

us apply this principle to 1 Corinthians 12:13. Paul is saying very simply that the only way a person can enter into (become a part of) the group of saved people is by being immersed into it. The Bible cannot make it any clearer: a man *must* be immersed in water to be in the church. Those who have followed the teachings of men, and have *not* been immersed, are not a part of Christ's spiritual body. They are a part of a manmade denomination, and their salvation is then dependent upon a man—who can never save them.

A sixth purpose of baptism is the remission of sins. While this point may be akin to the teaching of Acts 22:16, it portrays a slightly different purpose for baptism. In direct response to the greatest question ever asked (“What shall we do?,” Acts 2:37) Peter said, “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.” A key word in this passage is “remission.” Remission means “to take away, to forgive, to not hold against.” The Bible teaches that God is able to remember our sins no more (Heb. 8:12), to remove our sins as far as the east is from the west (Ps. 103:10-12), and to cast our sins into the depths of the sea (Mic. 7:18-19). But for God to do this, we must be baptized (Mk. 16:16). Another vitally important word in this verse is the word “for.” The Greek word translated “for” is *eis*. This word is used to represent “a going into, an indication of purpose, or the going in the direction of a goal.” Hence, the purpose or goal of baptism is the forgiveness of one's sins. However, it is important for us at this time to discuss a false doctrine that involves Acts 2:38. Some have tried to make the word “for” mean “because of.” This argument is known as the “causal view of *eis*.”

While this view may sound good to those trying to propagate the doctrine of salvation by “faith only,” it contains several glaring errors that prove it to be false. (1). Logic demands that this view of Acts 2:38 cannot be true. If this view were true, then Peter would have been saying to the Jews of his day, “Repent and be baptized *because you have already received the remission of sins.*” Why would Peter tell the Jews that they need to repent and be baptized if they have already been forgiven of their sins? If they had already been forgiven of their sins, they did not need to do *anything*. It would be highly illogical for someone to ask you what they need to do to be saved (the question of Acts 2:37), and you then tell them that they have to do two things (repent and be baptized)—not to *be* saved, but because they *already are* saved. (2) This view of Acts 2:38 is in direct contradiction to the words of Jesus, Who taught that for a man to be saved he had to repent *before, not after*, he had been forgiven of his sins. In Luke 13:3, Jesus told certain people who were still in sin that they had to repent to get out of sin. Jesus said, “I tell you no, but unless you repent you shall all likewise perish” (Lk. 13:3). If the causal view of Acts 2:38 is true, then Peter and Jesus are in disagreement on what one must do before *salvation* to rid themselves of their sins. If such a disagreement does, in fact, exist, it would make the *infallible* Bible a *fallible* book. Does the Bible contradict itself? Or does the false doctrine of salvation prior to baptism contradict the Bible? To ask is to answer. (3) While there is no proof that the causal argument is justifiable in any case, for the sake of argument let us assume for a moment that it is. The Greek word *eis* is used some 1,768 times in the New Testament. Of all the uses of *eis*, there are only about five instances where the causal case would make sense and would be correct grammatically. These numbers tell us that the chance of the causal view of *eis* occurring is about .3 percent. That

is to say, 99.7% of the time *eis* does not mean “because of.” Therefore, for one to translate “for” as “because of,” this position would have to be supported by strong textual indicators and justifiable evidence. There are no such indicators or textual evidences on which to base such a view. In fact, when all the evidence is considered, it is diametrically opposed to *eis* meaning “because of” in Acts 2:38. The Bible plainly teaches that baptism is for the remission of past sins. And no amount of theological wrangling is going to alter that fact.

# The Purpose of Baptism

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**A Sacrament?  
Outward Symbol?  
Essential to  
Salvation?**

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If someone were to ask you the question, “Why were you baptized?,” what would your answer be? Many would simply say, “Because Jesus was.” While it is good to do what Jesus did, there is much more to the purpose of baptism than merely doing what Jesus did. When we turn to the Scriptures, we find that there are several pertinent reasons for being immersed. Notice what the Bible teaches regarding the various purposes of baptism.

The first purpose of baptism is to save one’s soul from eternal destruction. To deny that baptism is for the salvation of the soul is to deny the explicit words of the Bible. Peter said, “...baptism now saves you...” (NASB, 1 Pet. 3:21). In the everyday world, we understand statements like this quite clearly. For example, suppose you go to your doctor and he informs you that you have a life-threatening cancer. However, he tells you that there is one cure. He goes on to explain that radiation therapy will “now save you” from cancer. You do not have to wonder what that statement means. You *know* that the doctor is telling you that unless you undergo radiation therapy, *you will die*. In a similar fashion, Peter stated that unless one is baptized for the remission of sins, *he cannot be saved* (and thus he will die spiritually). Jesus, too, taught that baptism was for the salvation of the soul. In Mark 16:16, Jesus said, “He who believes and is baptized will be saved, but he who does not believe will be condemned.” Notice how simply Jesus says that belief plus baptism equals salvation. Again, if you and I were to apply this same sentence with the corresponding syntax (two conditions equal a reward), we would not have any difficulty understanding

