesians, and to the Philippians* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson), p. 186.

⁷ “It is a substantiation (γάρ) of the assertion of v.26, that they are sons of God”—Ernest DeWitt Burton (1920), *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Galatians* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons), p. 204. Some have suggested that baptism is nonessential to salvation on the grounds that ὅσοι (*hosoi*), rendered “as many as” in the KJV and NKJV, implies that there were those among the Galatian Christians who had not been baptized. However, the Greek does not support this con-

tention. As Huxtable explains: “[T]he baptism of a part of their body, whatever its consequences to those particular individuals, would have furnished no proof of the foregoing statement, that ‘all’ of those whom he was addressing were ‘sons of God.’ The class marked out by the ὅσοι is **clearly coextensive** with the ‘ye all’ of ver. 26...affirming with greater positiveness than οἵτινες [“whoever”—DM] would have done, that what is predicated in the subsequent clause is predicated of **every individual belonging to the class defined** in this”—Prebendary Huxtable (1950), *The Pulpit Commentary: Galatians* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans), 20:143-144, emp. added, bracketed material added. See also Burton, *Commentary*, p. 203—“But it must not be supposed that ὅσοι includes only a part of the πάντες [“all”—DM]; for this would be itself in effect to contradict the preceding verse” (p. 203), and Herman Ridderbos (1953), *The Epistle of Paul to the Churches of Galatia* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans), p. 147.

⁸ Willmarth, p 310. See also Burton—“The preposition εἰς with βαπτίζω signifies literally and spatially ‘into,’ followed by the element into which one is plunged” (*Commentary*, p. 204).

⁹ p. 285. Alford adds: “an *objective admission* into the covenant of Redemption—a *putting on of Christ*” (1:307, italics in orig.)

¹⁰ Danker, pp. 333-334; Thayer, p. 214; Barclay Newman (1971), *A Concise Greek-English Dictionary of the New Testament* (London: United Bible Societies), p. 60; W.J. Hickie (1977 reprint), *Greek-English Lexicon to the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker), p. 63; Mounce, *Dictionary*, p. 1143.

¹¹ See also 1 Chronicles 12:18; 2 Chronicles 24:20; Romans 13:14; 1 Corinthians 15:53-54, Ephesians 6:14, Colossians 3:12, and 1 Thessalonians 5:8. The sinner is initially clothed with Christ at his conversion in the act of baptism in place of the “old man” (Romans 6:6; Ephesians 4:22; Colossians 3:9). However, in his ongoing war with the flesh, the Christian must continue to “crucify the flesh” (Galatians 5:24) and clothe himself with the spiritual attributes that characterize the fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22; Ephesians 4:24).

¹² *Commentary*, p. 204. “‘To put on Christ’ is to become as Christ, to have his standing; in this context to become objects of the divine favour, sons of God, as he is the Son of God” (p. 203).

¹³ p. 286.

¹⁴ Lenski, pp. 187-188.

¹⁵ Robert Jamieson, A.R. Fausset, and David Brown (no date), *A Commentary Critical and Explanatory on the Old and New Testaments* (Grand Rapid, MI: Zondervan), 2:332.

¹⁶ p. 286.

Titus 3:5



“For we ourselves were also once foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving various lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful and hating one another. But when the kindness and the love of God our Savior toward man appeared, not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us, through the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit, whom He poured out on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Savior, that having been justified by His grace we should become heirs according to the hope of eternal life” (Titus 3:3-7).



For most of the 2,000 years of the Christian Era, the “washing of regeneration” has been readily acknowledged to be an allusion to water baptism. What’s more, the vast majority of Christendom did not place baptism in conflict with salvation like many today who insist that if baptism precedes and is necessary to salvation, then baptism would be a meritorious “work.” Such thinking, only relatively recently popularized, is so foreign to New Testament teaching on salvation that it is difficult to fathom how it could have attained such a prominent foothold in contemporary Christian theology. Incredibly, no doubt due to the Holy Spirit’s eternal and timeless nature as deity, this passage anticipated the “wrong turn” that has been taken by specifically correcting the confusion inherent in the “no works, so no baptism” dogma.

The Central Features of Salvation

Observe carefully how the above verses pinpoint four central features of redemption. First, we humans have been thoroughly and completely lost in sin due to our own actions (i.e., “foolish, disobedient, etc.”—vs. 3). Second, it took a kind and loving God to manifest Himself as our Savior (vs. 4). This divine initiative that was intended to save us was a clear manifestation of His

mercy (vs. 5), and grace (vs. 7), and it was accomplished via Jesus Christ (vs. 6). Third, our salvation could not be achieved by human goodness or our own “works of righteousness,” i.e., works or actions that we enact in order to atone for our sin, save ourselves, and bring about our own justification/righteousness (vs. 5).¹ Fourth, on the contrary, God made our salvation possible via “the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit” (vs. 5). A careful examination of each of these factors, together with awareness of the underlying language selected by the Holy Spirit, will clarify succinctly the role and function played by water baptism in the divine scheme of redemption.

To summarize, according to this context, **Who** saved us? It was “God our Savior,” “the Holy Spirit,” and “Jesus Christ our Savior.” **What** did they make available to us? We could be “saved,” “justified,” and have “the hope of eternal life.” **Where** was this salvation made possible? In and “through Jesus Christ our Savior”—a reference to His unique role in the scheme of redemption by His death on the cross. **Why** would they desire to save us? It was due to their “kindness,” “love,” “mercy,” and “grace.” **When** was the moment in time that God bestowed these blessings and saved us? It was at the moment of “the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit.”

“Washing of Regeneration” and “Renewal of the Holy Spirit”?

So the question is—to what do these two expressions refer? Baptist grammarian Robertson conceded that the “washing of regeneration” refers to water baptism.² The vast majority of commentators, theologians, and grammarians through the centuries have agreed. Look carefully at the syntax selected by the Holy Spirit. Once again, *día* with the genitive is used, meaning “through.” Why would “regeneration,” i.e., being cleansed of sin in order to be saved, be coupled with the term “washing”? λουτρόν (*loutron*) refers to a bath, washing, or ablution and is used only twice in the New Testament—here and in Ephesians 5:26 where spiritual cleansing is also in view. The verb form λούω (*louo*) is used five times in the New Testament,³ with its use in Hebrews 10:22⁴ paralleling Titus 3:5 and Ephesians 5:26. A related word, ἀπολούω (*apolouo*), used only twice in

the New Testament, refers in both instances to cleansing of sin at the point of conversion (1 Corinthians 6:11; Acts 22:16).⁵

Recall, once again, that the Bible is its own best interpreter. Since the Holy Spirit is the author of the entire Bible, He would naturally repeat and paraphrase Himself. A careful comparison of the Titus and Ephesians verses, along with John 3:5 and 1 Corinthians 12:13 (see p. 7, Endnote 2), enables the reader to clarify the precise meaning of the phrase “the washing of regeneration.” See Appendix S for a graphic of this comparison. The “washing of regeneration” of Titus corresponds with “washing of water” in Ephesians, “baptized” in 1 Corinthians, and “water” in John 3.

Observe further that the term παλιγγενεσίας (*paliggenesias*—“regeneration”) is a compound word composed of the two Greek words πάλιν (*palin*—“again”) and γένεσις (*genesis*—“birth”).⁶ One cannot help but recall the conversation between Jesus and Nicodemus pertaining to a second birth—which entailed “water” (John 3:3-7). Further, in both cases, the Holy Spirit acted as the divine agent by which the plan of salvation was communicated. He conveys the message of salvation and terms of entrance into the kingdom via human spokesmen (“earthen vessels”—2 Corinthians 4:7). Hence, “renewal of the Holy Spirit” is achieved when an individual conforms to the specifications given by the Spirit in the Gospel, i.e., he hears the message and believes it (Romans 10:17), repents of his sins (Acts 3:19), confesses Christ with his mouth (Romans 10:9-10), and is immersed in water for the remission of sins (Acts 2:38). A person is “renewed” by the Spirit **when he obeys the instructions of the Spirit** to undergo the “washing of regeneration,” i.e., baptism.

One final observation regarding this verse. Follow the logic: If we are **not** saved by “works of righteousness which we have done,” but we **are** saved by the “washing of regeneration,” then it follows that the “washing of regeneration” cannot be classified as a “work of righteousness.” Hence, baptism is not a “work” or “deed” in the same sense that Paul uses those terms in passages like Romans 3:28 (“justified by faith apart from the deeds of the law”) and Ephesians 2:9 (“not of works, lest anyone should boast”). Commenting on these two verses, McGarvey insightfully noted:

But by works of law in this place Paul means such acts of obedience to law as would justify a man on the ground of innocence, and make him independent of the grace manifested in pardon.... Now baptism is certainly an act of faith, deriving its propriety from a positive command; and **not a work of law** in the sense attached to that expression by Paul; consequently, it may be required of a believer to be baptized **before** he is forgiven, and yet justification may be apart from “works of law”.... [T]he works excluded from the ground of salvation are works of perfect obedience, by which, if any man had wrought them, he would be saved on the ground of merit. This would exclude grace. But remission of sins is in its very nature a grace bestowed, and not a debt paid; and whether it is bestowed on certain conditions or on no condition, it **remains a matter of grace**. Only in case the works done are of such a nature that the person doing them deserves salvation, can grace be excluded; and in that case there would be no remission, because there would be no sins to be remitted. So, then, if God has seen fit to require the believer to be baptized before he forgives him, forgiveness is none the less a matter of grace than if he made no such requirement.⁷

Baptism is necessary to and precedes salvation, but it is not to be considered a “work of righteousness” that is excluded from God’s bestowal of salvation.

Endnotes

¹ It is a misinterpretation of Scripture to assume that, since humans do not have it within their capability to achieve their own salvation, no action on their part is required by God. The Bible repeatedly indicates that humans are required to perform “righteous acts,” i.e., actions that God, Himself, stipulates as prerequisite to His bestowal of blessing. When Peter sought to convince the Gentiles that they, too, were acceptable recipients of salvation and entrance into the kingdom, he contrasted their **ethnicity**, which was irrelevant to their salvation, with their **obedience**, which was relevant and essential. He styled this indispensable prerequisite to salvation: “whoever fears Him and **works righteousness** is accepted by Him” (Acts 10:35). Obviously, Peter did not believe that anyone can merit or earn their salvation. Nevertheless, he indicated that certain “acts of righteousness” performed by humans are necessary to salvation. This is no doubt the sense intended by him on the day of Pentecost when he declared: “Save yourselves from this crooked generation” (Acts 2:40, ASV, ESV, NRSV, NIV, et al.). Observe, however, that these righteous acts are stipulated **by God**—not man. For a man to do what God tells him to do in

no way implies that the individual is somehow achieving his own salvation or that he is being saved by “works” rather than by “grace.” Cf. 1 John 3:7,10. The righteous acts that God requires humans to do before He will impart His gracious, undeserved forgiveness based on the blood of Christ are faith, repentance, confession, and baptism. See John 6:29 where Jesus stated that believing is a “work” that God requires man to perform (cf. Galatians 5:6; Philippians 2:12; 1 Thessalonians 1:3,11; James 2:22). Likewise, repentance entails “works befitting repentance” (Acts 26:20). See also the expression “obedience of faith” in Romans 1:5 and 16:26 which refers to the **obedient compliance** that characterizes and defines the kind of faith set forth in the book. If faith, repentance, and oral confession with the mouth (Romans 10:9-10) all constitute physical and mental actions/works that an individual must perform **before** he can be saved, why would anyone balk at baptism as a prerequisite to salvation—a passive act that is done **to** the person by the baptizer? The reason man cannot save himself by his own actions is due to his having sinned. One sin necessitates that salvation be achieved on some basis other than man’s own goodness/conduct. All his good works and obedience cannot nullify the one sin he committed. Hence, God must “step in” and orchestrate the means of forgiveness, which He did in the sending of His Son. That act is the grace of the Bible. God must then, likewise, communicate to man precisely how he may take advantage of that forgiveness, i.e., what man must do in order for God to apply the cleansing benefits of Christ’s blood to man’s sin. Faith, repentance, oral confession, and immersion in water constitute the prerequisites that **God** stipulates as necessary in order for Him to forgive sin as His free gift and gracious mercy.

