

THE GREEK PREPOSITION “EIS”

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What is a preposition? A preposition shows the relationship between a noun or a pronoun and some other word in the sentence. I am interested for the purposes of this article in the Greek preposition *eis*, especially with reference to Christian baptism.

The Greek lexicons clearly point out that the Greek *eis* signifies action from without to within. Please note the use of the preposition in the following passages: **“Go you therefore and teach all nations, baptising them *in* the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit...”** (Matthew 28:19); **“For as yet He was fallen upon none of them: only they were baptised *in* the name of the Lord Jesus.”** (Acts 8:16); **“And he said unto them, *Unto* what then were you baptised? And they said, *Unto* John’s baptism.”** (Acts 19:3); **“Know you not, that so many of us as were baptised *into* Jesus Christ were baptised *into* His death?”** (Romans 6:3); **“Is Christ divided? Was Paul crucified for you? Or were you baptised *in* the name of Paul?”** (1 Corinthians 1:13); **“And were all baptised *unto* Moses in the cloud and in the sea.”** (1 Corinthians 10:2); **“For by one Spirit are we all baptised *into* one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink *into* one Spirit.”** (1 Corinthians 12:13); **“For as many of you as have been baptised *into* Christ have put on Christ.”** (Galatians 3:27).

When “in” should be “into”

The passages quoted are from the Authorised Version. Clearly, the translators have not been consistent in their translation of *eis*. Matthew 28:19 and Acts 8:16 are good examples. In both, we have “in” instead of “into”. I believe the translations are inaccurate. The Greek preposition for “in” is *en* and, therefore, Matthew 28:19 should read: “...*into* the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.” and Acts 8:16 should read “...baptised *into* the name of the Lord Jesus Christ.” You see, before you are in Christ, you have to come into Christ; before you are in the house, you have to come into the house; before you are in the field, you have to get into the field. Actually, “in the name” is equivalent to “by the authority of.” The authority by which any action is done is one thing, and the object for which it is done is another.

The impact of “Eis” concerning baptism

But what does it mean to be baptised “into the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,” or “into Christ”? Alexander Campbell has written: “Persons are said to enter into matrimony, to enter into an alliance, to get into debt, to run into danger. Now, to be into the name of the Lord Jesus was a form of speech in ancient usage, as familiar and significant as any of the preceding. And when we analyse these expressions, we find they all import that the persons are either under the obligations or influence of those things into which they are said to enter, or into which they are introduced. Hence, those immersed into one body were under the influences and obligations of that body. Those immersed into Moses assumed Moses as their lawgiver, guide and protector, and risked everything upon his authority, wisdom, power and goodness. Those who were immersed into Christ put Him on, and acknowledged His authority and laws; and those who were immersed into the

name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, regarded the Father as the fountain of all authority – the Son as the only Saviour – and the Holy Spirit as the only advocate of the truth, and teacher of Christianity. Hence, such persons as were immersed into the name of the Father, acknowledged Him as the only living and true God – Jesus Christ as His only begotten Son, the Saviour of the world – and the Holy Spirit as the only successful Advocate of the truth of Christianity upon earth.”

Immersed “into Christ”

So we see that the phrase “into Christ” is always connected with conversion, regeneration, immersion or putting on Christ. “In Christ” speaks of a state of rest or privilege. “Into” expresses motion towards; “in” implies rest or motion in. But why does Matthew 28:19 speak of being baptised *into the name* of the Father, Son and of the Holy Spirit? One commentator has written: “The word *name* means more than a mere designation or title. It relates to the character and attributes of those under consideration, and it here implies that we are immersed into a state where we share the Divine nature, that is, eternal life, the life of God.”

In the Worgan-Kingdon Debate held in Belfast, Northern Ireland, in 1967, brother Worgan spoke of the significance of this preposition. He said: ‘Now notice the word *into*. In both the English and the Greek text it is a preposition of movement, of motion. It indicates a change of position. The Lord didn’t say baptise them *in* the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, but *into* the name. When one is baptised, you see, he changes his position, his relationship with regards to the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. And mark this, of nothing else but baptism is it said that it effects this change for the penitent believer. Professor James Madison Stiffler, the Baptist professor of New Testament Exegesis, at Crozier Theological Seminary says, ‘The *in* should certainly be *into*.’ Believers are not to be immersed by the authority of the three Divine persons, but into fellowship with them. Baptism, rightly administered, unites with Christ. The soldier in the act of donning his uniform declares his allegiance and fellowship. He comes into something and so baptism brings man into all that the Divine names imply.’ I notice that brother Worgan went on to quote from G.R. Beasley-Murray’s book *Baptism in the New Testament*, which I found a most interesting read.

Baptism is still a controversial subject for many. I personally have found that a lot of writers are somewhat confused by it. I cannot think why. There are, at least, nine designs of baptism. They are: to fulfil all righteousness; to secure the answer of a good conscience; to bring us into a relationship with the Godhead; to enable us to receive the Holy Spirit; to enable us to share in the likeness of the death of Christ; to enable us to put on Christ as a garment; to bring us into a state of wholeness, that is of salvation; and to remit or forgive sins.

Jesus’ ministry began with baptism and ended with baptism. This fact should show unto all the importance of the ordinance. The Baptist, Beasley-Murray, at the conclusion of his book on baptism, pleaded that, first, there ought to be a greater endeavour to make baptism integral to *the Gospel*; second, there should be a serious endeavour to make baptism integral to *conversion*; and, third, there should be an endeavour to make baptism integral to *Church membership*. Churches of Christ in the past have been accused of saying too much about baptism. James Anderson, the well-known Scottish evangelist, in debate once acknowledged this fact, but pointed out to his opponent that he had to mention it so often because others were not preaching enough about it, if at all. In any event, the words of the Master are clear: disciples are made among the nations by **“baptising them into the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.”** (Matthew 28:19).