

**Acts 2:38 -** And Peter said to them, “All of you repent, (and let each one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ) for/because of the forgiveness of the sins of all of you; and all of you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.”

3. Both of these approaches hold up well but still questions remain as to how this verse is best interpreted.

#### IV. Resolving the Controversy

1. As it stands, many systems of false theology and apostasy have been concocted from verse 38. The most obvious one is so-called baptismal regeneration, that man can actually do something to save himself.
2. Remember that baptism is a work, something that man does. All ritual involves human motion; human energy requires meritorious effort. So all ritual involves works.
3. Water baptism is a ritual in which someone is actually doing something, but the effort required in performing a ritual always depends upon knowing something.
4. The secret of all the ritual involved in Old Testament ceremonies required that participants understood the meaning of the ritual before they performed or observed it.
5. Because some people have taken this ritual and made it a system of salvation, they have introduced the principle of salvation by works (cf. Titus 3:5 and Ephesians 2:8–9.)
6. Peter begins Acts 2:38 with the command “repent,” the aorist active imperative of the verb **μετανοέω (metanoéō)**. “Repentance” is nonmeritorious in this context because it requires a change of mind regarding Jesus as the Christ.
7. It is important to point out that the verbs “to repent,” *metanoéō* and “to believe” *pisteúō* have the same meaning in the sense that they mean, “to change your mind about Christ.”

8. You cannot believe in Christ without changing your mind about Who He is, and you can't change your mind without believing. In context then, you cannot believe without repenting and you cannot repent without believing.
9. Also, it must be remembered that repentance in salvation has nothing to do with sin since you cannot repent of your sins to be saved, or feel sorry for them to do so.
10. However, the use of the verbs *metanoéō* and *pisteúō* are used in the context of those who are being addressed by the evangelist.
11. In Acts 2:38, "repent" is used to address Jews including those who have come into Jerusalem from areas throughout the Roman Empire.
12. They have been convicted by Peter's rhetoric and the common grace ministry of the Holy Spirit yet, although intrigued, they still do not know what to do.
13. When they inquire of the apostles, "What must we do?" Peter replies, "Repent!" *Metanoéō* is a command for them to change their minds about Jesus as a Man and convert to the idea that He is Messiah.
14. To change their minds about Jesus is to believe He is the Messiah. They cannot change their minds without believing. Consequently, when "repent" is used it means "to believe," and when "believe" is used it means to "repent."
15. Often "repent" is used when the objects are Jews and when Gentiles are the targets the word, "believe," is used. For example, in Acts 16:30, the Philippian jailer inquired, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" Paul and Silas responded in:

**Acts 16:31** - **Believe** [ aorist active imperative of the verb πιστεύω (*pisteúō*) ] in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved."

16. In Acts 2:38, Peter uses the aorist active imperative of the verb *metanoéō* while in Acts 16:31, Paul and Silas use the aorist active imperative of the verb *pisteúō*.
17. In both instances, the evangelists are answering in the very same way. The reason *pisteúō* is used is because the Gentile jailer had no previous information on the subject of Jesus and the idea of salvation.
18. In the Hellenistic culture of SPQR, there was a different system by which to understand systems of perception. To say “repent” to a Gentile did not compute because to him there was no inventory in his mind from which to repent.
19. The two words are near synonyms so that the differences between the two are not in their definitions, but the nuances of thought among those who hear them.

**Μετανοέω:** To change one's mind; repent, be converted. Since in μετανοέω the negative impulse of turning away is dominant, it is also used with: *repent and turn away from something.* (p. 640)

**Πιστεύω:** To consider something to be true and therefore worthy of one's trust, *believe in something, be convinced of something with that which one believes in indicated.* (p. 816)

To entrust oneself to an entity in complete confidence; *believe in; trust*, with implication of total commitment to the one who is trusted. In our literature, God and Christ are objects of this type of faith that relies on their power and nearness to help, in addition to being convinced that their revelations or disclosures are true.<sup>1</sup> (p. 817)

20. Therefore, whether you say “repent” or “believe” they mean the same thing, but one of the two is best in light of the culture being addressed.
21. The Hellenistic culture was universal throughout the Roman Empire. Romans had no intrinsic culture since they had adopted the Greek culture where the emphasis was on perception.

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<sup>1</sup> Walter Bauer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and other Early Christian Literature*, 3d ed., rev. and ed. Frederick William Danker (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2000), s.vv. “μετανοέω,” 640, “πιστεύω,” 816, 817.

22. When speaking to Gentiles, the approach is to command the target to, "Believe on the Lord Jesus." On the other hand, when speaking to Jews whose dominant culture is based on Judaism, then the concept of changing one's mind is required.
23. Also the idea of repentance does not carry an emotional response. Repenting is a change of thought. Emotion is directed toward thought, it does not legitimately initiate it. The thought is based on a response to information that causes the *kardía* to be put under conviction.
24. If emotion is involved here, it would be associated with their ambivalence about what to do, thus the question, "Brethren, what shall we do?"
25. Peter's response begins with the verb μετανοέω which is in the aorist tense with an active voice and an imperative mood. The volitional act of changing their minds is to be produced by those posing the question and done so with a sense of urgency.
26. The verb is in the second person plural: "Everybody." But it is followed by the command, "and be baptized," the aorist passive imperative of the verb βαπτίζω (*baptízō*).
27. This is a third person singular and the passive voice indicates that each individual is to receive the action of being baptized. Therefore, *baptízō* makes reference to water.
28. Due to the formalities implicit to the Levitical rituals, water is used outside the Tabernacle and the temple to purify the High Priest as he enters the Holy Place and/or the Holy of Holies.
29. The water is emblematic of cleansing from sin. When a person is baptized, the principles to be understood are identification with the sacrifice and resurrection by the perfect Person of Messiah.