² *Word Pictures*, 4:607.

³ It refers to washing feet in John 13:10, washing a dead body in Acts 9:37, washing backs that had been beaten in Acts 16:33, and the washing of a pig in 2 Peter 2:22. Its occurrence in Revelation 1:5 in the TR is a textual variant.

⁴ The grammar of Hebrews 10:22 provides further support for the contention of this book. “Let us draw near,” or as Kenneth Wuest renders it, “let us keep on drawing near” [(2002 reprint), *The New Testament: An Expanded Translation* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans), p. 529; Also Lenski, *Hebrews*, p. 347], is a present middle/passive subjunctive verb used for exhortation—a “hortatory subjective”—Davis, *Grammar*, p. 76; Dana & Mantey, p. 171; Summers, p. 108. This drawing nearer to God is to be accompanied by “a true heart in full assurance of faith.” The term rendered “full assurance” refers to a “state of **complete** certainty, **full** assurance, certainty” (Danker, p. 827). The recipients of the book already possessed faith (when they became Christians), but they now needed to mature their faith and bring it to a more complete state of assurance, conviction, and certainty (particularly since they were tending to revert back

to their Jewish conceptions). [See the meaning in Colossian 2:2 and Hebrews 6:11 as well as the verb form used in Romans 4:21, Colossians 4:12, and Romans 14:5.] This admonition is followed by two Perfect passive participles. Recall from the discussion of Acts 16:34 that the Perfect tense in Greek connotes “completed action with a resulting state of being” (Summers, p. 103; Davis, p. 156). Perfect passive participles describe action that is either coincident with or antecedent to the principal verb (Davis, p. 157). Hence, the actions of “having been sprinkled” and “having been washed” occurred **before** the admonition to “keep on drawing near to God.” As Marcus Dods explains: “These participles express **not** conditions of approach to God which are **yet** to be achieved, but conditions **already** possessed”—(no date), “The Epistle to the Hebrews,” in *The Expositor’s Greek Testament*, ed. W. Robertson Nicoll (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans), 4:346-347, emp. added. Mounce conveys the thrust of the perfect passive participle even more forcefully: “**since** our hearts **have been**....” (see also NCV and ISV). The following two participles, therefore, refer back to the point in time of their **conversion**—when they accessed the “blood of Jesus” (vs. 19). As Carl Moll noted in his comments on verse 22: “We thus refer the language, not to sanctification, but to *justification* on the ground of a propitiation”—(1870), *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, ed. John Lange (New York: Charles Scribner), p. 175, italics in orig.

The first participle speaks of “**having had** our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience” (translated by Wuest, p. 529). In keeping with the subject matter of Hebrews, the notion of “sprinkled” undoubtedly harks back to and echoes the Law of Moses practice of sprinkling people and objects with various liquids (including water as well as blood) for purification purposes. However, it is a physical impossibility for one literally to sprinkle his heart, mind, and conscience. Hence, the writer is using figurative language. But how/when did they “sprinkle their hearts”? The answer lies in the fact that before one can become a Christian, one must alter his heart and mind, i.e., repent (Luke 13:3,5; Acts 2:38; 3:19; et al.). Again, the Greek term for “repentance” literally means “a change of mind” (Danker, p. 640). So the author and recipients of the book of Hebrews came to faith in Christ, and then repented of their sins. If, instead, the “sprinkling” here refers to the cleansing power of Christ’s blood, the design of baptism remains the same, since the two participles indicate **coincident** actions. The former possible meaning is inviting since Romans 6 distinguishes between the “death” to sin that occurs in the mind of the prospective convert at the point of repentance which precedes the spiritual death or extermination of sin which occurs in **the mind of God** (see Endnote 1, p. 6) at the point of burial in water.

The next participle, which describes action that occurred coincident with the sprinkling, adds “**having had** our body washed

with pure water” (again, Wuest’s literal rendering). Observe that the use of the term “body” (singular-σῶμα)—not σὰρξ (“flesh”)—indicates a **literal** washing of the physical body with H₂O—unlike the **figurative** use of sprinkling in the previous participle. (See Alford, 4:196). The only activity associated with Christianity that involves water applied to the body is baptism. Lenski insisted that “the New Testament knows of only one washing, namely baptism” (*Hebrews*, p. 350). Writing in the 19th century, Robert Milligan noted: “Indeed, nearly all eminent expositors are now agreed that there is here a manifest reference to the ordinance of Christian baptism”—(1950), *The New Testament Commentary: Epistle to the Hebrews* (Nashville, TN: Gospel Advocate), 9:282-283. To summarize, in Hebrews 10:22, the inspired writer urges his Christian audience to continue to draw closer to God, even as they had commenced that approach when they first believed, repented of their sins, and were baptized. See Appendix Q for a graphic illustration of these principles.


One other observation that merits consideration: in the very next verse (vs. 23), the writer admonishes his readers to “hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering.” The term “confession” is the noun form (ὁμολογίαν) of the verb that means to confess. The New Testament plainly declares that one of the prerequisites to initial salvation/forgiveness—in addition to faith, repentance, and baptism—is oral confession with the mouth (Romans 10:9-10). Macknight notes: “The apostle in this exhortation referred to that confession of their hope of salvation through Christ, which the primitive Christians **made at baptism**” (p. 556, emp. added). If that is the confession that the writer has in mind in verse 23, then the writer alludes to all four **prerequisites** to salvation in two verses: faith, repentance, confession, and baptism.

⁵ These word counts are taken from W.F. Moulton and A.S. Geden (1978), *A Concordance to the Greek Testament* (Edinburgh: T.&T. Clark), pp. 97,606. See Appendix R for a synthesis of baptism and the words for washing.


⁶ Perschbacher, p. 303; Thayer, 474. Thayer even uses the words “new birth” to define the term, along with “renewal, re-creation” and adds “the production of a new life consecrated to God, a radical change of mind for the better, (**effected in baptism**)” and cites Titus 3:5. Danker, also, cites Titus 3:5 as an instance where the term means “experience of a complete change of life, *rebirth*” (p. 752, italics in orig.). See also Daniel Waterland (1856), *The Works of the Rev. Daniel Waterland* (Oxford: University Press, p. 431— “[A]ccording to the ancients, regeneration, or new birth, was either Baptism itself..., or a change of man’s spiritual state considered as wrought by the Spirit in or through Baptism” (italics in orig.).

⁷ 1892, pp. 247-248, emp. added.

1 Peter 3:21



“...who formerly were disobedient, when once the Divine longsuffering waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was being prepared, in which a few, that is, eight souls, were saved through water. There is also an antitype which now saves us—baptism (not the removal of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God), through the resurrection of Jesus Christ” (1 Peter 3:20-21).



At least three syntactical features of this passage are helpful in sorting out the meaning intended by the inspired writer.

The Greek Preposition *Dia*

First, the use of the Greek preposition *dia* with the genitive has as its basic meaning “through.” Several nuances present themselves in the actual usage of this prevalent preposition. Blass, Debrunner, and Funk pinpoint the meaning “To denote manner...; also **the circumstances in which one finds one-self because of something...or the medium.**”¹ Anthon’s first meaning is “Relation of Place” which he describes as “A motion extending through a space or object, and passing out of it; and hence ‘*through*,’ ‘*out of*,’ ‘*throughout*.’”² Danker identifies two relevant meanings: (1) “marker of extension through an area or object, *via, through*.” He specifically cites 1 Peter 3:20 as an example of this meaning, noting that “saved through water” means “*be brought safely through the water.*”³ In other words, water was the medium used by God to enable Noah and his family to escape the same fate as the rest of the human population.⁴ As Alford explains: “The water is in the Apostle’s view the *medium of saving*, inasmuch as it bore up the ark.... It saved them, becoming to them a means of floating their ark and bearing them harmless: it saves us, becoming to us baptism.”⁵ (2) Though Danker classifies 1 Peter 3:20 as an example of this use, he suggests that Jesus’ baptism might

also be characterized by his third possible option: “marker of **instrumentality or circumstance** whereby something is accomplished or effected, *by, via, through*” and, specifically, “of attendant or prevailing circumstance.”⁶ Observe that he offers the **same** English translation, i.e., “*via*” and “*through*.” Hence, we are dealing with subtle nuances that do not significantly alter the basic thrust of the preposition. In either case, the fact that the eight members of Noah’s family were “saved by/through water” means that water was the “space,” “area or object,” “medium,” or the “instrumentality or circumstance” through which, by which, and out of which God accomplished or effected their safety.⁷

Type/Antitype

Second, observe Peter’s use of the technical term “antitype” (ἀντίτυπον). Whereas Romans 6:3-4 equated baptism with a sort of reenactment or mimicking of the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ, 1 Corinthians 10:2 and 1 Peter 3:21, instead, use the stylistic device of type-antitype⁸ in which Old Testament events prefigured New Testament events. Specifically, in 1 Corinthians 10:2 the Israelite crossing of the Red Sea was a **type** (*tupikos*—vs. 11) of the **antitype** of New Testament baptism.⁹ Likewise, in 1 Peter 3, the waters of the Noahic Flood prefigured New Testament baptism as well. As the waters of the Flood were utilized by God to bring Noah and his family to safety,¹⁰ so the waters of baptism are the means that God uses to bring the penitent believer to the place of spiritual safety.

The “Resurrection of Jesus”

Third, the term “resurrection” is extremely significant in making sense of the essentiality of baptism. Those who resist the scriptural role of baptism typically do so by insisting that “we are saved by what Jesus did, not by what we do.” **This declaration is certainly true.** Yet, Peter’s remarks (like Paul’s in Titus 3:5) demonstrate that salvation can depend wholly upon the work of Christ and yet He still require human beings to engage in divinely specified actions as prerequisites to His bestowal of salvation. This fact is most apparent in Peter’s post-parenthetical remark: “through (*dia*) the resurrection of Jesus Christ.”¹¹ This *dia* is undoubtedly an instance of Danker’s “marker of instrumentality or circumstance whereby something

is accomplished or effected.”¹² The New Testament is abundantly clear that salvation is effected by means of the atoning work of Jesus. We typically think in terms of His shed blood on the cross and, therefore, His death as **the** atoning event. However, the New Testament frequently refers to that atoning work in terms of all three events, i.e., His death, burial, and resurrection (e.g., 1 Corinthians 15:3-4). At times, the three are compressed (by means of synecdoche) under the single term “resurrection.” For example, Paul refers to Jesus as having been “delivered up because of our offenses, and was **raised** because of our **justification**” (Romans 4:25). Peter used the term in precisely this fashion at the beginning of his epistle, linking salvation to Christ’s resurrection:

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His abundant mercy has begotten us again to a living hope **through the resurrection of Jesus Christ** from the dead, to an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled and that does not fade away, reserved in heaven for you (1 Peter 1:3-4).

