

Dispelling Myths about Acts 2:38

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An older brother recently told me about some Baptist college students with whom he had some dealings. They told him that they had one class period devoted simply to getting around the teaching of Acts 2:38. If they would simply accept the teaching of Acts 2:38 without trying to get around it, they would get that much closer to salvation. However, Baptists and other denominations would rather put myths out about Acts 2:38 than accept the pure teaching of the Scriptures.

Myth #1. *Acts 2:38 is a plan of salvation only given to the Jews to cleanse them from the sin of crucifying Christ.* There are several problems with this idea. First, this violates the principle of “one faith” given in Eph. 4:5. If Acts 2:38 is one system of faith, then other groups, like the Gentiles, would have received different systems of faith, and this is at least one faith too many. Second, if this applies only to the Jews, what about the Gentiles involved in Christ’s crucifixion? After all, Acts 4:27 lists the Gentiles among those gathered against Christ. Third, Acts 2:38 mentioned the remission of *sins*, not just the singular sin of crucifying Christ, but rather a plurality of sins.

Myth #2. *Acts 2:38 is teaching that the baptism of the Holy Spirit is under consideration, not water baptism.* I question this. First, why would Peter mention that those who repented and were baptized would then receive the gift of the Holy Spirit, if they received baptism of the Holy Spirit? Second, the baptism of the Holy Spirit is called a promise in Acts 1:5 and 2:33. God administers promises, but man obeys commandments, and Acts 2:38 includes two commandments and one promise. Baptism is one of those commandments. It must be something that man controls, and man does not control the baptism of the Holy Spirit. Third, if the baptism of the Holy Spirit is commanded for the remission of sins, and one does not receive the baptism of the Holy Spirit, then one does not receive remission of sins. Who is responsible for this lack of baptism? God is responsible!

Myth #3. *The “for” in the phrase “for the remission of sins” in Acts 2:38 means, “because of the remission of sins”, meaning that one already has remission of sins and gets baptized as a result.* There is a small three-letter Greek word called “eis” that is translated “for” in Acts 2:38. It is also translated as “unto” in other translations, like the ASV. An effective way for us to understand what is meant is for us to look for a similar construct. Matt. 26:28 says, “For this is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many *for the remission of sins.* (emphasis mine, JB).” Does this mean “which is shed for many *because of* the remission of sins” with the meaning that Christ’s blood would be shed because remission of sins had already been obtained? Certainly not, but rather Christ shed His blood to bring about, that is, unto the remission of sins. Remission of sins would be the result of His blood being shed, just like remission of sins is the result of our being baptized by Christ’s authority.