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501 Advanced Hermeneutics

24 January 2020

The Case for the Causal Use of $\epsilon\iota\varsigma$ in Acts 2:38

For anyone who believes in God and holds to a belief in the inspiration of The Bible, the life of Jesus Christ has been the focal point of all of human history. Since sin entered the world, mankind waited for the redemptive work of the coming Messiah. Over two-thousand years ago, this promised Seed was born in a small town to a poor family. Through the sacrifice of His sinless and perfect life, Jesus Christ brought salvation to all men (New American Standard Bible, Titus 2:11). That good news of salvation through faith in Christ has since spread across the world like a wildfire reaching into the deepest, darkest parts of all civilization.

However, for the last two thousand years there has been constant discussion and disagreement among those who seek to follow Christ as to what salvation by faith actually means. Many groups have held to salvation by faith alone (belief alone) apart from any act of obedience on the part of man. Other groups have proposed that The Bible's definition of salvation by faith means salvation by the system of Faith, The Gospel, which includes obedience to God's commands. Both groups will agree that The Scriptures teach that all have sinned (Rom. 3:23) and that those sins hide God's face from man (Is. 59:1-2). However, these groups differ in what The Bible requires a person to do in order to be justified by faith. This is in fact a vital disagreement and thus should be important to any who seek to please God.

In the discussion of justification by faith, one of the passages and its meaning that is hotly debated in theological circles is Acts 2:38. The passage occurs in Peter's sermon on the day of Pentecost in response to a question by the Jewish crowd who experienced guilt at the realization

that they had crucified their long awaited Messiah. These Jews interrupted the preaching and ask Peter, “what shall we do?” (Acts 2:37) Peter responds “repent, and each of you be baptized 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).

This passage seems to be a strong passage in support of the idea that sins are forgiven at the point of baptism in water as a plain reading of the text would suggest. Even theologian John MacArthur agrees that the reading seems to link baptism with the forgiveness of sins. MacArthur states “In Acts 2:38, Peter appears to link forgiveness of sins to baptism” (MacArthur). However, MacArthur follows his statement with this explanation. “But there are several plausible interpretations of this verse that do not connect forgiveness of sin with baptism. It is possible to translate the Greek preposition *εἰς* ‘because of,’ or ‘on the basis of,’ instead of ‘for’”(MacArthur). MacArthur is not alone in his interpretation of this passage. This writer conducted a Google search on the question “Does Acts 2:38 teach that baptism is necessary for the remission of sins?” and received 151,000 search results in .55 seconds. While Google is not a scholarly means of research, the fact remains a majority of those seeking answers to religious matters use Google to conduct their research. Of those Google search results, the Top 10 Articles all took the position that *for the remission of sins* in Acts 2:38 means *because of the remission of sins*. This would on the surface seem like very strong evidence to the contrary of the simple reading, but as William Badke states in his research strategies book, the internet has introduced many problems to scholarly research. Badke says of the internet that “anyone can publish almost anything he or she wants to say, without impediment” (Badke 1.4). However, with this freedom to post anything Badke says we also lose certainty. Since anyone can publish articles on the web, there are no longer the checks and balances that prevent the spread of inaccurate information. Unfortunately,

this makes googling to get the answer to such an important theological question an insufficient way to obtain truth and we must dig deeper to determine the meaning of this passage by more scholarly means.

As one searches the literature on this particular passage and the history of interpretation surrounding it, there are at least two frequent discussions that have occurred around Acts 2:38. Both of these discussions center around the phrase *for the remission of sins* and whether this means sins are forgiven at the point of water baptism or before water baptism. A.T. Robertson rightly says, “this phrase is the subject of endless controversy as men look at it from the standpoint of sacramental or of evangelical theology” (Robertson Acts 2:38). These two discussions are normally referred to as the grammatical discussion and the lexical discussion. Some writer’s reference these two points as objections or arguments rather than discussions, but this writer believes discussion is a more appropriate term (Beisner). The grammatical discussion focuses on grammatical differences in person and number in regard to baptism and repentance and their connection to the phrase *for the remission of sins*. This will not be discussed in this paper but is worthy of further study to accurately interpret such a vital salvific passage of Scripture. If one seeks more information on the grammatical discussion, Greek scholar J.W. McGarvey has done a masterful job explaining and examining this in his commentary on the Book of Acts (McGarvey, Original pp. Acts 40-41).