In fact, in both 1 Peter 1:3 and 3:21, the Holy Spirit used the same phrase: δι’ ἀναστάσεως Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ (“through the resurrection of Christ”). In both cases, salvation is attributed to the resurrection.¹³

Further, Paul stressed this same point to the Romans (as discussed above) as well as to the Colossians when he said they had been “buried with Him in baptism, in which you also were **raised with Him** through faith in the working of God, who raised Him from the dead.... If then you were **raised with Christ**, seek those things which are above” (2:12; 3:1). Hence, we are driven to the conclusion that human access to the benefits of the resurrection occurs at the point of water immersion. No one questions that Christ’s atoning work is the source of our salvation. Baptism is not the “**how**” of salvation—it is simply the “**when**.” As Alford summarized: “His resurrection, and entrance into His kingdom, giving us, by Him, a living part in Him, and entrance also into His kingdom by means of His appointed sacrament of Holy Baptism.”¹⁴

Endnotes

¹ p. 119, emp. added. For “circumstances,” they cite 2 Corinthians 2:4 where Paul stated that he wrote to the Corinthians “through

- many tears.” For “medium” they cite 2 Corinthians 10:9 where Paul showed concern about whether he might “terrify” the brethren “by letters.” Observe the parallel: “terrified via letters” compared with Peter’s “saved via water.” The letters were the agency through which Paul feared he would terrify the Corinthians, and water was the agency through which God saved the eight souls.
- ² Charles Anthon (1849), *A Grammar of the Greek Language* (New York: Harper & Brothers), p. 464, italics in orig. He gives διὰ πεδίου (“through the plain”) as a similar example, which parallels through the water of the Flood.
 - ³ p. 224, italics in orig. Similarly, Perschbacher explains “saved” in verse 20 as “to bring safely through” and for the passive specifically: “to reach a place or state of safety,” citing 1 Peter 3:20 as an instance of this usage (p. 96, italics in orig.).
 - ⁴ The same prepositional phrase (δι’ ὕδατος—“by water”) is used in 1 John 5:6 to refer to Jesus as having come “by water and blood.” The “by water” undoubtedly refers to Jesus’ baptism (Mark 1:9), hence, literally passing **through** the waters of baptism.
 - ⁵ 4:365,369, italics in orig. See also MacKnight: “Eight souls were effectually saved by water, or, **safely conveyed through the water...** The baptism...which is the antitype or thing which was signified by the deluge, now saves us as effectually as the water of the deluge **preserved Noah by bearing up the ark**”—James MacKnight (no date), *A New Literal Translation, from the Original Greek of all the Apostolical Epistles* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker), pp. 620-621, emp. added. Also Adam Clarke (no date), *Clarke’s Commentary: Romans-Revelation* (New York: Abingdon-Cokesbury)—“[W]as it the *deluge*, itself, or the *ark*, or the *being saved* by that ark from the deluge, that was the *antitype* of which St. Peter speaks? Noah and his family were *saved by water*; i.e. **it was the instrument of their being saved** through the good providence of God” (6:862, italics in orig., emp. added).
 - ⁶ Danker, italics in orig. See this use illustrated in 2 Corinthians 2:4 (“through many tears”) and 1 Timothy 2:15 (“saved through childbearing”). See also Max Zerwick and Mary Grosvenor (1981), *A Grammatical Analysis of the Greek New Testament* (Rome: Biblical Institute Press), p. 711, who identify *dia* in this verse as “instrumental *through* (= by means of) water.”
 - ⁷ Observe that some commentators desire to shift the attention away from the essentiality of baptism by suggesting that Noah and his family were saved **by the ark**, and that “Jesus is our ark of safety, so we’re saved by Jesus—not baptism.” Unfortunately, such thinking fails to allow Peter and the Holy Spirit to express what they meant. The passage does not say that Noah was saved “through

the ark," but "through water"; and it does not say that "Jesus now saves us" but rather "baptism now saves us." Macknight rightly notes: "The relative ὃ being in the neuter gender, its antecedent cannot be κιβωτος, *the ark*, which is feminine, but ὕδωρ, *water*, which is neuter" (p. 620, italics in orig.). [NOTE: Newer editions of the Greek New Testament have the accusative (ὃν) rather than the dative (ὃ) relative pronoun.] Rather than attempt to force the text to fit our preconceived ideas, why not study the text in order to ascertain what God intended to convey, and then bring our preconceptions and biases into line with that inspired meaning? If God intended to convey the meaning that Noah was saved by the ark, He could have very easily said so!

⁸ Bullinger defines "type" as "A figure or ensample of something future and more or less prophetic, called the 'Antitype'" which he says "agrees more with what in the New Testament is called σκιά (*skia*), a shadow (Heb. x. i. Col. ii. 17)"—E.W. Bullinger (1968 reprint), *Figures of Speech Used in the Bible* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker), p. 768. See also D.R. Dungan (1888), *Hermeneutics* (Delight, AR: Gospel Light), p. 368.

⁹ Once again, *dia* with the genitive in verse 1 is rendered "through" the sea. Their baptism was literal, since the Israelites were surrounded by water, i.e., a wall of water on the left, a wall of water on the right, and the presence of God in the form of a cloud overhead (water in the atmosphere)—which Paul notes in the words "under the cloud" and "through the sea" (vs. 1) and again "in the cloud and in the sea" (vs. 2). They were submerged/baptized "into Moses," i.e., into his divinely designated leadership role. This type prefigured or anticipated the baptism to which all individuals are required to submit in the Christian Era in which we are baptized "into Christ" (our leader, rather than Moses); and, whereas they received manna and water from a rock (both manifestations of the presence of deity in His care for them), we receive the "bread of life" and drink via Christ (John 6:50-58).

¹⁰ Bullinger, p. 697—"it was water which was the instrumentality through which Noah was brought safely through."

¹¹ The close connection between baptism and Jesus' resurrection is made clearer by removing the parenthetical remark in the verse: "There is also an antitype which now saves us—baptism...through the resurrection of Jesus Christ."

¹² p. 224. This point is unaffected by the "subjective" vs. "objective genitive" question. See Daniel Wallace (2000), *The Basics of New Testament Syntax* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan), p. 59.

¹³ Cf. Acts 3:26; 4:33; 17:18; 1 Corinthians 15:17; Philippians 3:10 ("the power of His resurrection"); 1 Thessalonians 1:10; 1 Peter 1:21.

¹⁴ 4:370.

Conclusion

At the end of time, it will surely be one of the great tragedies of eternity that so many will stand before God having “rejected the will of God for themselves, not having been baptized” (Luke 7:30)—either for rejecting the act altogether or for altering its purpose as stated by God Himself. Will God refuse those who failed to grasp the proper meaning assigned to baptism? Be reminded of the occasion when Paul encountered individuals in Ephesus who had been immersed under John’s baptism subsequent to the time when that baptism had served its purpose. They were unaware that the pre-Christian era had passed and that all people were now living under the New Covenant (see Hebrews 9:15-17). Hence, their baptism, a precursor to Christianity, lacked a proper understanding of the baptism administered under the Christian Era. Though its outward form was the same (i.e., immersion), their **understanding** of the import of New Testament baptism was lacking—which necessitated being baptized correctly “in the name of the Lord Jesus” (Acts 19:5). **So it matters what is in one’s mind when he or she is baptized.** Otherwise, anyone on the planet who happened to go completely under water at some point in life would be baptized scripturally. What makes the difference is the **intention** of the one being baptized and whether he **understands** the reason and purpose of New Testament baptism.¹

Someone might say: “But I can’t believe that God would condemn me on such a technicality like the purpose of baptism!” Such thinking betrays biased perceptions of God and His grace which minimize the necessity of being overly concerned about strict obedience to every command of God—as if arriving at correct doctrine is irrelevant to establishing a right relationship with God. But this is precisely what the Bible teaches. Doctrinal purity does not necessarily guarantee a right relationship with God, but a right relationship with God is impossible without doctrinal purity. **Both** “spirit and truth” (i.e., proper attitude **and** proper adherence to truth—John 4:24) are essential to a right relationship with God. The very nature

of God and truth is at stake in this discussion. Truth, by its very definition, is narrow, specific, fixed, and technical. God is a God of truth Who operates within the parameters of truth. Since He is God, He does not, and cannot, vary from truth and right. Man's definition of what constitutes a "technicality" rarely matches God's definition. More often than not, the very items that humans brush aside as unimportant and trivial, are those things upon which God lays great importance. Herein lies the crux of man's problem. **We** decide what **we** think is important, and then proceed to structure **our** religion around those self-stylized premises, assuming divine sanction and "grace." Never mind the fact that "it is not in man who walks to direct his own steps" (Jeremiah 10:23). Never mind the fact that "the wisdom of this world" is foolish to God (1 Corinthians 1:20). And never mind the fact that such an attitude and approach betrays great arrogance.

In everyday living, we understand very well the principle that those things that appear to be trivial or mere technicalities can be crucial to survival. The incorrect dosage of medicine in a medical emergency—even milligrams—can mean the difference between life and death. One or two miles over the speed limit can rightfully secure the offender a ticket. Accidentally putting gasoline into a diesel engine can ruin an automobile. I suppose one could label each of these examples as "technicalities," but doing so does not alter the magnitude of their importance or the extent of their ramifications.

In biblical history, the same principle holds true. Adam and Eve were expelled permanently from the Garden of Eden for eating from **one** piece of fruit from **one** tree (Genesis 3). Nadab and Abihu—the right boys, at the right place, at the right time, with the right censers and the right incense—nevertheless were destroyed by God for incorporating the **wrong fire** into their incense offering (Leviticus 10:1-2). Moses was excluded from entrance into the Promised Land because of his **one** mistake at Kadesh—striking a rock instead of speaking to it (Numbers 20:7-12). Saul was deposed as king for sparing the best sheep and cattle, and the life of **one** individual out of an entire nation (1 Samuel 15). Uzzah was struck dead for merely reaching out to steady the Ark of the Covenant (2 Samuel 6:6-7). God rejected Uzziah because he entered the temple, merely to

burn incense (2 Chronicles 26:16ff.). Aquilla and Priscilla were struck dead simply for misrepresenting the amount of money they received for the sale of their property (Acts 5:1-11).

These are no more “technical” or “trivial” than the New Testament regulation pertaining to the necessity of water baptism. We must refrain from attempting to second-guess God or deciding for ourselves what **we** think is important to Him, since “that which is highly esteemed among men is abomination in the sight of God” (Luke 16:15). We need to be attentive to “**all** the counsel of God” (Acts 20:27)—even those portions that humans deem unimportant or peripheral. When people are clamoring, “That’s not a salvation issue!,” we need to reaffirm the words of Jesus, “These you ought to have done, without leaving the others undone” (Matthew 23:23).

The Greek grammar that the Holy Spirit selected to communicate Himself to the human race is sufficiently clear that the translators of the average English translation, without the “aid” of biased commentators and theologians, have conveyed to the average person the divine intention with regard to the role of baptism in the religion of Christ. We are under divine mandate to set aside **all** influences—whether family, friends, or respected religious authorities—and allow God to communicate His intentions for our salvation. We must not allow our bias, our preferences, our church affiliations, and our human loyalties to dismiss the clear teaching of the Holy Spirit on the matter of baptism. Indeed, “how can one conscientiously ignore inspired grammatical forms that were designed to convey precise religious ideas?”² We dare not do so. Rather, let us brush aside all adverse influences and joyously, with enthusiasm, embrace the clear teaching of God.

For who has known the mind of the LORD? Or who has become His counselor? Or who has first given to Him and it shall be repaid to him? For of Him and through Him and to Him are all things, to whom be glory forever. Amen (Romans 11:34-36).

Endnotes

- ¹ No wonder Phillip asked the Eunuch, “Do you **understand** what you are reading?” (Acts 8:30). Cognitively and intellectually grasping the details of New Testament Christianity is indispensable to accepting Christ for the forgiveness of sins. Once Phillip “preached Jesus to him” (vs. 35), he understood the purpose and significance of baptism—so much so that as soon as he saw a body of water in their vicinity, he said, “See, here is water. What hinders me from being baptized?” (Acts 8:36).
- ² Wayne Jackson (no date), “Acts 2:38—Carroll Osburn and ‘For the Remission of Sins,’” *ChristianCourier.com*, <https://www.christiancourier.com/articles/498-acts-2-38-carroll-osburn-and-for-the-remission-of-sins>. For more study charts that illustrate various features of baptism, see Appendix T.

Epilogue

The story is told of a high society woman of distinction who had been off the social circuit for some time due to circumstances beyond her control. She decided to reintroduce herself into social circles by hosting a banquet at her large estate and inviting her peers to attend. Considerable preparations were made, coupled with great deliberation and planning, carefully anticipating the coming event in hopes of achieving a magnificent evening, entertaining her guests in notable fashion, and effectively regaining entrance into high society. When the evening finally arrived, the extensive preparations were in full display: the kitchen staff had prepared a sumptuous banquet, the banquet tables were elaborate and visually inviting, the talented and extensive orchestra was in place and playing enchanting music, the ballroom was decorated in splendor, and the hostess was dressed in her most dignified and magnificent garb. She felt ready and eager to make her grand debut.

