

# **An Attempt To Explain Away Baptism For the Remission of Sins**

by Harold Hancock

"Now when they heard this, they were cut to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, "Men and brethren, what shall we do?" Then Peter said to them, "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 2:37,38).

Recently on TV, a nationally known "evangelist" commented on Acts 2:37,38. His remarks on repentance were excellent. Repentance is a change of heart; it is people turning from self and sin to the Lord. True repentance is needed for true conversion and commitment to the Lord. However, his remarks on baptism seemed shallow and unworthy of a person with his knowledge of the Bible and obvious ability to exegete scripture. They were a feeble and unsuccessful attempt to explain away an apparent truth- baptism is for (in order to obtain) the remission (forgiveness) of sins. Most likely, that "evangelist" will not read this article and change his mind, but perhaps, we can challenge the thinking of others, warn them of some of the error taught about baptism, and make the truth plain.

The speaker "warned" that Acts 2:38 is the "proof text" for those who believe in "baptismal regeneration"- those who believe that baptism is for the remission of sins." May I ask, does not the speaker's description of those who believe in "baptismal regeneration" sound a bit familiar and scriptural? Are not those the very words appearing in Acts 2:38-"and be baptized for the remission of sins"? Should we not be a little suspect when we define the position we oppose with a quote directly from the Bible? If one defines "believing in baptismal regeneration" as believing one must be "baptized for the remission of sins," what is wrong with the belief? Is it not what the scriptures themselves teach?

The TV evangelist suggested that the purpose of baptism was for penitent Jews to show they were denouncing Judaism. If this is the purpose of baptism and what Peter had in mind, why did Peter not say so instead of commanding his audience, "be baptized for the remission of sins." How could anyone rightly and logically conclude from Peter's statement that the purpose of baptism was for Jews to declare that they were no longer a part of Judaism? Where is any passage of scripture that hints that the purpose of baptism was to show that penitent Jews were separating themselves from Judaism? Furthermore, why were Gentiles commanded to be baptized (Acts 10:47)? They were not a part of Judaism. Our "evangelist" is drowning in imaginative speculation.

The TV evangelist sought to bolster his position and discredit those who teach "baptismal regeneration" by declaring that nowhere else do the scriptures teach that remission of sins comes as a result of baptism. Perhaps, he should reconsider. Paul said Ananias told him, "Arise and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on the name of the Lord" (Acts 22:16). I am sure that the TV preacher would deny this passage teaches "baptismal regeneration" just as he does Acts 2:38. Nevertheless, the passage is plain to those who will accept the truth and do not wrest the

scriptures.

Another attempt to blunt the force of Acts 2:38 and to deny its plainness was to suggest that "for remission of sins" means "because one has received remission of sins." Our speaker cited one source who says the text may be so translated. However, no reliable translation renders Acts 2:38 as "because of remission of sins." The phrase is translated:

"for the remission of sins" (New King James)  
"for the remission of sins" (King James)  
"unto the remission of your sins" (American Standard)  
"for the forgiveness of your sins" (New American Standard)  
"for the forgiveness of your sins" (Revised Standard)  
"for the forgiveness of your sins" (New International Version).

The expression "for remission of sins" is used by Christ when He instituted the Lord's Supper. "And He took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying `Drink ye all of it; for this is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins'" (Matthew 26:27-28). Everyone agrees that the Lord meant His blood was shed that men might receive the remission of sins. He did not mean His blood was shed "because of remission of sins. Peter commanded us to be baptized to obtain the forgiveness of sins, not because we have already been forgiven.

The TV preacher has sought to muddy the waters of baptism, but they are still clear in light of Bible teaching. Peter said to repent and be baptized for the remission of sins. Baptism is as important for salvation as is repentance. In 1 Peter 3:21, Peter tells us baptism saves and tells us how; it is "not the removal of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God, through the resurrection of Jesus Christ." The command is to be baptized; the purpose is for the remission of sins; the power is in the Lord in Whose name we are baptized. Do not lose sight of these truths. Recognize any attempt to explain away "baptism for the remission of sins" for what it is- the doctrine of men.