The second major discussion is the lexical discussion. This focuses on the meaning of words. This paper will focus on this discussion and the contrasting positions on both sides. The lexical discussion centers around the meaning of the phrase *for the remission of sins* which occurs in Acts 2:38, but for a different reason than the grammatical discussion. The lexical discussion specifically focuses in on the word *for* and its meaning in the phrase *for the remission*

of sins. This English word *for* is translated from the Greek word εἰς. It is a preposition that occurs 1774 times in the New Testament. It is defined as “to or into, indicating the point reached or entered” (Arndt and Gingrich, Strong, Thayer). Its semantic range (range of meaning) however has been debated for the last few centuries. While all agree a majority of the uses of εἰς are forward looking, there has been a disagreement over the use of εἰς in extremely rare cases.

As many different religious groups have sought to accurately interpret this salvation passage and reconcile it with the rest of their theology, two major positions have come to the forefront on how one should interpret and apply the word *for* in the phrase *for the remission of sins* which occurs in Acts 2:38. This paper will examine the two positions taken on the meaning of this Greek word εἰς and its relevance to the meaning of Acts 2:38. The first position will address the position that εἰς can have a causal use and mean *because of* as is put forth by some Greek Scholars. The second position will address the position of other Greek scholars who firmly hold the position that εἰς is never used causally, but always looks forward in time and never backwards.

The first position taken by many on the meaning of εἰς in Acts 2:38 is frequently referred to as the “Causal Use of Eις.” This position holds that while the word εἰς usually points forward, in Acts 2:38 it could mean *in view of* or *because of*. Hence the phrase *for the remission of sins* becomes *because of the remission of sins*. If this definition were plausible, it would open up Acts 2:38 to the possibility of baptism being *in respect to* or *because of* sins having already been forgiven. Many who hold this position have pointed out that the English word *for* can mean *because of* as well. The popular website GotQuestions.org in their article on this topic states this explanation for the use of εἰς:

“In both Greek and English, there are many possible usages of the word ‘for.’ As an example, when one says ‘Take two aspirin for your headache,’ it is obvious to everybody that it does not mean ‘take two aspirin in order to get your headache,’ but instead to ‘take two aspirin because you already have a headache.’ There are three possible meanings of the word ‘for’ that might fit the context of Acts 2:38: 1—‘in order to be, become, get, have, keep, etc.,’ 2—‘because of, as the result of,’ or 3—‘with regard to.’ Since any one of the three meanings could fit the context of this passage, additional study is required in order to determine which one is correct” (“Does Acts 2:38”).

Calvin Beisner takes a similar approach in his website article “Does Acts 2:38 Teach Baptismal Remission?” which first appeared in the Practical Hermeneutics section of the Christian Research Journal in 2004. Beisner appeals to the definition of the word *for* in the *Webster’s New International Dictionary* and how *for* has eleven definitions, only three of which make sense in Acts 2:38 (Beisner). He describes that one of the English definitions of the word *for* is *because of*. This view is also put forth by Cooper Abrams in his article “Does Acts 2:38 teach that baptism is necessary for salvation?” In this article, Abrams also takes the position with the explanation of “If you saw a poster saying ‘Jesse James wanted for robbery’, ‘for’ could mean that Jesse is wanted so he can commit a robbery, or is wanted because he has committed a robbery? The later sense is the correct one” (Abrams).

Those who hold to a causal use of εἰς also appeal to the Greek as well to establish their position. The history of this lexical argument in the Greek is of relevance here. While all Greek lexicons historically have held to εἰς always being a forward-looking preposition, there has been in the last two hundred years, the introduction of arguments for the use of εἰς causally in Hellenistic Greek. It seems the earliest evidence appeared in the 1923 June edition of the London

Expositor where J.R. Mantey penned an article entitled “Unusual Meanings for Prepositions in the Greek New Testament.” This article was referenced in Dana and Mantey’s “Manual Grammar of the New Testament” which was written four years later in 1927 (Dana and Mantey 104). While Mantey does not specifically make the case for εἰς meaning *because of* in Acts 2:38 in his 1923 article, he states that he believes it could be used causally in Matthew 12:41 and Luke 12:32. In this article, Mantey also puts forth an example from Hellenistic Greek which he believes shows εἰς being used causally. The example he furnishes for support from Hellenistic Greek is from Josephus. This Josephus quote explains that John the Baptist did not baptize people until they had repented (Antiquities, 18.5.2). Mantey then shows the use of *baptism with water unto (εἰς) repentance* in Matthew 3:11. Mantey then connects the two ideas from Josephus and Matthew 3:11 to point to a similarity in the purpose of John’s baptism. Since Josephus says John the Baptist baptized people only after they were willing to repent, Mantey believes Matthew 3:11 meant John the Baptist would only baptize people with water *because of* their repentance. While the statement is clearly true that John baptized after repentance, the conclusion that this was linguistic proof for the causal use of εἰς would not be conceded without a battle.