But something was wrong. As the time for the grand event approached, no guests were forthcoming. When the official hour arrived, still no guests had appeared. She urged the orchestra to keep playing. She instructed her kitchen staff to keep the food warm. She urged the doormen to keep a close watch for arrivals. And she waited—for 15 minutes past the scheduled start time, then 30, 45, and finally an entire hour. She was devastated—and thoroughly humiliated. She could only conclude that her would-be guests were unwilling to accept her return and used the occasion to formally express their rejection. She calmly dismissed the musicians, ordered her staff to dismantle the decorations, return all accoutrements to storage, and package the food to donate to charity. She then quietly retired to her boudoir, and in the midst of her dejection, despair, disappointment, and humiliation, she took her own life.

Some days later, as the executors of her estate were settling her affairs, going through her things, one of them found in a drawer of her desk a large stack of envelopes that had been addressed and prepared for mailing. They even had stamps already placed on each envelope. They were the invitations to the banquet. She had forgotten to mail them. All of her

extensive and well-intentioned preparations were for naught. **She had failed to do the one thing that would have given meaning to all of her other preparations.**

How many deeply religious, sincere people who, during their lifetime, devote themselves to many activities associated with the religion of Christ, nevertheless, fail to honor the Lord by conforming to His will regarding the design of water baptism?

“Not everyone who says to Me, ‘Lord, Lord, shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who **does the will of My Father** in heaven. Many will say to Me in that day, ‘Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name?’ And then I will declare to them, ‘I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!’” (Matthew 7:21-23). “But why do you call Me ‘Lord, Lord,’ and **do not do the things which I say?**” (Luke 6:46). “If you love Me, keep My commandments.... He who has My commandments and keeps them, **it is he who loves Me....** You are My friends if you **do whatever I command you**” (John 14:15,21; 15:14).

Appendices

Appendix A

A Comparison Between Hebrews 11:30 and Salvation “by Faith”

**A Comparison Between
Hebrews 11:30 and
Salvation “by Faith”**

By FAITH	walls of Jericho	fell down	AFTER	encircled 7 days
By FAITH	sin	is forgiven	AFTER	penitent believer baptized

Salvation “by faith”
does not exclude
human action/works.

Appendix B

Matthew 28:19-20 and Mark 16:15-16 Compared

Matthew 28:19-20 and Mark 16:15-16 Compared

Matthew 28:19-20

"Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations,
baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy
Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you."

Matthew 28:19-20	Go	all the world/ every creature	make disciples	teach what Jesus commanded and baptize them
Mark 16:15-16	Go	all the nations	will be saved	preach the Gospel and baptize believers

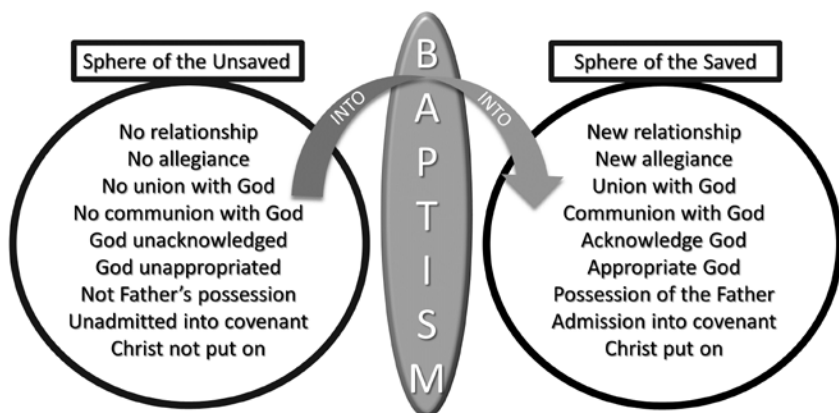
Mark 16:15-16

"Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature.
He who believes and is baptized will be saved."

Appendix C

Summary of *Eis* in Matthew 28:19

Summary of *Eis* in Matthew 28:19



Appendix D

Mark 16:16— English Sentence Diagram

Declarative statement

Mark 16:16

Future Indicative Passive Verb
Simple Predicate

Future Tense Verb
Simple Predicate

Relative
Pronoun: the
"he" who will
be saved

He

will be saved

who

believes

Pronoun
Simple Subject

Coordinating
Conjunction

and

is baptized

but

He will be condemned

Relative
Pronoun: the
"he" who will
be condemned

who

does believe

not

Appendix E

Sharp's Rule

The issue is also resolved on the basis of a technical Greek feature known as “Sharp’s Rule 1,” named after biblical scholar and classicist Granville Sharp who died in 1813. His rule, based on very specific criteria in the Greek language, shows itself to be consistently valid. Here is his wording of the rule:

When the copulative καί connects two nouns of the same case, [viz. nouns (either substantive or adjective, or participles) of personal description respecting office, dignity, affinity, or connection, and attributes, properties, or qualities, good or ill,] if the article ὁ, or any of its cases, precedes the first of the said nouns or participles, and is not repeated before the second noun or participle, the latter always relates to the same person that is expressed or described by the first noun or participle—Granville Sharp (1803), *Remarks on the Uses of the Definitive Article in the Greek Text of the New Testament* (London: Venor & Hood), p. 3.

This rule describes the precise syntactical conditions of Mark 16:16. The two aorist participles (“believes” and “is baptized”) are preceded by a single article and connected by “kai/and.” Hence, the second participle (“is baptized”) refers to the same person represented by the first participle (“believes”). It follows, then, that since the two participles represent the same person, it would be entirely redundant to repeat the entire description—which accounts for the occurrence of only one participle in the second clause. (My thanks to Dr. James Smeal for calling my attention to these details.) See Daniel Wallace’s extensive writing on Sharp’s Rule in his *Grammar*, pp. 270ff., his 2009 book *Granville Sharp’s Canon and Its Kin* (New York: Peter Lang), his 1983 article “The Semantic Range of the Article-Noun-Kai’-Noun Plural Construction in the New Testament,” *Grace Theological Journal*, 4[1]:59-84, his 1998 article “Granville Sharp: A Model of Evangelical Scholarship and Social Activism,” *Journal of Evangelical Theological Society*, 41:591-613, as well as his 1995 dissertation “The Article with Multiple Substantives Connected by Kai in the New Testament: Semantics and Significance” (Dallas Theological Seminary). Wallace gives James 1:25 as an example of “Participles in the TSKS Personal Construction” (p. 275). Note the precise parallel to Mark 16:16—

Sharp’s Rule 1					
	ARTICLE	PARTICIPLE	COPULATIVE	PARTICIPLE	VERB
Mark 16:16	ὁ	πιστεύσας	καί	βαπτισθεὶς	σωθήσεται
	the	one who believes	and	is baptized	will be saved
James 1:25	the	one who looks	and	perseveres	will be blessed
	ὁ	παρακύψας	καί	παραμείνας	μακάριος

Appendix F

Mark 16:16—Men vs. Jesus

Mark 16:16

MEN SAY:

BELIEF = SAVED + BAPTISM

JESUS SAID:

BELIEF + BAPTISM = SAVED

Jesus said: "He who believes and is baptized will be saved."

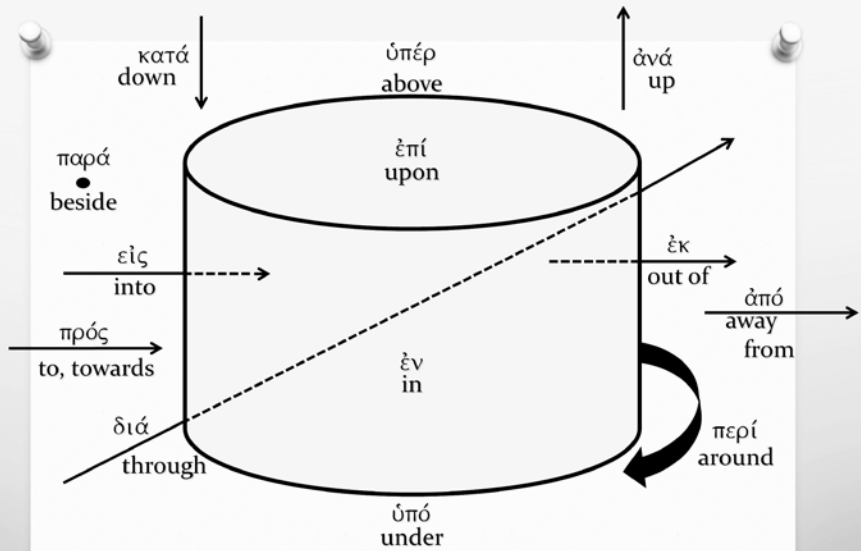
Men say: "He who believes and is saved will be baptized."

Men say: "He who believes and is **not** baptized will be saved."

Appendix G

Basic Meanings of Greek Prepositions

Basic Meanings of Greek Prepositions



These prepositions are used in concert with various Greek "cases" (i.e., the accusative, genitive, and dative).

Appendix H

**Acts 2:38 in
60 English Translations with
Abbreviation Codes for
English Translations**

ACTS 2:38 IN 60 ENGLISH TRANSLATIONS

RENDERING	TRANSLATION
"unto the remission of your sins"	ABUV/ASV
"into remission of your sins"	RHM/WYC
"into forgiveness of your sins"	CJB/JNT
"to remission of sins"	YLT
"in order to the remission of sins"	TLO
"in order to have your sins forgiven"	GSPD
"to have your sins forgiven"	KNOX
"so that your sins will be forgiven"	BECK/CEV/GW/NOG
"so that your sins may be forgiven"	IEB/NRSV
"so that your sins will be forgiven"	GNT
"so that you may have your sins forgiven"	PHILLIPS
"so your sins are forgiven"	MSG
"and your sins will be forgiven"	NLV
"with a view to the remission of your sins"	WEY
"Then God will forgive your sins"	ERV
"then your sins will be forgiven"	NIRV/VOICE
"Your wrong ways will be forgiven you"	WE
"to have your sins removed"	TPT
"for the removal of your sins"	TLV
"for the remission of [your] sins"	DARBY/DR/GNV/JUB/KJV/ KJ2/KJ21/MOF/NKJV/NMB
"for the forgiveness of [your] sins"	CEB/CSB/CV/DLNT/EHV/ESV/ EXB/HCSB/ICB/ISV/LEB/MEV/ MOUNCE/NABRE/NASB/NCV/NEB/ NET/NIV/NLT/OJB/TCNT/TJB/WEB

All renderings for *eis* manifest a prospective thrust.

ABBREVIATION CODES FOR ENGLISH TRANSLATIONS

ABUV = John Broadus American Bible Union Version

ASV = American Standard Version

BECK = William Beck NT in Language of Today

CEB = Common English Bible

CEV = Contemporary English Version

CJB = Complete Jewish Bible

CSB = Christian Standard Bible

CV = Confraternity Version

DARBY = Darby Translation

DLNT = Disciples Literal New Testament

DR = Douay-Rheims

EHV = Evangelical Heritage Version

ERV = Easy-to-Read Version

ESV = English Standard Version

EXB = Expanded Bible

GNT = Good News Translation

GNV = 1599 Geneva Bible

GSPD = Edgar Goodspeed American Translation

GW = God's Word Translation

HCSB = Holman Christian Standard Bible

ICB = International Children's Bible

IEB = International English Bible

ISV = International Standard Version

JNT = Jewish New Testament

JUB = Jubilee Bible 2000

KJV = King James Version

KJ2 = King James II (Jay Green)

KJ21 = 21st Century KJV

KNOX = R.A. Knox New Testament

LEB = Lexham English Bible

MEV = Modern English Version

MOF = James Moffatt New Testament

MOUNCE = Mounce Reverse-Interlinear New Testament

MSG = The Message

NABRE = New American Bible (Rev. Ed.)

