

# Safford Church of Christ

3888 S Hwy 191, Safford, AZ 85546

## 6 July 2014

*I was glad when they said to me, "Let us go to the house of the LORD!" Psalm 122:2*

### Topics

#### A.M. Bible Class:

The God of All Comfort (2 Corinthians 1:3 ff)

#### A.M. Lesson:

True Freedom (John 8:32)

#### P.M. Lesson:

Living for God (1 Peter 4:1-11)

#### Wednesday:

Murder the Israelite king and take his place, or The Rapid Decline of Israel (2 Kings 15:8-38)

Pulpit Evangelist

Ken Knowlton: 428-3494

Elders

Greg Briggs: 428-8756

John Cunningham: 428-0895

Sunday Bible Class	10:00 A.M.
Sunday Morning Worship	11:00 A.M.
Sunday Evening Worship	6:30 P.M.
Wednesday Evening Class	6:30 P.M.
Thursday Ladies Bible Class	10:00 A.M.

## Acts 2:38

Neil Short

To a restorationist, Acts 2:38 is one of the most simple verses in the Bible. The verse very clearly makes repentance AND baptism conditions for forgiveness of sins.

*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 shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. (Acts 2:38, RSV)*

To an evangelical, Acts 2:38 is one of the most difficult verses in the New Testament. I am often amazed to witness the efforts evangelicals will exert to neutralize the force of the verse. The doctrine that baptism is a requirement for salvation cannot be tolerated by an evangelical.

The motivation behind this article is that I recently heard yet another effort at refuting the clear meaning of Acts 2:38. I plan to present the most common arguments; but first I will share with you the new (to me) offering.

Claim:

Peter uses two imperative verbs "repent" and "baptize". But these verbs are not the same. Repent is 2nd person plural, and Baptize is 3rd person singular. From this it should be seen that the the preposition is really the adverb of repent. The clause "be baptized each one of you in the name of Jesus" is the governed clause of "repent that you might be forgiven of your sins". So it would really read like this: "Repent (and be baptized each one of you upon the name of Jesus Christ) that your sins may be forgiven and receive..." (quoted from a Facebook thread).

This argument borders on the ludicrous. This person is imposing an extremely complex sentence structure upon Peter's answer that it wouldn't have possibly made any sense to the hearers. How many ways can I butcher a straightforward sentence to make it say something different than what it was intended to say?

Anyway, the usual attack on Acts 2:38 has to do with the preposition "for" (*eis*, in Greek). The usual understanding of *eis* is as follows. A sentence, "A *eis* B" is translated "A for B." It means "A results in B." There is a rare way to understand "A *eis* B" and that is "A because of B." Evangelicals want to read Acts 2:38 as "Repent, and be baptized every one of you in

the name of Jesus Christ *because of* the forgiveness of sins....”

The only motivation to read this verse with the reverse meaning of *eis* is because the altered reading safeguards the evangelical doctrine of salvation by grace alone. There is, however, some support that can be dragged out of near obscurity. The *Enhanced Strong's Dictionary* by OakTree Software has this to say.

If you saw a poster saying “Jesse James wanted for robbery”, “for” could mean Jesse is wanted so he can commit a robbery, or is wanted because he committed a robbery. The later sense is the correct one. So too in [Acts 2:38], the word “for” signifies an action in the past. Otherwise, it would violate the entire tenor of the NT teaching on salvation by grace and not by works.

In other words, the above writer sees a doctrinal problem with the plain meaning of Acts 2:38; so in order for it to harmonize with what he understands as the “teaching of salvation by grace” he argues for an awkward and contextually unrequired reading. Furthermore, the wanted poster example does not even use similar language as Acts 2:38.

A more persuasive example is given by Matthew 12:41:

*The men of Nin'evah will arise at the judgment with this generation and condemn it; for they repented at [eis="for"] the preaching of Jonah, and behold, something greater than Jonah is here.*

At least in this case, the reverse (and rare) meaning is required by the context. The question for us is, how would Peter's answer have sounded in the ears of those people who asked, “Brethren, what shall we do” (Acts 2:37)? Those people had not been through the Protestant Reformation and didn't know about “salvation by grace alone.” What did they hear?

Consider the following crystal clear example:

*for this is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for [eis] the forgiveness of sins. (Matthew 26:28)*

Was the blood poured out *because of* or *for* the forgiveness of sins? The meaning is very clear (even in the New World Translation)!

What did the people in Acts 2:37-38 hear? They

heard exactly what we plainly hear. Repentance and baptism are *for* the forgiveness of sins!

There is yet another very common argument. That is, the Philippian Jailer was told to “believe.” *and brought them out and said, "Men, what must I do to be saved?" And they said, "Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved, you and your household." (Acts 16:30-31)*

The natural conclusion (if these are the only two verses you read in the entire book of Acts) is that belief alone is all that is needed. However, all it takes is a *little* careful reading. Why wasn't the jailer given the same answer Peter gave in Acts 2:38? Clearly, the jailer didn't even believe in Jesus! What would have been the point of repenting or being baptized into a name he didn't even believe in? I could ask the same question about Acts 2:37-38. Why didn't Peter tell the crowd, “Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved?” The people in Acts 2 interrupted the lesson to ask what they must do. They were acting on their belief by announcing their eagerness to *do something!* There is a logical progression to salvation and the progression involves objective steps. It would have been absurd for Peter to tell the people to “believe.” They already believed. It would have been absurd for Paul and Silas to tell the jailer to repent and be baptized into the name of the Lord Jesus—a name the jailer had yet to believe!

## News

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Barbara Eisenburg is home from the hospital and feeling better. Please continue to keep Barbara and Bill Eisenberg in your prayers. Dorothy Wiggins is in the last stages of life at the Hospice of the Valley in Chandler. Linda Prock is in at the Beehive – the new care center in Thatcher at the corner of 2nd Ave. and Hwy 70.

Dave Morse is also at the Beehive Care Center.

## Prayer List:

*Bill and Barbara Eisenberg, H.L. Boling, Mike and Sandy Cavasos, Nicolas and Annie Self, Dave Morse, Richard Tuey.*