In 1951, a four article back and forth discussion occurred on this topic in the Journal of Biblical Literature between Greek scholars J.R. Mantey and Ralph Marcus. Mantey began the discussion with an article entitled “The Causal Use of Εἰς in the New Testament.” Mantey begins this article by conceding that “None of the Greek Lexicons translate εἰς as causal. And the only Greek grammar that does, as far as we know, is A Manual Grammar of The Greek New Testament” (“The Causal Use” 45). It may be of note, that Mantey is also one of the authors of this particular Greek Grammar. In this article, Mantey puts forth the idea that “usage rather than

lexicons establishes the meaning of words.” Mantey then appeals to Hellenistic Greek and examples he believes provide evidence of the use of εἰς causally in the non-Biblical writings. He points to examples given in Polybius and Josephus and to at least nine New Testament passages. Mantey’s proposal however would not go unchallenged.

In June of 1951, Greek Scholar Ralph Marcus wrote an article in response that also appeared in JBL titled “On Causal Εἰς.” Marcus was respectful in his response even making the statement in his opening argument that “Professor J. R. Mantey has performed a useful service in trying to establish a causal use of εἰς in the N.T. and in Hellenistic Greek generally” (“On Causal Εἰς” 129). Marcus’s cordiality did not keep him from voicing his disagreement with Mantey’s assumptions stating, “At the risk of appearing ungrateful for his brave attempt to go beyond the standard lexicons and grammars, I must flatly state that he has been mistaken in his construing and rendering of all of these passages”. Marcus then proceeds with a rebuttal of each Hellenistic Greek example Mantey gives in his first article concluding Mantey’s attempt fell short of proving any evidence for a causal use of εἰς. There is one example Marcus simply overlooks in his first response, which he deals with in his second response.

By December of that same year, Mantey had published a response to Marcus’s article which also appeared in JBL (“On Causal Εἰς Again” 309-311). Mantey brings up, rightly so, that while Marcus rebuffed his Hellenistic Greek examples, Marcus did not deny that εἰς could be used causally in the New Testament passages that Mantey had given as possible examples in his first article. In this article Mantey also quotes A.T. Robertson and W.H. David from their work “New Short Grammar of the Greek New Testament” in which they state “a case like Acts 2 ‘for the remission of sins’ can mean either (cause) on the basis of forgiveness of sins, or (purpose) with a view to forgiveness of sins. There is nothing in εἰς to compel either result. One will

interpret it according to his theology” (Robertson, *New Short* 256). Mantey also introduces a few new examples in Hellenistic Greek from Lucian, Dionysius, and even one from the Septuagint. Mantey also once again appeals to the N.T. examples from Matthew 12:41, Luke 11:32, Luke 3:7, and others he previously had brought forth.

The following spring in March of 1952, Marcus responded to Mantey’s second article in like manner as the first with a very respectful yet consistent refutation of Mantey’s examples of causal εἰς in Hellenistic Greek. Marcus asserts that Mantey’s translations of many of his examples are “unexceptional” and points to the fact that Mantey is arguing from English meanings instead of Greek meanings to establish his point. At the close of his article, Marcus summarizes the exchange with this statement:

“Whether εἰς is used causally in Acts 2:38, baptisthētō hekastos hymōn...εἰς aphasin ton harmarton hymōn, I have not sought to determine. But I think it is clear that 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” (“Elusive Causal Eις” 44).

In 1996, distinguished Greek scholar and author Daniel B. Wallace, published a book entitled “Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics”. In his book, Wallace discusses the use of the preposition εἰς and the causal use is nowhere found in his work (Wallace 369-370). In

referencing the discussion in the early 1950's between Marcus and Mantey, Wallace summarized the discussion with these words. "Marcus ably demonstrated that the linguistic evidence for a causal use of εἰς fell short of proof" (Wallace 370). Those who hold to the causal use of εἰς should take this information into account and must wrestle with these distinguished scholars' discussion and their conclusions about this position. One should take both sides into account and weigh them fairly in order to determine the likely meaning of the word before deciding on their theological positions.