NASB = New American Standard Bible

NCV = New Century Version

NET = New English Translation

NIRV = New International Reader's Version

NIV = New International Version

NKJV = New King James Version

NLV = New Life Version

NLT = New Living Translation

NMB = New Matthew Bible

NOG = Names of God Bible

NRSV = New Revised Standard Version

OJB = Orthodox Jewish Bible

PHILLIPS = J.B. Phillips New Testament

RHM = J.B. Rotherham Emphasized New Testament

TCNT = 20th Century New Testament

TJB = The Jerusalem Bible

TLO = The Living Oracles

TLV = Tree of Life Version

TPT = The Passion Translation

VOICE = The Voice

WE = Worldwide English New Testament

WEB = World English Bible

WEY = Weymouth

WYC = Wycliffe Bible

YLT = Young's Literal Translation

Appendix I

Greek Specialists on Acts 2:38

Questions Posed to Greek Specialists:

“In view of your expertise in Greek, will you be so kind as to clarify a technical Greek matter (apart from any theological considerations) that pertains to a New Testament verse? A two-part question: What is the force/thrust of the preposition *eis* in Acts 2:38? And, further, can **both** verbs in the verse, i.e., ‘repent’ (2nd person plural) and ‘be baptized’ (3rd person singular), be modified by the **same** prepositional phrase ‘for the remission of sins’?”

Dr. Jane McLarty (B.A., M.A., M.Phil., Ph.D.)

Senior Tutor, Wolfson College

**Director of Studies in Theology, Churchill College & Lucy Cavendish College
Cambridge University Faculty of Divinity**

“The basic meaning of the preposition *eis* is ‘to’ (i.e., directional)—but developing from this is the idea of a non-physical goal or aim—so in this context you could translate ‘for’ the forgiveness of sins—i.e., the repentance and baptism are aimed at the forgiveness of sins. Yes, both could be modified by the prepositional phrase, grammatically.”

Dr. Stathis Gourgouris (Ph.D., UCLA)

Professor of Classics, English, and Comparative Literature

**Director of the Institute for Comparative Literature and Society
Columbia University**

“I am not a linguistic expert in New Testament Greek, but ‘*eis aphesin hamartiōn*’ is a common phrase. You find it often even in liturgical texts. It’s often translated as ‘so that your sins will be forgiven’—the literal translation is the way you have phrased it: ‘for the remission of your sins’. I don’t think there is a special thrust/force in the preposition. Yes, to your second question: both verbs are modified by the prepositional phrase. The strangeness here is not so much that 2nd and 3rd person, but that one verb is obviously direct imperative addressed to many and the second verb a kind of indirect, impersonal as it were, imperative, which is moreover in passive voice. I don’t know if I can give you an account of the different choice in verb forms, but I would argue that it bears no theological difference.”

Dr. Lindsay Whaley (Ph.D., State University of New York at Buffalo)

Professor of Classics and Linguistics

Dartmouth College

“It is fairly common to express purpose using *eis* in Koine Greek (it also occurs in Attic Greek, though with less frequency) and that is its function in Acts 2:38. Although I would stop short of saying it is IMPOSSIBLE to render the *eis* with both verbs according to the rules of Greek grammar, it strikes me as highly unlikely. Both for... the different subjects, and because if Luke intended this, he could have used a *men...de* construction or a *kai...kai* construction to

make the parallelism explicit. ‘be baptized’—there is no way that it could only be associated with repent because of its placement.”

Dr. Rebecca Sinos (Ph.D., Johns Hopkins University)
Professor and Chairman of the Department of Classics
Edwin F. and Jessie Burnell Fobes Professor in Greek (Classics)
Amherst College

“The preposition is in its basic meaning directional (‘into’) and when not indicating spatial movement can refer to one’s aim more generally, so here indicating the purpose of the baptism. The two imperatives work together, but the second person plural imperative ‘repent’ seems to me not so closely linked to the prepositional phrase as is the third person singular imperative ‘be baptized.’ Nothing prohibits extending the prepositional phrase to apply to both imperatives, though.”

Dr. Simon Burris (Ph.D., Cornell University)
Senior Lecturer in Classics
Faculty Fellow in Ancient Greek Literary Papyri at the
Baylor Institute for Studies of Religion
Baylor University

“I am only qualified to speak to the specific grammatical questions (theology is above my pay-grade) and I am not an expert in NT but a general Hellenist, but your questions fall within the broad purview of Greek language studies, which is where my expertise lies. The “eis” in Acts 2:38 seems a clear example of the preposition indicating end or purpose, which I think we would normally render with our preposition “for.” This use of “eis” is well attested from Homer on, with plenty of examples in the NT.... There is no way to be absolutely sure of the answer to your second question, but I myself would almost certainly restrict the force of “eis” to “baptistheto” on the basis of word order. (I think the result is a nice structure of three distinct stages, too: repent, get baptized, receive the Holy Ghost).”

Dr. Marcus Folch (B.A., Cornell University; Ph.D., Stanford University)
Associate Professor, Department of Classics
Columbia University

“I do not pretend to be a scholar of New Testament (now increasingly called Hellenistic) Greek, but my sense is that each of the verbal clauses Peter uses, and thus the prepositional phrases attached to them, are distinct. ‘Peter [replied] to them, “Repent (2nd person plural aorist active imperative), *and* may each of you be baptized (3rd sing. pass. imper.) in the name of Jesus Christ into the forgiveness of your sins, *and* you will receive (2nd pl. act. ind.) the gift of the Holy Spirit.” What strikes me in the sentence above is the way that the ‘and’ (καί) separates each clause, and the manner in which each verb is grammatically differentiated from the other verbs by some combination of tense, person, and/or mood; there is almost no other way for an author to signal the distinctness of each clause, other than to separate them off into discrete sentences. So, to your second question, no, I do not think that the first two verbs govern the same prepositional phrases. With respect to your first

question, εἰς + accusative (ἄφεσιν) encodes motion toward or into; hence, ‘be baptized into’. I would expect a parallel construction to be used for ‘be dunked into a bucket of water.’ I am not entirely unaware of the theological implications of these observations; baptism, not repentance, seems to do the work of salvation. But that’s another story.... While it is not impossible that *eis* encodes purpose, one should consider the conventional semantics of *baptizō*, which regularly takes *eis* to indicate the substance into which the object is plunged (cf. LSJ s.v. βαπτίζω A. 1. *dip, plunge*, ξίφος εἰς σφαγὴν J.BJ2.18.4; σπάθιον εἰς τὸ ἔμβρυον Sor.2.63:—Pass., of a trephine, Gal.10.447; βάπτισον σεαντὸν εἰς θάλασσαν Plu.2.166a)....

As for the notion of *kai* as an “‘inclusive’ particle,” the problem is a. that *kai* in this context is not a particle but rather a conjunction, and b. the sense of the third clause, which naturally presupposes and almost requires that the *kai* which introduces the third clause have the same function as the *kai* which introduces the second clause. In other words, the *kai*’s in this sentence are serving identical purposes, joining the first clause to the second, and the second to the third. It appears to me that *kai* is a seriated conjunction, demarcating a sequence of action; one first repents, then is baptized (paradoxically into remission of sins, not water), and finally receives the gift of the holy spirit. The seriated function of the *kai* is evident in the tense of the final *lêmpsethe* (future), indicating that it follows upon the previous two verbal actions.”

[NOTE: The above remarks by these Greek specialists are not to be construed as their endorsement of the contents of this book, but serve solely as professional assessments of the Greek linguistic and syntactical realities of Acts 2:38.]

Appendix J

Acts 2:21, 2:38, and 3:19 Compared

Acts 2:21, 2:38, and 3:19 Compared

Acts 2:21 Whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved.

Acts 2:38 Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.

Acts 3:19 Repent therefore and be converted that your sins may be blotted out so that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord.

ACTS 2:21	Whosoever	shall call	on the name	of the Lord	shall be saved		
ACTS 2:38	every one of you	repent/be baptized	in the name	of Jesus Christ	remission of sins	gift	the Holy Spirit
ACTS 3:19	your	repent/be converted			sins blotted out	times of refreshing	presence of the Lord

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Appendix K

**Verb & Participle
of Identical Action
Describing Same Action
From Different Points
of View in Acts 22:16**

Verb & Participle of Identical Action Describing Same Action from Different Points of View in Acts 22:16		
Relation of Fact to Method	The Method of Being Baptized & Sins Washed Away	The Fact of Calling
Relation of Outward Form to Inner Significance or Quality	The Outward Form of Being Baptized & Sins Washed Away	The Inner Significance or Quality of Calling
Relation of Act to Purpose or Result	The Act of Being Baptized & Sins Washed Away	The Purpose or Result of Calling

Appendix L

A Comparison of Acts 2:21 and Acts 2:38

Acts 2:21

“Whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved.”

Whosoever	shall call	on the name	of the Lord	shall be saved.
every one of you	repent and be baptized	in the name	of Jesus Christ	for the remission of sins

Acts 2:38 = Acts 2:21

Acts 2:38

“Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins.”

Appendix M

Convergence of Death, Blood, & Baptism

Convergence of Death, Blood,
& Baptism in Romans 6:3-4

Baptized
INTO

εἰς

BLOOD
Death of Christ

Buried
with

Christ

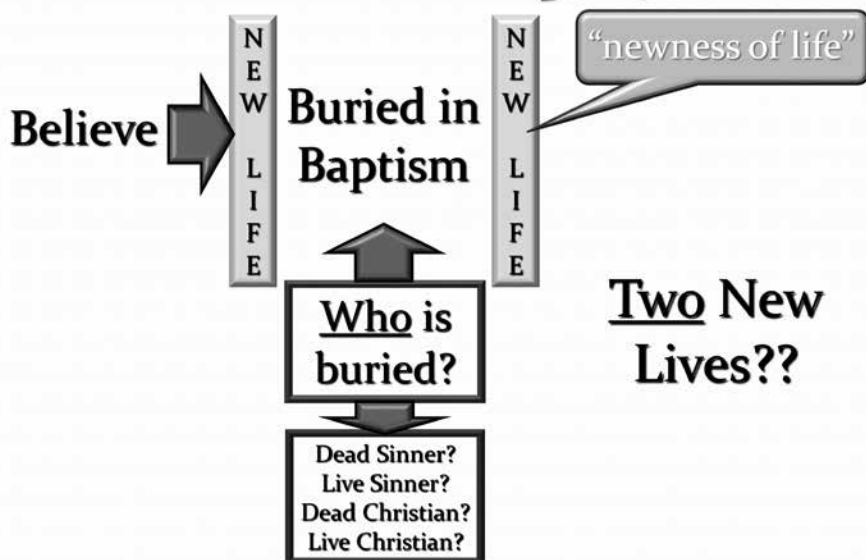
WATER

Appendix N

Romans 6—Two New Lives?

The flawed view of...

