

# Another Look at Acts 3:19

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*The Messenger of Living Righteousness, January & February 1966*

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Question: "Does not *Acts 3:19* prove conclusively that only upon those who have had their sins blotted from the Sanctuary in the judgment can the Latter Rain fall?"

**T**HIS Scripture means just what it says as does every other text in the Inspired Word. But, like all other Scriptures, it can be made to speak a very different to its intended message if is lifted out of its context and considered apart from the rest of the evidence of the Word. And it is a fact of the plainest truth that when this text is studied in the light of its context and along with the rest of the evidence in the word on the subject of the blotting out of sins and the times of refreshing it offers no proof at all that the Latter Rain can come on those only who have passed the judgment of the living. In fact it supports the opposite position fully, and entirely.

### To Blot Out

Ever bear in mind that no Bible truth can be established on one text alone. If it could then *Revelation 20:10* taken alone would seem to strongly justify the belief that there is to be an eternally burning hell. But when viewed in the light of the rest of the Word this view cannot be sustained and a deeper study of this Scripture is needed. Such a study soon reveals that the Bible uses the term *forever*, in a different sense to that used in normal modern English.

And it is a sound principle of Bible study that you must take the Bible definition of the Word if you are to understand the Bible meaning. To discover the Bible use of the word requires but the study of the use of that word through Scripture by which means its meaning soon becomes crystal clear.

Just as the correct understanding of *Revelation* 20:10 depends on a clear understanding of the Bible definition of the terms used, so also does a correct understanding of *Acts* 3:19 depend on a correct understanding of the Bible definition of the term, *blotting out*. And we shall find that the Bible meaning differs from the usual meaning. The term *to blot out*, is usually understood to mean:

“...to wipe out, to erase, to smear away, to stamp into non-existence, to obliterate.”

If that is the meaning *then a certain thing could be blotted out only once*. That is obvious.

But the Bible meaning differs somewhat from that as we shall soon demonstrate, and, inasmuch as the whole matter of the blotting out of sins is a transaction taking place in the Sanctuary, we shall find the evidence that we are seeking there better than anywhere else. And there we shall find that the term does not mean *to wipe out* or *to obliterate from existence* but *to remove* or *to take away*. True, this removing is so complete that the sin is obliterated from the place where it was, but not from existence. That which has been blotted out or removed from the one place is put into or onto another.

## Two Cleansings

So we turn to the blotting out of sins that is to take place after the judgment. We know that the cleansing of the Sanctuary is to be accomplished by the blotting out of sins which have accumulated there up till the judgment. Now notice how specifically and exactly we are told what that blotting out is.

**The Great Controversy, p. 421-422:**

As anciently the sins of the people were by faith placed upon the sin offering, and through its blood transferred in figure to the earthly sanctuary; so in the new covenant the sins of the repentant are by faith placed upon Christ, and transferred, in fact, to the heavenly sanctuary. And as the typical cleansing of the earthly was accomplished by the removal of the sins by which it had been polluted, so the actual cleansing of the heavenly is to be accomplished by the *removal, or blotting out* of the sins that are there recorded.

Now notice how in connection with the sanctuary service the term blotting out is defined as being a *removal* from the one place to another. The one place is the sanctuary. The other is the scape-goat. A. T. Jones understood it:

**The Consecrated Way to Christian Perfection, p. 118:**

The cleansing of the sanctuary as to the sanctuary itself, was the *taking out of and away from* the sanctuary all the transgressions of the people which, by the service of the priests, had been taken into the sanctuary during the service of the year.

Now notice carefully that that which is at this time taken out of and *away from* the sanctuary, has previously been taken out of and *away from* the sinner to be put into the sanctuary. In other words that which has previously been effected in the repentant one to provide his cleansing is now *repeated* in the sanctuary. And if the repetition is called a *blotting out of sins* what must the original be but also a *blotting out of sins*. In other words,

1. Sin is first blotted out of the sinner by being removed from him and placed in the sanctuary. This blotting out must take place before the judgment.
2. Then that which has been previously removed from or blotted out of the sinner is now removed or blotted from the sanctuary.

We are well aware that the term *blotting out of sins* is not generally understood at the present time to apply to the removing of

the sins from the person in the daily experience, but this was very much the view held in the early days of the Advent Message. So Crozier understood it when he said:

**The Sanctuary, p. 14:**

From these texts we learn that the words atone, cleanse, reconcile, purify, purge, pardon, sanctify, hallow, forgive, justify, redeem, blot out, and some others are used to signify the same work.