The second position taken in the lexical discussion seeks to establish evidence that shows εἰς is always forward-looking and never looks back. This position holds that there is no evidence to support a causal use of εἰς in the Greek. Many of the articles put forth to support the causal use of εἰς appeal heavily to the different meanings of the word *for* in English usage (Abrams, Beisner). This second position would reject those English based appeals due to the fact that different words in different languages have different meanings. Moises Silva in "Toward an Exegetical Theory" states "We cannot, for example, assume that the linguistic rules of English syntax or the nuances of English words correspond to those of New Testament Greek. If we do, we run the risk of imposing our ideas on the biblical text" (Kaiser et al. 21). Dana and Mantey in their "A Manual Grammar of the Greek New Testament" also state "a very important fact to remember in studying prepositions is that each one, unlike the English use, may be used to express one or several either kindred or diversified ideas. The best way to determine the meanings of a preposition is to study it in its various contexts and note its various uses" (Dana and Mantey 98).

One must be careful not to impose the meanings of the English preposition *for* onto the Greek preposition εἰς. Bill Mounce even states that in his opinion there is no reason ever to do an

English word study anymore (Bible Gateway 29:06). Mounce says “There is no approximation between English and Greek words, therefore in studying the English word we are at best making an approximation of the Greek word” (11:38). This position would propose that the proper way to determine the meaning of a word is not to make an argument from English, but to make sure the argument is made from Greek. Moises Silva reminds us we cannot use English translation alone to determine our doctrine, but we should allow the Greek and Hebrew to “shed light on the debate” (Kaiser et al. 53). Thus, if starting in English and reasoning backwards into Greek is not an appropriate way to determine the meaning of a Greek word, it would only make sense that to determine the definition of εἰς in the Greek N.T. one should start with the definition of the Greek word from authorities in the Greek language. Thus, this position would appeal to the scholarship of all Greek lexicons and a great majority of Greek grammars in the defining of this word.

Before looking at those Greek authorities, it is important to first give some reference to those authorities on how a word should be examined in order to determine its meaning. Walter Kaiser Jr. in his book “Toward an Exegetical Theology” states:

“The meaning of words is determined, in the first place, by custom and general usage current in the times when the author wrote them. No intelligent writer deliberately departs from this *usus loquendi*, that is, the current usage that is prevalent in a particular age, without having a good reason for doing so and without furnishing some explicit textual clue that he has done so” (Kaiser Ch. 5, Loc.1442-1447).

Leon Crouch in his article on “Greek Word Studies” states that the first step in determining the word’s meaning is to determine the words root and secondly is to determine the word’s use in the literature apart from the New Testament (Kearley 227). Metzger has defined εἰς as the root meaning “into” (Metzger 82). Gordon Fee in his book called “New Testament

Exegesis” gives four steps to determining the meaning of a word in Greek (Fee 102-103). Fee says that first one should establish the meaning of the word prior to its use in the Biblical Text and to see how far back that word goes into Hellenistic Greek. Fee suggests the student first consult “Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature”.

This work is commonly referred to as BDAG. This Greek lexicon defines εἰς in Acts 2:38 as

4. marker of goals involving affective/abstract/suitability aspects, *into, to...to denote purpose in order to, to, εἰς ἄφεσιν ἁμαρτιῶν for forgiveness of sins, so that sins might be forgiven* Mt 26:28; cp. Mk 1:4; Lk 3:3; Ac 2:38. (Arndt et al. 290)

BDAG also references Matthew 26:28 as a passage that εἰς should be translated exactly the same way as Acts 2:38 by *for the forgiveness of sins*. It is interesting to note that none of those who hold the causal use of εἰς hold to the interpretation of Matthew 26:28 as being translated that Jesus Christ shed his blood *because of the remission of sins*. All agree Jesus Christ shed his blood *in order that sins might be forgiven* even if this does not run consistently to the causal position’s interpretation of Acts 2:38. The phrase in Greek is identical in Matthew 26:28 and Acts 2:38.

Secondly, Fee also suggests that one look for the words use in contemporary literature in the Greco Roman World. This is what J.R. Mantey was attempting to accomplish when rebuffed by Ralph Marcus and “fell short of linguistic proof” according to Daniel B Wallace (Wallace 369-370). In a separate correspondence with author Wayne Jackson, Wallace stated that his “exegetical integrity” would not allow him to accept Mantey’s causal position (Jackson, “Exchange”). Thirdly, Fee says in determining the meaning of a Greek word one must determine the use of this word elsewhere in the New Testament. Lastly, Fee said to

“analyze the context carefully to determine which of the range of meanings is the most likely in the passage you are exegeting” (103). In order to do this, one could consult a variety of Greek Lexicons in order to determine the established consensus by the field of Greek scholars. This is exactly what Bruce Metzger suggests in his book “Lexical Aid for Students of New Testament Greek” where he gives his recommendations of twelve standard Greek lexicons that a person can use to determine the meaning of a word (Metzger 5). Metzger also gives a short definition of his own in that same work defining εἰς as “into” (Metzger 8). Metzger even uses as his example the term eisegesis, which refers to one reading their own ideas “into” the text. Certainly, one would not define eisegesis using the causal use of εἰς which would imply “eisegesis” is developing one’s theology “because of” the text. This is the definition of exegesis. This would make eisegesis and exegesis the same thing.