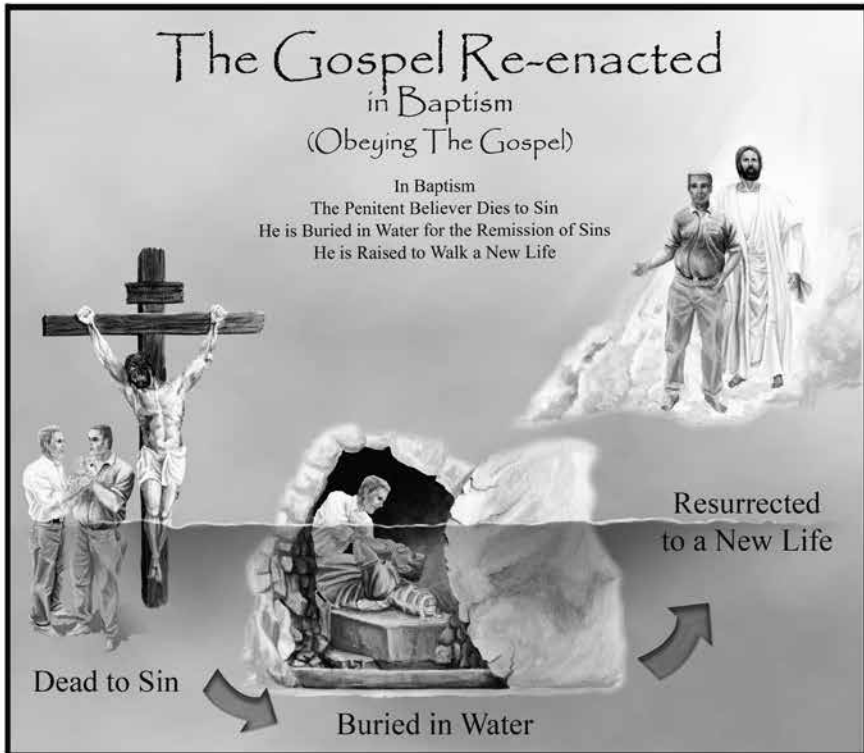
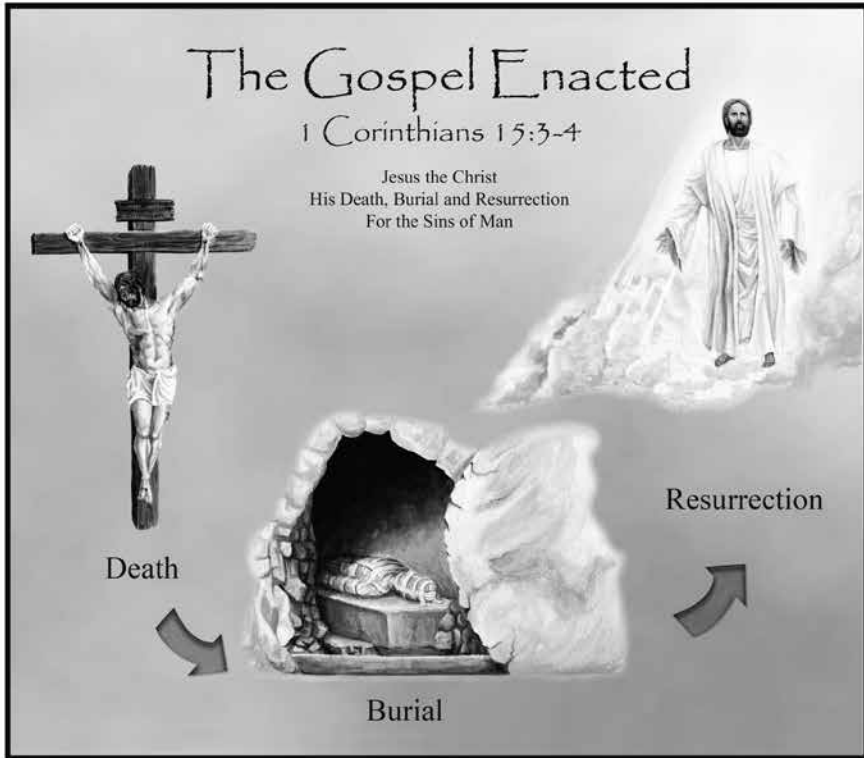
Romans 6:3-4



Appendix O

The Gospel Enacted and Reenacted

Romans 6:3-4



Illustrated by Rob Baker

Appendix P

Romans 6 and Colossians 2 Compared

Romans 6

“we died” (6:2)
“we died with Christ” (6:8)
“buried with Him/baptism” (6:4)
“Christ raised from dead” (6:4)
“Walk in newness of life” (6:4)
“be dead to sin” (6:11)
“live any longer in it” (6:2)

Colossians 2/3

(3:3) “you died”
(2:20) “you died with Christ”
(2:12) “buried with Him/baptism”
(2:12) “raised Him from dead”
(3:1) “Seek things above”
(3:5) “put to death your members”
(3:7) “when you lived in them”

Both passages teach that people are dead in sin and lost until they access the benefits of the death of Christ by being buried in water baptism. At that point, a person becomes dead to sin in the mind of God. Coming up out of the waters of baptism is a type of resurrection that signals a change in the way that person now lives life.

Appendix Q

The Meaning of Hebrews 10:22

Hebrews 10:19-21

A summary of the great scheme of redemption—the means by which God can forgive us.

“Therefore, brethren, having boldness to enter the Holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way which He consecrated for us, through the veil, that is, His flesh, and having a High Priest over the house of God...”

“the blood of Jesus”

As the High Priest entered the Most Holy place once a year to sprinkle blood on the Ark of the Covenant, so Jesus’ blood has been presented to God in heaven for us.

“through the veil/
His flesh”

The curtain/veil that separated the Holy from the Most Holy place was removed by the death/flesh of Jesus on the cross.
Cf. Mark 15:38.

“having a High
Priest”

Our High Priest/Mediator is Jesus, God Himself, not some imperfect, human High Priest.

Hebrews 10:22

The only acceptable human response to the great scheme of redemption.

“Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water.”

“faith”

=

Believe

“hearts sprinkled
from an evil
conscience”

=

Repent

“bodies washed
with pure water”

=

Baptized

Appendix R

Baptism and the Washing of Sin

Baptism and the “Washing” of Sin

ἀπολούω

Acts 22:16

“Arise and be baptized, and **wash away** your sins, calling on the name of the Lord.”

1 Cor. 6:11

“But you were **washed**, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus.”

λουτρόν

Eph. 5:26

“Christ also loved the church...that He might sanctify and cleanse her with the **washing** of water by the word.”

Titus 3:5

“He saved us, through the **washing** of regeneration.”

λούω

Heb. 10:22

“having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience and our bodies **washed** with pure water.”

Appendix S

The Meaning of Titus 3:5

THE MEANING OF TITUS 3:5

JOHN 3:5	SPIRIT	WATER	KINGDOM
1 COR. 12:13	SPIRIT	BAPTIZED	BODY
EPH. 5:26	WORD	WASHING OF WATER	CHURCH
TITUS 3:5	HOLY SPIRIT	WASHING OF REGEN.	SAVED

↑

The Holy Spirit authored the Gospel; He "begets" and "renews" us by this preached Word.

↑

The Gospel generates penitent faith that leads to immersion in water.

↑

We are now saved, citizens of the kingdom, and members of Christ's body the church.

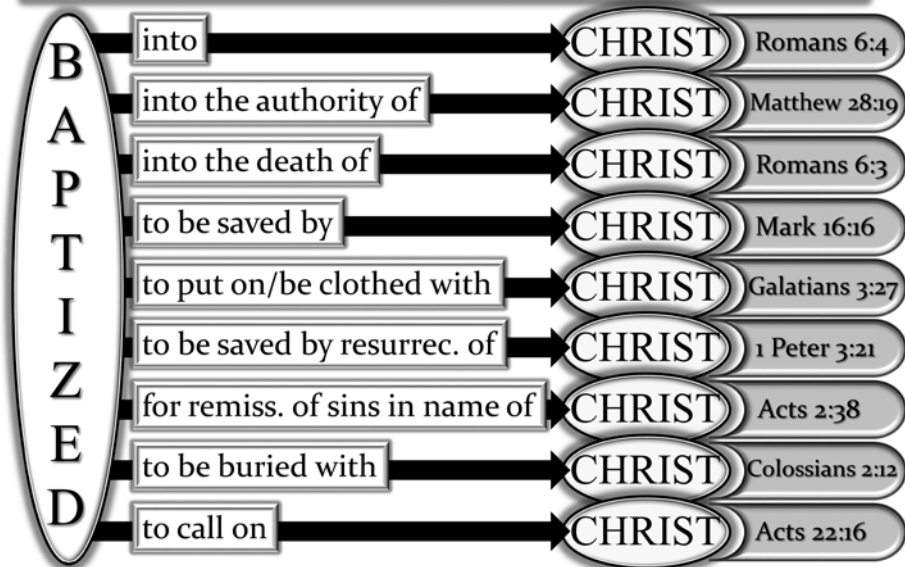
Appendix T

Study Charts:

- ◆ **Baptism Connected to Christ**
- ◆ **Conversion Transition**
- ◆ **The Nature of Faith**
- ◆ **Conversions in Acts**
- ◆ **Blessed When?**
- ◆ **Post Cross/N.T. Baptism**

Baptism Connected to Christ

Baptism is necessary for remission of sins, because it is directly connected to Christ:



Conversion Transition

Passage	Pre-Conversion	BAPTISM	Post-Conversion
Colossians 1:13	Power of Darkness	→	Kingdom of the Son
Galatians 3:27	Spiritually Naked	→	Clothed with Christ
Romans 6:4	Dead in Sin	→	Newness of Life
1 Peter 3:21	Unsaved	→	Saved by Resurrection
Matthew 28:19	Not a Disciple	→	Disciple of Christ
Matthew 28:19	Not in Father/Son/HS	→	Into Father/Son/HS
1 Cor. 12:13	Out of Body	→	Into one Body
John 3:5	Out of Kingdom	→	Into the Kingdom
Acts 2:38	Sins Unforgiven	→	Remission of Sins
Acts 22:16	Sins Unwashed	→	Sins Washed Away
Ephesians 5:26	Uncleansed	→	Sanctified/Cleansed Church
Colossians 2:12	Uncircumcised	→	Body of Flesh Put Off
Titus 3:5	Foolish/Disobedient	→	Saved by Mercy

The Nature of Faith

 Hebrews 11	Promised Blessing		
	Faith	Obedience	Blessing
Abel (v.11)	by faith	offered	righteous
Enoch (v.5)	by faith	pleased God	translated
Noah (v.7)	by faith	prepared	saved
Abraham (v.8)	by faith	obeyed/went out	inheritance
Abraham (v.17)	by faith	offered	received
Moses (v.24-26)	by faith	refused/chose	reward
Moses (v.27)	by faith	forsook Egypt	saw Him
Moses (v.28)	by faith	kept Passover	not destr.
Israel (v.17)	by faith	passed/Sea	survived
Israel (v.17)	by faith	encircled	walls fell
Rahab (v.17)	by faith	received spies	perish not

Conversions in Acts

Great Comm. Matthew 28:19-20; Mark 16:15-16; Luke 24:46-47; Romans 10:9-10					
Acts	Believe	Repent	Confess	Baptized	Saved
2 (Pentecost)	Pricked	Repented		Baptized	Remission
8 (Samaritans)	Believed			Baptized	
8 (Simon)	Believed			Baptized	
8 (Eunuch)	Believed		Confessed	Baptized	Rejoiced
9 (Saul)	Trembled	Sorrow	Confessed	Baptized	Sins Washed
10 (Cornelius)	Believed	Repented		Baptized	Saved/Life
11 (Dispersed)	Believed	Turned to the Lord			
16 (Lydia)	Heart Opened			Baptized	Faithful
16 (Philippian Jailer)	Believed	Washed Stripes		Baptized	Rejoiced
17 (Berea/Athens)	Believed				
18 (Corinth)	Believed			Baptized	Saints
19 (Ephesus)	Believed	Confessed Evil Deeds		Baptized	In Christ

Blessed/Forgiven—When?