it. For example, suppose that the local radio station in your town is having a promotional giveaway, and the disc jockey says, “Whoever comes down to the station and clucks like a chicken will receive \$100.” From this statement, you know you have to *both* go down to the station (condition #1) *and* cluck like a chicken (condition #2) in order to receive \$100 (the reward). Anyone knows that if you go down to the station and bark like a dog, then you will not receive the reward. Or, if you do not go down to the station, but instead you stand in front of your radio and cluck like a chicken, you will not get the money. Why? Because you did not do exactly what was required of you. While this may be a rather crude illustration, it expresses the point quite clearly. Unless one meets *both* of the conditions expressed by Jesus (belief and baptism) he will *not* be saved.

A second purpose for baptism in the New Testament is to enter the kingdom of God. In John 3:1-8, Nicodemus comes to Jesus to compliment the Savior on His marvelous works. However, Jesus does not respond to Nicodemus’ flattery, but instead looks deeper into his spiritual condition and tells him that he cannot enter the kingdom of God unless he is “born of water and the Spirit.” What exactly does it mean to be “born of water and the Spirit”? This no doubt was the very question Nicodemus was asking himself, since he responded to the Lord’s statement by asking, “Can a man be born again?” Nicodemus, like some today, thought that a person had to be *physically* born into the kingdom of God (a popular view among Jews). But Jesus explained to him that he did not need to be born again physically, but *spiritually*. To be born of water means to be immersed. After one becomes a child of God, he is in many ways like a baby (Rom. 6:4, 1 Pet. 2:2). In fact, the Apostle Paul said, “If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creature” (2 Cor. 5:17). Baptism is the point

in one’s spiritual search where he is naked (as he is cleansed of the world’s allurements), washed in blood, and adopted into a new family (Col. 3:1ff.; Acts 22:16; Gal. 4:4-7). That sounds pretty much like a birth, doesn’t it? Also, we might note that to be born of the Spirit means to be born by the Word of God, the tool of the Spirit (Eph. 6:17). Peter wrote of “having been born again, not of corruptible seed but incorruptible, through the word of God which lives and abides forever...” (1 Pet. 1:23).

A third purpose for baptism in the New Testament is to get into Christ. There are two passages in the New Testament which teach that one cannot get into Christ without being immersed (Gal. 3:27; Rom. 6:1-4). In Galatians 3:27 Paul wrote, “For as many of us as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ.” It is interesting to notice that the Paul used the Greek word *eis*, which means into, in, or unto. Here, Paul is saying that *the only way to get into Jesus is by immersion*. Notice the importance of this statement. In 2 Timothy 2:10, Paul said that salvation is “in (*eis*) Christ.” In Ephesians 1:3, Paul said that all spiritual blessings are “in Christ.” In Romans 8:1, Paul said there is no condemnation to those who are “in Christ.” See the point? Salvation, all spiritual blessing, and no condemnation are in Jesus, and *the only way to get into Jesus is by baptism*. Simply stated, one cannot receive salvation or the blessing of God without being immersed into Christ. To say that baptism is unimportant to one’s salvation is to ignore the plain teaching of these passages and others like them.

A fourth purpose for baptism is to wash away or remove sins (Acts 2:38; 22:16). It is a biblical fact that all men have sinned, have been separated from God, and are lost (Rom. 3:23; 6:23). Isaiah said, “Your sins have separated you from your God and your iniquities have hidden

His face from you” (Isa. 59:1-2). Here is the problem. God is too holy to look upon sin (Hab. 1:13). Man is stained with sin (Gen. 3). Therefore, man’s sin must be removed before he can have a relationship with God. If, then, we can find in the New Testament at what point a person’s sins are washed away, we can know with certainty that *that* is the point of salvation and reconciliation to God. Fortunately, the Bible tells us very clearly when that takes place. In Acts 9:6, the blind Saul (who later became the apostle Paul) cried out to God, “Lord what would you have me to do?” The answer to Saul’s question is found in Acts 22:16, “Arise and be baptized and *wash away your sins* calling on the name of the Lord” (emp. added). This text clearly teaches that *the point where a person’s sins are washed away is at baptism*. The removal of sins does not occur a moment *before*, or a moment *after* baptism.

A fifth reason for baptism in the New Testament is to gain entrance into Christ’s church. In the religious world, you frequently hear people talk about “joining the church.” This is not biblically accurate. We do not “join” the church. Rather, God adds us to the church (Acts 2:47). Paul said in 1 Corinthians 12:13, “For with one Spirit, we were all baptized into one body.” To fully understand this verse, one must understand what kind of a body Paul is discussing. In Ephesians 1:22-23 Paul said, “And He put all things under His feet, and gave Him to be head over all things to the church, which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all.” From this text we learn that the words “body” and “church” are used synonymously to represent the collective group of saved people. Now that we know that the body is the church, let