To establish the consensus that εἰς points forward, let us examine some Greek lexicons and their use of εἰς, with respect to Acts 2:38 so that we may establish not only the overall use, but also in this highly, disputed passage. BDAG, mentioned earlier, states the meaning of εἰς as “to denote purpose *in order to, to, εἰς ἄφεσιν ἁμαρτιῶν for forgiveness of sins, so that sins might be forgiven* Mt 26:28; cp. Mk 1:4; Lk 3:3; Ac 2:38” (BDAG 290). Abbott-Smith defines εἰς as a “preposition expressing entrance, direction, limit, into, unto, to, upon, toward, for, among” (132). Arndt and Gingrich define εἰς in Acts 2:38 as “for forgiveness of sins, so that sins might be forgiven” (228). Bullinger defines εἰς as “into, to, unto, with a view to; *hence with respect to a certain event, in order to, for*” (295). Liddell defines εἰς as “into” (230). Souter also defines “εἰς” as into in his Pocket Lexicon to the Greek New Testament (73). J. H. Thayer, in reference to Acts 2:38, defines εἰς to mean “to obtain the forgiveness of sins” (Thayer 94).

If one seeks to establish this position further, they could consult the Greek lexicons and grammars by many others. Balz, Buttmann, and Spicq are three additional resources that this author consulted and has listed in the reference section. Machen rightly warns “the proper method is to learn first the usual meaning before proceeding to the unusual. A reversal of this method will lead to hopeless confusion. Let the student, therefore, so far as prepositions are concerned, adhere for the present rigidly to the translations given in the vocabularies” (Machen 41-42).

Now that the standard and consistent meaning of εἰς by all Greek lexicons has been established, it is clear that a causal use cannot be seen in the Greek resource literature. One can see that those who hold the position that εἰς in koine Greek is never used causally seem to be standing on much more lexical evidence than those who appeal to the alleged causal use of εἰς. An appendix has also been added to show a chart of twenty-three different translations from the Greek done by a vast array of translators from different denominations which have all translated the passage in the same light (Appendix A). One could also consult a vast array of English translations to see the consistent translation of Acts 2:38 and the absence of reputable translations who translate Acts 2:38 *because of the remission of sins*. One may even be interested to note the history of the *New International Version's* translation of Acts 2:38. Hugo McCord discusses the change in his appendix in “The Everlasting Gospel” where he states:

“The translators of the 1973 NIV in Ac 2:38 have ‘so that your sins may be forgiven.’

However, ‘many letters from pastors and professors’ caused the 1984 NIV to return to the ambiguous ‘for the forgiveness of your sins,’ concerning which Dr. Ken Barker, of the

translation committee, wrote, ‘I believe we translated it correctly the first time.’”

(McCord, Everlasting 718)

With both of these positions considered and examined, we are now faced with one last issue to cover. How did the New Testament writers use εἰς? Did they use it causally or is there another explanation to those passages that seem to teach εἰς being used as *because of*? In both of his articles in the 1951 Journal of Biblical Literature, Mantey pointed to example New Testament passages that supported the causal use of εἰς. One will remember that while Marcus did refute the non-Biblical alleged causal uses of εἰς, Marcus did not deal with Mantey’s proposed causal uses of εἰς within the New Testament (“Elusive Causal Εἰς”). Mantey did not seek to do this because by dismantling Mantey’s attempt and showing there are no non-Biblical causal uses of εἰς, Marcus eliminated the support for a causal use of εἰς inside the New Testament. To state the causal use was not in Hellenistic non-Biblical Greek but was in Biblical Greek would be to suggest that Biblical Greek and Non-Biblical Greek are different types of Greek. Both have been established to be in koine.

However, many will likely still appeal to these passages using arguments from English to establish their position. Thus, it would be wise for one to deal with the alleged causal support passages in the New Testament that Mantey, Robertson, and others who hold this position point to in the New Testament to support their position. While this paper will not examine each individual example provided in Mantey’s articles or the other supporting articles, it would be helpful to examine one passage that seems to be one of the most frequently appealed to. One can use this example passage and apply these principles to the other causal support passages in the New Testament. The reader should study each passage Mantey has put forward but must

remember to examine the passages starting from the Greek text and not to make arguments from an English meaning.