PASSAGE	GOD'S GRACE	GOD'S WORD	MAN'S FAITH	MAN'S OBEDIENCE	GOD'S BLESSING
Gen.6:8, 14,22; Heb. 11:7	"found grace"	"make an ark"	"by faith"	"prepared an ark"; "did as God commanded"	"for the saving of his household"
Numb. 21:8-9	"shall live"	"make snake on pole & look"	[believed]	"made" & "looked"	"lived"
Josh. 6:2-20; Heb. 11:30	"I have delivered Jericho"	"march, blow trumpets, shout"	"by faith"	"marched," "blew," & "shouted"	"walls fell"
2 Kings 5:10,14	"you shall be clean"	"wash in the Jordan 7 times"	[believed]	"dipped 7 times"	"he was clean"
Matt. 28:19-20 Mark. 16:15-16 Acts 2:38 Eph. 2:8 Col. 1:20 Tit. 2:11; 3:3-7	"by grace"; "grace has appeared"; "blood of His cross"	Gospel	"believe" "by faith"	"baptized"	"remission of sins"; "saved"

Post-Cross/N.T. Baptism—

- Matthew 28:19** —————> To become a disciple of Christ
Mark 16:16 —————> To be saved
John 3:5 —————> To enter the kingdom
Acts 2:38 —————> To have remission of sins
Acts 22:16 —————> To wash away sins
Romans 6:3-4 —————> To be buried with Christ
1 Corinthians 12:13 —————> To enter the one body
Ephesians 5:25 —————> To be part of cleansed church
Galatians 3:27 —————> To be clothed with Christ
Colossians 2:12 —————> To be "circumcised" (sin cut off)
Titus 3:5 —————> To be saved by God's mercy

Indices

Index of Scriptures

	PAGE
GENESIS	
3	96
3:15	59
6:8,14,22	146

EXODUS	
16:29	49

LEVITICUS	
4:1-35	6
4-5	6
4:20,26,31,35	6
5:10,13,16,18	6
8:6	6
10:1-2	96
16:4	6

NUMBERS	
8:7	6
19:1-22	6
19:9	6
20:7-12	96
21:8-9	146

JOSHUA	
6	37,146
6:10	49
7:2	8

1 SAMUEL	
15	96

2 SAMUEL	
6:6-7	96

2 KINGS	
5:10,14	146
10:19	50

1 CHRONICLES	
12:18	82

2 CHRONICLES	
24:20	82
26	97

	PAGE
JOB	
8:22	80
29:14	80

PSALMS	
22:1	43
51:7	6
104:1	80
132:9,16,18	80

PROVERBS	
31:25	80

ISAIAH	
49:18	80
61:10	80

JEREMIAH	
10:23	96

JOEL	
2:32	65

JONAH	
3:8-10	54
3:10	42

ZECHARIAH	
7:10	56

MATTHEW	
3:7ff.	41
3:8	41,60
3:11	40,41,53,54
3:16	7
4:3,6	59
7:14	1
7:13-14	3
7:21	3
7:21-23	100
10:32	62
12:41	40,41
14:31	40,42,43,54
19:22	71
21:29	53,60
22:14	1
23:23	97

26:28	45,47
27:3	53
28:18	18-19
28:18-20	20,30,31
28:19	16,17,18,19,27,106-107, 144,146
28:19-20	9-30,31,38,77,104-105, 145,146

MARK

1:4	52,53,63
1:9	93
12:37	2
15:34	40,43
15:38	138
16:15-16	104-105,145,146
16:16	31-37,63,69,108-109, 111,112-113,144,146

LUKE

1:3	56
1:64	60
3:3	63
6:46	3,100
7:30	37,95
11:32	40,41
12:32	40
12:41	40,41
13:3	4,74,88
13:5	88
13:23	1
16:15	97
22:31	59
24:46-47	31,145

JOHN

3:3-7	85
3:5	36-37,85,138,142,146
3:16	3
3:18	34,37
4:24	95
6:29	87
6:50-58	94
6:66	1
7:17	1
8:30-31,44	62
8:32	1
12:42	62
13:10	87
14:15,21	100
15:14	100
16:12-13	8

ACTS

2:21	49,51,65,72,123-124, 127-128
2:37	145
2:38	4,5,38-56,62,63,66, 72,73,74,85,88,98, 116-117,119ff.,123- 124,127-128,144, 145,146
2:40	86
2:46	60
3:19	51,62,74,85,88,123-124
3:26	49,94
4:7	16
4:33	94
5:1-11	97
8:1	73
8:12-13	5,62,145
8:13,22-23	62
8:16	17
8:30	4,98
8:35-36	60,98
8:36-38	5
8:36-39	7,62,145
8:39	60
9	74
9:1-19	64
9:6	73-74,145
9:8	74
9:9	74
9:18	5,62,63,145
9:37	87
10:33	71
10:35	86
10:47	7
10:47-48	5,56,62,145
11:4	56
11:14	56
11:15	56
11:21	63,145
14:22	79
15	2
16:5	79
16:12	58
16:14	145
16:15	5,15,62,145
16:16-18	58
16:23	63
16:25	58
16:29	63
16:30	63
16:31	58
16:32	59

16:33	5,63,87,145
16:34	57-63,88,145
17:18	94
17:30	74
17:34	145
18:8	5,7,62,145
19:1-5	35,145
19:5	5,17,62,95
19:18	63,145
20:27	97
21:20,25	63
22:6-16	64
22:16	5,63,64-74,85,125-126, 140,144,145,146
25:13	71
26:12-18	64
26:20	54,87

ROMANS

1:5	87
1:16-17	44
3:25	6
3:28	85
4:20	40,43
4:21	43,88
4:25	92
5:8	3
6:2	136
6:3	80,144
6:3-4	4,5,27,75-78,80,81,91, 130,132,134,136,146
6:4	136,144
6:4-6	66,67
6:6	77,82,88
6:7	77
6:8	136
6:11	136
6:17	76
6:18	76
10:4	79
10:9-10	4,37,72,85,87,89,145
10:16	3
10:17	4,56,59,85
11:32	40,43
11:34-36	97
13:12	80
13:14	82
14:5	88
16:26	87

1 CORINTHIANS

1:2	145
1:10	29

1:10-17	27-28
1:13	17,27,29
1:15	17
1:20	96
2:13	5
6:11	66,85,140
10:1	94
10:2	66,91,94
10:11	91
12:8-9	7
12:11	7
12:12	29
12:13	5,29,85,138,142,146
15:3-4	132
15:17	94
15:53-54	82
16:1-2	49

2 CORINTHIANS

2:4	92,93
4:7	85
7:8	53
7:10	60
10:9	93

GALATIANS

1:23	79
3:23,24,25,26	79
3:26-27	79-82
3:27	5,75,144,146
5:6	87
5:22	82
5:24	78,82

EPHESIANS

1:1	145
1:21	19
2:8	146
2:9	85
3:1-5	8
3:20-21	3
4:5	5,77,79
4:13	79
4:22	82
4:24	80,82
5:26	7,84,138,140,142,146
6:11	80
6:14	82

PHILIPPIANS

2:7	71
2:12	87
3:10	76,94

COLOSSIANS

1:13	144
1:15ff.	19
1:20	146
2:2	88
2:11	27,78
2:12	5,78,92,134,144,146
2:13	78
2:17	6,94
2:20	134
3:1	92,134
3:3	134
3:5	134
3:7	134
3:9	82
3:10	80
3:12	82
4:12	88

1 THESSALONIANS

1:3	87
1:10	94
1:11	87
2:13	8
4:3-4	49
5:8	82

2 THESSALONIANS

2:15	8
------	---

1 TIMOTHY

1:12	71
2:15	93
6:12-13	72

2 TIMOTHY

3:16	8
------	---

TITUS

2:11	3,146
3:3-7	146
3:5	5,83-89,91,140,141-142,144,146
3:14	40,44

HEBREWS

2:10	68
2:14	59
6:11	88
8:5	6
9:15-17	95
9:19-22	6

10:1	6,94
10:19-21	140
10:22	5,7,77,84,87-89,137-138,140

10:23	89
11:4	145
11:5	145
11:7	145,146
11:8	145
11:17	145
11:24-26	145
11:27	145
11:28	145
11:29	145
11:30	8,102-103,145,146
11:31	145
12:7	40,44
12:8	44

JAMES

1:25	111
2:19	59
2:22	87

1 PETER

1:3-4	92
1:10-12	8
1:21	94
3:20	90,93
3:21	4,5,7,27,63,90-94,144

2 PETER

1:16-21	8
2:22	87
3:15-16	8

1 JOHN

2:2	3
3:7,10	87
5:6	93

2 JOHN

9	37
---	----

JUDE

3	79
---	----

REVELATION

1:5	87
12:4ff.	59
13:10	6
22:14-17	3

Index of Subjects

accusative case, 38,45,46,53,54
 authority, 6,16-20,27-28,29,72,144
 badge, baptism as a, 25-26,80
 baptismal regeneration, 8
 Baptist Quarterly, The, 26,38
 believe/belief/believer, 3-4,7,8,13,18,20,
 23,25,32-35,36-37,39,57ff.,
 62,63,73,78,79-81,85,86,
 89,91,113,136,140,145
 blood of Christ, 3,4,6,8,26,39,47,57,
 62,66,67,75,77,78,87,88,
 92,93,129-130,132,140,146
 Calvinist/Calvinism, 3,4
 causal *eis*, 25,39-47,48,52,53,55
 causative middle, 65,66
 cleanse/cleansing, 4,6,8,25,62,67,69,
 77,78,84,85,87,88,144,146
 confessing/confession, 4,5,8,18,19,37,62,
 67,72,73,85,87,89,145,161
 demons, 58,59,100
 distributive imperative usage, 50,55
 Docetism, 2
 faith, 1-7,8,13,18,19,25,27,29,31,34,37,
 42,43,59,61-63,73,74,78,79,
 80,85-89,92,102,138,140,146
 faith only, 2,62,73
 forgiveness, 3,4,5,6,7,8,16,25-27,32,33,
 38-39,46-47,48,50,51,52,55,
 57,66,67,69,75,78,86,87,
 89,98,117
 free will, 4
 Garden of Eden, 96
 Gnosticism, 2
 Gospel, 1,3,4,5,12,19,23,26,32,43,59,
 62,78,79,85,131-132,138,146
 grace, 2,3,4,8,25,67,84,86,87,95,96,146
 grace only, 2
 Great Commission, 9,20,23,31
 Hellenistic, 11,25,46
 inspiration, 7,8
 “in the name,” 2,16,18,19,24,28,65,
 72,95
 “into the name,” 15-19,24,27-28,30
 Jericho, 8,37,146

Jerusalem, 64
 Latin Vulgate, 18
 law, 2,19,57,79,85,86
 Law of Moses, 2,6,79,88
 Lord’s Supper, 47
 Macedonia, 57
 mercy, 43,84,92,144,146
 metonymy of the cause, 40
 mythology, 57,59
 negative inference fallacy, 36-37
 Nineveh/Ninevites, 41-42,54
 objective genitive, 94
 “on the name,” 24,64-65,68,72,74,161
 outward sign/form, baptism as a, 7,25,78
 participles
 aorist, 10,14,22,31ff.,63,68,69-72,111
 adverbial, 21,65,68
 antecedent action, 21,31-32,36,
 69-71,88
 attendant circumstance, 14
 circumstantial, 21,68,69-71
 coincident action, 11,21,22,26,69-71,
 81,88
 manner, 12,13,21,65,68,72
 means, 12,13,14,21,22,68,70,72
 modal, 12,21,72
 perfect, 10,61-62,63,88
 present, 9-14,21,22,23,31,70
 simultaneous action, 10,11,12,22,23,
 34,69-71,73
 subsequent action, 11,21,22,31-33,
 36,69
 person and number, 48ff.,119ff.
 personal Savior, 3,26,59,60,73
 Philippi, 57,58
 picture, baptism as a, 26,30,66-67,69,73,80
 public profession, baptism as, 18,25-26,161
 regeneration, 7,27,83-85,89,138,161
 remission, 26,38,39,40,41,43,46,47,48,51,
 52,53,54,55,66,67,72,73,77,85,
 86,98,117,124,132,144,145,146
 repent/repentance, 4,5,6,19,39,40-42,46,
 47,48,50,51,53,54,55,59-60,61,

62-65,74,77,85,87,88,89,124,
140,145
resurrection, 27,66-67,76,91-92,
94,132,134,144
Septuagint, 17,49
Sharp's Rule, 37,112-113
symbol, baptism as a,
6,16,25-27,69,72,73,76,78,80
synecdoche, 92
subjective genitive, 94
testimony, 25-26
unsaved believers, 62
wash/washed/washing, 26,52,53,59,
64-67,69,71-72,73,74,83-85,
87,88-89,138,141-142,144,145,
146,160,161
way of salvation, 24,58
word order in Greek, 22
works, 2,42,44,54,83,84,85-87

Index of Persons

A

Alford, Henry, 13,16,23,25,28,34,62,
82,89,90,92
Anthon, Charles, 90,93

B

Ballantine, W.G., 71-72
Barnes, Albert, 13,19,24
Beasley-Murray, G.R., 13,20,23,30
Bengel, Johann Albrecht, 24
Bietenhard, Hans, 16,25,27
Blass, Friedrich, 10,68,90
Boles, H. Leo, 17,29
Brewer, G.C., 53,54
Briney, J.B., 56
Broadus, John, 23-24
Brown, Colin, 25,30
Browne, Edward, 14
Bruce, Alexander, 12,23
Bruce, F.F., 17,29,69
Bullinger, E.W., 53,94
Burris, Simon, 121
Burton, DeWitt Ernest, 21,33,36,68,71,72,
80,81-82
Buttman, Alexander, 68