So also E. J. Waggoner understood it:

**Review and Herald, September 30, 1902:**

We need to be on guard against the idea that the blotting out of sin is merely as the passing of a sponge over a slate, or an entry in a ledger, to balance the account. This is not the blotting out of sin. . . . The blotting out of sin is the erasing of it from the nature the being of man. The blood of Jesus Christ cleanses from all sin.

These men had a broader and much more correct understanding of the blotting out of sins and it is because we have allowed our concept of it to become so narrowed that we have failed to understand the message of *Acts* 3:19.

**Peter's Appeal**

It is plainly evident that there are two blottings out of sin and that being so the question immediately arises,

“To which was Peter referring in particular when he addressed the people at the temple gate that day so long ago?”

Let us turn to the Scriptures and see. In the previous chapter Peter had been preaching to this crowd that had assembled at the sound of the outpouring of the Spirit. He was preaching to a crowd of people unconverted and guilty of the crucifixion of Jesus. And to that crowd he pressed home the charge of their sin with telling force, for he accused them of slaying the Son of God. And when they were convicted to the heart he said to them,

## Acts 2

<sup>38</sup> Repent and be baptised every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.

Now it is evident to all that Peter here was making the call to basic repentance and that the remission of sins spoken of was the remission from the individual to the sanctuary in the daily experience.

Let us now compare this with the experience at the gate of the temple and we will find that it is identical. Once again Peter was addressing an unconverted audience. It was not the same group that had heard him previously for he pressed home to them the same charge that he had laid upon the others; the crucifixion of Christ. And when he had laid on them that same straight testimony then he called on them to repent just as he had done on the previous group. And while the actual words were slightly different, the meaning was the same exactly.

Let us compare them side by side.

Acts 2:38	Acts 3:19
Repent	Repent
be baptised	be converted
for the remission of sins	that sins may be blotted out
to receive the Holy Ghost	that times of refreshing may come

One of the great beauties of the Inspired Word is that the same truth will be expressed several times in different passages in different words. The message is the same but the expression of it is different so that the reader is better able to grasp through the varied expressions something more of the fullness of the meaning. Thus the message of *Daniel* 9:24 is repeated in *Revelation* 10:7. Both Scriptures say the same thing only in different words and as we compare them we understand the truth that much more clearly.

Likewise, Peter said the same thing in *Acts* 3:19 that he had said in *Acts* 2:38. Both verses begin with the same word, “repent,” and in both cases to an unconverted audience. To the first he said “be baptised,” while to the second he said, “be converted.” What difference is there? There is none because to be baptised is to be converted. Now as has already been clearly shown remittance or removing or taking away of sin is exactly the blotting out of sin and the result in both cases is to receive the Holy Spirit which reception is indeed a time of refreshing.

Now there is no fair denying that each of the steps called for in these two verses is dependent on the step before it being taken. Conversion or baptism can never be unless there is first repentance. Likewise there can never be a time of refreshing except there have been a remitting or blotting out of sin from the believer. The word “when,” as translated in the *Authorised Version*, is more correctly translated “that” or “so that” with the definite idea of purpose in it. That is to say,

“Your sins are to be blotted out *so that* times of refreshing may come.”

And this is exactly right and as it only can be in the life’s experience. Notice too that it is not only “a time” of refreshing, but “times,” plural, and inasmuch as the verse carries the idea of purpose in it:

“Your sins may be blotted out so that *times* of refreshing may come,”

–it is evident that each time of refreshing, can come only upon there being a blotting out of the sin first.

### **In the Daily Experience**

A careful study of the experience of the remission or blotting out of sin in the daily experience shows this to be the exact order of events. This subject is treated in careful detail in our previous,

publication, entitled *Acceptable Confession*, the points of which we will but summarise here.

1. The individual is convicted of sin and repenting of it comes to the sanctuary with his offering.
2. Over the head of this he confesses his sin which is more than just the guilt, but the sinfulness as well, and the sin is blotted out of him so completely that only a vacuum remains where the sin was.
3. The sin which is blotted out of him is remitted, or sent, into the sanctuary and defiles it.
4. Now and only now can the Spirit of God come into the person. The vacuum must be made first so that there is room provided for the admission of the Holy Spirit. He comes into the space *where the sin was*.