One New Testament passage that this writer has seen frequently appealed to in the proposed literature in support of the causal use of “εἰς” has been Matthew 12:41. This passage reads “The men of Nineveh will stand up with this generation at the judgment, and will condemn it because they repented at the preaching of Jonah; and behold, something greater than Jonah is here.” A.T. Robertson chose this as a strong example of a causal use of εἰς (Grammar 592-593). This example can also be furnished from Mantey’s second article in JBL in 1951.

“But even if no evidence at all from usage in non-Biblical Greek nor the LXX could be produced, there is still enough in the Greek NT alone to convince the critical scholar that εἰς is used causally. How can we deny this when we consider Matt. 12:41... ‘because they repented at(=on account of) the preaching of Jonah.’ The preaching of Jonah was clearly the basic cause that occasioned repentance” (“Causal Εἰς Again” 310).

How should one interpret Matt. 12:41? Is it true that in a sense the people of Nineveh repented “because of” Jonah’s preaching? Of course! That would be a true statement, but that is not the question at hand. The question at hand is what is the proper interpretation of the Greek text of Matthew 12:41. Wayne Jackson made a great point in his article about the use of εἰς in this passage when he states “before one can argue, therefore, that Matthew 12:41 contains this alleged exception, he must be absolutely positive there is no interpretation that can be placed upon the text in which εἰς carries its general, forward-looking thrust” (“Use of Preposition Εἰς”). What Jackson is saying is that since all Lexicons give a forward thrust to εἰς and it is used 1750 times in the NT, one must be careful to make sure the standard definition cannot be applied

before claiming to find an exception to the rule. This would be a drastic stretch to assume that one has found the one exception to the 1750 forward-looking uses of *eiς*. Even if one was to concede the nine causal passages Mantey suggested, this would still be 1741 non-causal uses of *eiς*. This would be the equivalent of a nine-foot basketball hoop, representing the alleged causal use of *eiς*, next to the 1453-foot-tall Empire State Building in New York City with the Statue of Liberty standing on top of it, representing the always forward pointing use of *eiς*.

With this staggering comparison in mind, is there an explanation of Matt. 12:41 which seems to stick with the standard definition given for *eiς*? If the standard definition for *eiς* points forward in time, and not backwards, then what could be a possible explanation with regard to Jonah's preaching? Jonah preached forty days and Ninevah would be destroyed and according to Jonah 3:5 the people of Ninevah repented in sackcloth and proclaimed a fast. McGarvey addresses this exact idea in his commentary on Matthew in which he states:

“The preposition here rendered ‘at’ is *eiς*, which usually means ‘into’ Some writers have contended that it here means ‘because of,’ or ‘in consequence of,’ a meaning quite foreign to the word. It is true, as a matter of fact, that the Ninevites repented in consequence of the preaching of Jonah; but had it been the purpose of the writer to express this thought, he would have used the preposition *dia* instead of *eiς*. The thought of the passage is quite distinct from this. They repented into the preaching of Jonah. This is not idiomatic English, but it conveys the exact thought a Greek would derive from the original. The term ‘preaching’ is put for the course of life required by the preaching, and it is asserted that they repented into this. Their repentance, in other words, brought them into the course of life required by the preaching, and it is asserted that they repented into this” (Original Commentary 113).

Hugo McCord agrees with McGarvey's assessment of this as McCord also says that John the Baptist was not talking about their past, but their future. McCord says if he was talking about their past life, he would have used *dia* (McCord, Articles 47). Dana and Mantey even state this principle in their Greek Grammar when they give the definition of *dia* in the accusative case as *because of* (Dana and Mantey 101). Dave Miller adds yet one more support to this idea. Miller states "had the Holy Spirit intended to say that baptism is 'because of' or 'on account of' past forgiveness, He would have used the Greek preposition that conveys that very idea: *dia* with the accusative" (Miller, "13 Objections").

If there is an explanation which would run consistent with the normal use of *εἰς*, what would lead one to push for an interpretation of the word which no Greek lexicon has ever taken? What would lead one to make an argument from English in order to change the meaning of a consistently used Greek preposition? I think some of the proponents of the position may have even given us a hint during their own explanations of Acts 2:38. Robertson admits that in "Acts 2 'for the remission of sins' can mean either (cause) on the basis of forgiveness of sins, or (purpose) with a view to forgiveness of sins. There is nothing in *εἰς* to compel either result. One will interpret it according to his theology" (Robertson, Grammar 389). Mantey makes a similar statement in his article in 1924 which began this entire debate in which he also states:

"When one considers in Ac. 2:38 repentance as self-renunciation and baptism as a public expression of self-surrender and self-dedication to Christ, which significance it certainly had in the first century, the expression may mean *for the purpose of the remission of sins*. But if one stresses baptism, without its early Christian import, as a ceremonial means of salvation, he does violence to Christianity as a whole, for one of its striking distinctions

from Judaism and Paganism is that it is a religion of salvation by faith while all others teach salvation by works” (Dana and Mantey 104).