C

Carson, D.A., 22-23
Carter, Ronald, 36
Clarke, Adam, 59,62,93
Crain, Sellers, 17,29
Cremer, Hermann, 52,53
Crosby, Alpheus, 52

D

Dana, H.E., 10,12,20,40,45,53,54,61,
63,68,78,87
Danker, Frederick, 18,30,38,45,51,55,56,76,
81,82,87,88,89,90,91
Davis, J.C., 55
Davis, William, 20,36,47,87-88
Debrunner, 68,90

Denny, James, 78
Dods, Marcus, 88
Dow, John, 81
Duff, Jeremy, 21

E

Eadie, John, 80,81
Eiselen, Frederick, 24,25

F

Fausset, A.R., 80,82
Folch, Marcus, 121-122
France, R.T., 14,15,24,25
Funk, Robert, 68,90

G

Gaebelein, Frank, 23
Gardner, Jim, ix,2
Geden, A.S., 89
Gerok, Karl, 67,74
Gerth, Bernhard, 10
Gideon, Virtus, 21
Goodwin, William, 10,20,55,68,70,71,78
Gourgouris, Stathis, 120
Green, Samuel, 12,21,45
Grosvenor, Mary, 93

H

Hackett, H.B., 24,50,56,68,72
Hadley, James, 10,20,50,70
Harris, Murray, 30,53,55
Hartman, Lars, 30
Hendriksen, William, 22
Heitmuller, Wilhelm, 30
Henry, Matthew, 59,62
Hester, David, 35
Hickie, W.J., 82
Howard, R.E., 81
Huddilston, John, 20
Huxtable, Prebendary, 82

J

Jackson, F.J. Foakes, 24
 Jackson, Wayne, 63,98
 Jelf, William, 10,70

K

Kittel, Gerhard, 27,52
 Knowling, R.J., 62,63,68
 Kuhner, Raphael, 10,21,32,36,38,79,81

L

Lake, Kirsopp, 24
 Lange, John, 21-22,29,68,69,88
 Lechler, Gotthard, 67,74
 Lenski, R.C.H., 13,24,28,52,68,70,73,
 80,81,82,87,89
 Liddell, Henry, 50,55,56,81
 Lightfoot, John, 13,23
 Lindblom, Johannes, 30
 Luther, Martin, 7

M

Maas, A.J., 24,25
 Machen, J. Gresham, 9,20,31,54,68
 Macknight, James, 28,89,94
 Madvig, J.N., 70
 Mantey, Julius, 10,12,20,25,39-40,43,45,46,
 53,54,55,61,63,68,78,87
 Marcus, Ralph, 46,55
 McCarthy, Michael, 36
 McGarvey, J.W., 6,7,19,26,29,30,34,42,85
 McIntyre, Luther Jr., 55
 McLarty, Jane, 120
 Meyer, Heinrich, 14,17,18,24,39,52
 Meyrick, Frederick, 24
 Miller, Dave, 27,29,35
 Milligan, George, 17,29,55
 Milligan, Robert, 16,25,77,89
 M'Neile, Alan, 25
 Moll, Carl, 68,88
 Moule, C.F.D., 15,24,52,63,68
 Moulton, James, 11,17,21,25,29,32,55,63,
 68,70,77
 Moulton, W.F., 21,89
 Mounce, William, 10,20,31,36,55,61,82,88

Myers, Kippy, 55

N

Newman, Barclay, 82
 Nicoll, W. Robertson, 13,23,29,63,78,88
 Nunn, H.P.V., 21

O

Oepke, Albrecht, 26,39,52
 Olshausen, Hermann, 67,74
 Osburn, Carroll, 55-56,98

P

Perschbacher, Wesley, 27,55,69,89,93
 Poole, Matthew, 13,18,23
 Porter, Stanley, 23

R

Ramsay, William, 30,62,63
 Ridderbos, Herman, 82
 Roberts, J.W., 51,56
 Robertson, A.T., 10,12,15,17,20,21,22,28,29,
 31,32,36,45,50,53,54,66,
 68,69,73,75,78,84
 Robison, Henry, 11,21,32
 Rogers, Cleon Jr., 21
 Rogers, Cleon III, 21
 Rogers, Justin, ix

S

Schlatter, Adolf von, 20,30
 Schmiedel, Paul, 32,36,70
 Schneider, David, 30
 Scott, Robert, 55,81
 Seymour, T.D., 70
 Sharp, Granville, 111
 Shepherd, J.W., 7,56
 Simcox, William, 68
 Sinos, Rebecca, 121
 Smeal, James, ix,111
 Smyth, Herbert, 21,36
 Souter, Alexander, 18,29
 Spicq, Ceslas, 52,54,69
 Stier, Rudolf, 67,69,74
 Summers, Ray, 9,20,31,53,61,63,87,88
 Swete, H.B., 32,34,36

T

Thayer, Joseph, 17,29,50,52,56,82,89

Turner, Nigel, 15,25

V

Van Dyke, Frank, 53

Van Oosterzee, J.J., 27

Vaughan, Curtis, 21

Vincent, Marvin, 15,25,78

Vine, W.E., 16,27

W

Wallace, Daniel, 13,24,54,55,63,94,111

Waterland, Daniel, 89

Westcott, B.F., 32

Whaley, Lindsay, 120-121

Wilkes, L.B., 56

Williams, A. Lukyn, 14,18,24

Williams, Charles, 70

Williams, George, 62

Willmarth, J.W., 26,29,38,47,54,55,80,82

Winer, George, 21,36,39,51,52,68,78

Wuest, Kenneth, 25,87,88

Z

Zerwick, Max, 93

Index of Bible Persons

Abel, 145
Abihu, 96
Abraham, 43,145
Adam, 96
Ananias, 26,64,65,73,74
Apollon, 27-28
Aquila, 97
chief priests, 53-54
Corinthians, 145
Cornelius, 56,145
elders, 53-54
Enoch, 145
Ephesians, 145
eunuch (Ethiopian), 145
Eve, 96
jailer (Philippian), 57-62,63,145
John the baptizer, 39,40,41,52,54,95
Jonah, 41-42,54
Judas, 53-54
King Agrippa, 54
King Saul, 96
Lydia, 145
Moses, 6,66,94,96,145
Nadab, 96
Paul/Saul, 5,26,27-29,43,54,57-61,63,64-67,73-74,75,76,78,79-80,85-86,91-92,93,94,95
Peter, 42,47,48,51,56,65,86,91-92,93
Pharisees, 41
Phillip, 98
Priscilla, 97
Rahab, 145
Samaritans, 145
Satan, 7,19,59
Sergius Paullus, 63
Silas, 57,63
Simon, 62,145
Uzzah, 96
Uzziah, 96

Index of Greek Words and Phrases

- ἀνά, “up,” 115
ἀντίτυπον, “antitype, stamp, form,” 91
ἀπό, “away,” 115
ἄρξασθαι, “began, initiated,” 56
ἄφεσιν, “remission,” 52
ἄφεσις, “remission,” 73
ἄφεσις τῶν ἁμαρτιῶν, “remission of sins,” 67
ἁμαρτιῶν, “sins,” 52,67
ἀπόλουσαι, “wash away,” 73
ἀπόλουσαι τὰς ἁμαρτίας σου, “wash away your sins,” 67
ἀπολούω, “to cleanse,” 84,142
βαπτίζω, “to baptize,” 7,27,52,82
βαπτισθεῖς, “is baptized,” 111
βάπτισαι, “be baptized,” 73
βάπτισμα, “baptism,” 7
βαπτιστής, “baptizer,” 7
βάπτω, “I baptize,” 27,52
γάρ, “for,” 79,81
γένεσις, “birth,” 85
διὰ, “through,by,” 92,93,115
δι’ ἀναστάσεως Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ, “through the resurrection of Christ,” 92
διὰ πεδίου, “through the plain,” 93
διδάσκοντες, “teaching,” 22
διστάζω, “to doubt, waver” 54
δι’ ὕδατος, “by/through water,” 93
ἐδίστασας, “you doubted,” 42,54
Ἐγώ, “I,” 28
εἰς, “into,” 16,18,26,38,42,46,51,52,54,55,80,82,115,131
εἰς ἄφεσιν ἁμαρτιῶν, “into remission of sins,” 52
εἰς ἄφεσιν τῶν ἁμαρτιῶν, “into the remission of sins,” 72
εἰς τί, “into what?” 54
εἰς τί ἐδίστασας, “into what you doubted?” 42
ἐκ, “out of,” 115
ἕκαστος, “each,” 50
ἐλευθερθέντες, “to free, set free,” 76
ἐν, “in,” 115
ἐπί, “upon,” 115
ἐπικαλεσάμενος τὸ ὄνομα αὐτοῦ, “calling on His name,” 72

ἐπίστευσαν εἰς αὐτον, "believe on Him," 62
 ἐπὶ τῷ ὀνόματι Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ, "on the name of Jesus Christ," 72
 καθεξῆς, "in order, sequence," 56
 καί, "and," 21,22,111
 κατὰ, "down," 115
 κιβωτός, "ark," 94
 λουτρὸν, "bath, washing, ablution," 84,142
 λούω, "to wash, bathe," 84,142
 μαθητεῦειν, "to make disciples," 24
 μαθητεύσατε, "make disciples," 30
 μακάριος, "blessed," 111
 ὁ, "the," 111
 ὁμολογίαν, "confession, profession," 89
 ὄνομα, "name," 30
 οὐχ ὡμολόγουν, "they were not confessing," 62
 ὅσοι, "as much, as many as" 81,82
 οἵτινες, "whoever," 82
 παιδαγωγός, "guardian, custodian," 79
 παλιγγενεσίας, "regeneration," 85
 πάλιν, "again," 85
 πάντες, "all," 82
 παρὰ, "beside," 115
 παρακύψας, "one who looks," 111
 παραμείνας, "perseveres," 111
 παραχρῆμα, "immediately," 60
 πεπιστευκότες, "having believed," 63
 πεπιστ. τῷ θεῷ, "having believed in God," 62
 περί, "around," 115
 πιστεύσας, "one who believes," 111
 πρὸς, "to," 51,115
 σὰρξ, "flesh," 89
 σκιά, "shadow," 94
 σχίσματα, "schisms," 29
 σωθήσεται, "will be saved," 111
 σῶμα, "body," 89
 τί, "what?" 42,54
 τύπος, "type, form, pattern" 76
 ὕδωρ, "water," 94
 ὑπέρ, "above," 115
 ὑπό, "under," 115
 Χριστιανούς ποιήσατε, "make Christians," 30
 ὧ, "which," 94

Index of Transliterated Greek Words and Phrases

anastas, 65
apistesas, 34
apolouo, 84
apolousai, 65,66
apostrepho, 54
baptidzein eis to onoma, 18
baptidzo, 17
baptidzontes, 12
baptisai, 65,66
baptistheis, 32
dia, 46,76,84,90,91,93,94
didaskontes, 12
eis, 14-19,24,25,27,30,38-47,48,52,53,54,55,75,76,80,105,115,117
eis aphesin hamartion, 47
eis aphesin ton hamartion, 39,47
eis maideian hupomenete, 44
eis ti, 43
eis to onoma, 17,18
eis to onoma tinos, 18
en, 15,25
enduo, 80
epikalesamenos, 65
gar, 79
genesis, 85
hekastos, 50
hosoi, 81
kai, 65,113
louo, 84
loutron, 84
matheteuein, 18
matheteuo, 12,23
matheteusate, 12,14

metamelomai, 53

metanoeo, 4,54

metanoia, 39,40

onoma, 16-19,28

paliggenesias, 85

palin, 85

pepisteukos, 61,62

pisteusas, 32

pros, 15

skia, 94

sothesetai, 32

tupikos, 91

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