If Robertson and Mantey both agree that Acts 2:38 could mean for the purpose of the remission of sins, what would compel them to so adamantly insist against what seems to be a mountain of evidence that Acts 2:38 cannot mean for the purpose of the remission of sins? It seems that the argument for the causal use of *εἰς* is not based in lexical exegesis, but possibly in theological bias. Robertson does state that sometimes “theological bias will determine how one interprets the Greek idiom...when the grammarian has finished, the theologian steps in, and sometimes before the grammarian is through” (Grammar, Robertson 389). Robertson states this even more clearly when he says:

“One will decide the use here according as he believes that baptism is essential to the remission of sins or not. My view is decidedly against the idea that Peter, Paul, or any one in the New Testament taught baptism as essential to the remission of sins or the means of securing such remission. So I understand Peter to be urging baptism on each of them who had already turned (repented) and for it to be done in the name of Jesus Christ on the basis of the forgiveness of sins which they had already received” (Robertson, Grammar 592).

Robertson is not alone in this train of thought as John Calvin who came along three hundred years before Robertson stated something very similar in his commentary on John 3:5. Calvin in his determination of what being born of water and the Spirit meant was forced by his theological bias to depart from the consistent orthodox position that every person from the time of Christ to Calvin had followed previously. Calvin said this in his commentary:

“Chrysostom, with whom the greater part of expounders agree, makes the word Water refer to baptism. The meaning would then be, that by baptism we enter into the kingdom of God, because in baptism we are regenerated by the Spirit of God. Hence arose the belief of the absolute necessity of baptism...It is true that, by neglecting baptism, we are excluded from salvation; and in this sense I acknowledge that it is necessary; but it is absurd to speak of the hope of salvation as confined to the sign. So far as relates to this passage, I cannot bring myself to believe that Christ speaks of baptism; for it would have been inappropriate” (Calvin John 3:5).

John Calvin and many others of the protestant movement, in a noble revolt against the unbiblical teachings of Catholicism unfortunately may have traveled too far in the other direction. The establishment of the doctrine of “Faith Alone” which currently teaches that a person is saved by trust in Christ before and without obedience to Christ’s commands, including baptism, has led to a difficulty in reconciling the plain reading of New Testament passages. This has caused those seeking to defend justification by faith alone apart from obedience to seek alternate explanations to passages that clearly teach a connection between baptism and the remission of sins through the blood of Christ.

Those who would appeal to the historical champion of the faith alone doctrine may be surprised to know that Martin Luther did in fact connect baptism with the remission of sins in Acts 2:38 and other passages. In Luther’s Small Catechism, Luther frequently connected baptism in water with the remission of sins as the plain reading of Acts 2:38 teaches. For instance, when Luther was discussing the nature of baptism, Luther asks the question “What does baptism give or profit? It works forgiveness of sins, delivers from death and the devil, and gives eternal salvation to all who believe this” (Luther, Small Catechism 16). One may dispute Luther’s

position on Acts 2:38 and baptism, but another discussion later in his catechism continues to evidence that Luther's justification by faith was much different than those of the faith only persuasion today. Luther asks "What great things, then, does baptism give or work? It works forgiveness of sins" (Luther, Small Catechism 175). Luther then quotes Acts 2:38, Acts 22:16, Galatians 3:26-27, and finally 1 Peter 3:21 as scriptural support for the position he takes of the remission of sins occurring at the point of baptism in one who has faith. Luther then goes on to differentiate himself from the Catholic dogma of Baptismal regeneration which puts the power in the water. Luther clearly states, as does Scripture, that the power is in the faith of the working of God (Luther, Small Catechism 177, Col. 2:12).

It seems from these quotes that those who have taken the position that *eiς* can be used causally may be influenced by their theological presuppositions. It would seem that many of the scholars who reject the idea that *eiς* points forward in Acts 2:38 would strive to prove this because of the strength of that passage for the connection baptism for the remission of sins. John MacArthur admits that Acts 2:38 seems to teach that baptism is linked to forgiveness of sins, but that he could not accept that interpretation because it would run contrary to justification by faith alone (MacArthur). MacArthur says this would violate "Analogia scriptura" or "the analogy of faith" (MacArthur, Abrams).

However, is it possible that MacArthur and Abrams theological presuppositions as to what justification by faith includes are incorrect? The approach of "Analogia scriptura" or the "analogy of faith" means whatever position one takes on Acts 2:38 must be reconciled with totality of other New Testament teaching. Does the rest of the New Testament support faith alone without baptism or salvation by the system of faith which includes baptism? If one had only Acts 2:38 one could be left to wonder. However, how could the faith alone position

reconcile their position with Acts 22:16 in which Paul is told to “get up and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on His name.” Paul had already believed and been penitent for three days in fasting and prayer, thus showing prayer is not how one calls on the name of The Lord (Acts 9:9-11). Thus, we can see when Paul through inspiration penned Romans 5:1 which says “Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ”, Paul was describing when he and the Roman church had peace with God. It was not before their baptism, but after their baptism, as Paul connects “being justified by faith” with “we have peace with God”. By using the “analogy of faith”, we can see the proper interpretation of Acts 2:38, lines up perfectly with the lexical evidence for translating *eis* non-causally. Burton Coffman rightly stated “the cleverness and ingenuity of man have been exhausted in the vain efforts to shout baptism out of this verse as a God-imposed precondition of salvation... This text is the grave of the Lutheran heresy of justification by "faith only"; and, since, many passages of the New Testament have been laid under tribute by holders of that error in their efforts to refute this text (Coffman Acts 2:38).

It seems that the major push to establish a causal use of *eis*, may be fueled by a desire to eliminate passages like Acts 2:38 from the discussion on whether baptism is for the remission of sins. The modern doctrine of faith-alone has confined baptism to an outward sign of an inward change and a public profession of faith, instead of attributing to it the appropriate importance that the New Testament has attributed to it in Scripture. When one seeks to establish a consistent doctrinal relationship between justification by faith and the Biblical importance of baptism, one must not seek to explain away certain passages which do not seem to line up, but to work to establish how both of those passages can work together. Until this is accomplished, one cannot attain to a comprehensive understand of the Sum of God’s Word and Truth (Ps. 119:160).

The New Testament has remained consistently unchanged since the inspired writers spoke as they were moved by The Holy Spirit nearly two-thousand years ago. Since that time, many have sought to establish their own doctrines which have originated not from the mind of God, but rather in the hearts of men. As we seek to stay faithful to The Lord, we must strive to not hold to traditions of men, even if those traditions of men have been held to by many intelligent and well-meaning scholars before us. Instead we must seek and follow only those orthodox traditions which are from The Mind of God and were delivered to us by the Lord and His apostles. We must be willing to test our beliefs like those noble Bereans did (Acts 17:11). We must seek to be honest enough with ourselves and our previously held positions to follow the evidence where it leads, even if that forces us to change the direction of our long traveled theological paths.

Appendix A

Meaning of "Eis" in Acts 2:38

<i>Translation</i>	<i>Name</i>	<i>Denomination</i>	<i>Work</i>
"for the putting away"	Abbot	Church of England	"Commentary on Acts"
"for, to or toward"	Alexander	Presbyterian	"Commentary on Acts"
"unto, for, in order to"	Axtell	Baptist	"Shepherd's Handbook"
"for, unto"	Benson	Methodist	"Commentary on Bible"
"for, unto"	Bickersteth	Church of England	"Commentary on Acts"
"end toward which"	Butcher	Presbyterian	"Shepherd's Handbook"
"in reference to"	Adam Clarke	Methodist	"Commentary on Bible"
"unto, to"	Dill	Baptist	"Shepherd's Handbook"
"is always prospective"	Ditzler	Methodist	"Wilkes-Ditzler Debate"
"aim, purpose"	Godet	Presbyterian	"Shepherd's Handbook"
"purpose"	Goodwin	Congregationalist	"Shepherd's Handbook"
"in order to"	Harkness	Baptist	"Shepherd's Handbook"
"the object to be obtained"	Harmon	Methodist	"Shepherd's Handbook"
"unto, in order to receive"	Harper	Baptist	"Shepherd's Handbook"
"unto"	Hovey	Baptist	"Commentary on John"
"unto, to this end"	Jacobus	Presbyterian	"Commentary on Acts"
"denotes object"	Meyer	Lutheran	"Commentary on Acts"
"with a view to"	McLintock	Methodist	McLintock & Strong En.
"unto"	Rice		"Commentary on Acts"
"might receive"	Schaff	Presbyterian	"Shepherd's Handbook"
"in order to"	Strong	Methodist	"Shepherd's Handbook"
"unto, to the end"	Summers	Methodist	"Commentary on Acts"
"into, to, toward"	Thayer	Congregationalist	Greek-English Lexicon
"in order to"	Willmarth	Baptist	Baptist Quarterly, 1878

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