Therefore it is true and strictly true that the sin must first be blotted out so that the time of refreshing may come, for every time that there is a receiving of the presence of the Holy Spirit it is indeed a time of refreshing.

And this will be, and in fact must be an oft repeated experience, for we do not see all of our sinfulness at once. We see it more and more and must repent again and again along the way and receive more and still more of the Holy Spirit as more and more of the sin is blotted out and room is made for the Spirit to enter. And so on till the ultimate time of refreshing is reached in the mighty outpouring of the Latter Rain to which Peter definitely looked forward as the richest fulfilment of the experience of the blotting of sin from the soul.

So it is clear that Peter was calling on those people to enter into the personal experience of the blotting out of sins in their daily lives and when applied to that experience the order of events in *Acts 3:19* is strictly and exactly right.

## In the Cleansing of the Sanctuary

Now we turn to the next, blotting out of sins, namely from the Sanctuary to the scapegoat which blotting out of sins can only take place after the judgment. And we must frankly recognise the fact that there is an application of *Acts 3:19* to this blotting out too. And this application is made by the *Spirit of Prophecy* so that we must consider the way in which that application is made by that source of Inspiration.

Now a very natural assumption is that whatever relationship exists between the blotting out of sins and the times of refreshing in the daily experience will be identical in the final experience. But the *simple fact is that it is the exact opposite*. In the daily the blotting of sin must precede the times of refreshing but in the final the times of refreshing must precede the blotting of sin from the sanctuary.

Apart from *Acts 3:19* there is evidence upon evidence to prove this but there is not the space to spell all that out just here. But we will take up two very important arguments to sustain the above contention.

We know that there are two experiences of justification. There is the justification we receive on conversion which is provisional upon our finally passing the searching of the scrutiny of the judgment, and there is the justification full and complete given to us in the judgment. And each becomes ours subsequent to a blotting out of sin. The fact is that the blotting out of sin in each case is the experience of justification. Now the fact is that there is a reversal in the order of events, which is to say that what is so in the daily, is exactly reversed in the final. Let us read it in the Bible. Paul says:

### **Romans 3**

<sup>28</sup> Therefore we conclude that a man is justified without the deeds of the law.

And this is absolutely true for the unjustified man just simply cannot do even the first deeds of the law. He must become justi-



fied, that is to receive forgiveness by having his sins blotted out or remitted and receiving the righteous life of Christ through the Spirit, before he can keep the law at all. In other words, justification comes first and the deeds of the law after. That is the order in the daily experience.

But in the judgment it is exactly the opposite. Read it there in plain language. The same Paul, writing by the inspiration of the same Holy Spirit said when speaking of the judgment,

**Romans 2**

<sup>13</sup> For not the hearers of the law are just before God, but the doers of the Law shall be justified.

And while this is the plain opposite of the text just quoted it is also absolutely true, but only in the judgment. In the first case we must be justified before we keep the law; in the Judgment we must be doers of the law before we can be justified. Read the context to this verse in *Romans 2* and you will see that the whole discussion is on the conditions to be found in the judgment.

And so it is that in every single instance where the *Spirit of Prophecy* quotes *Acts 3:19* it quotes it in a way that is in harmony with this principle. We all know that the *Revised Version* was often quoted when it gave a clearer meaning to the Scripture. In the *Revised Version* the word “when” is replaced by “that,” but with unfailing consistency Sister White always uses the translation “when” in every instance where she quotes this Scripture.

And it must be very apparent that the word “when” gives a different meaning to the word so that in two places she actually paraphrases the verse to convey the exact meaning that she intended. These are as follows:

**The Review and Herald, August 28, 1883:**

Are we by repentance and confession sending our sins beforehand to judgment that they may be blotted out when the times of refreshing shall come?

And again:

### **The Review and Herald, October 21, 1884:**

An effort was made to arouse them by presenting our true position in the antitypical day of atonement when every man should afflict his soul before God, when sins should be confessed and go beforehand to judgment that when the times of refreshing shall come they may be blotted out.

There is no question that the author is referring to the blotting out of sins from the heavenly sanctuary and not the previous blotting out of sins from the soul in these statements. Now read the way that the statement is worded and see that the opposite order of events is stated. See what it says? The sins *will be* blotted out *when* the times of refreshing come, which is but to say that the sins cannot be blotted out until the times of refreshing do come. Therefore the times of refreshing must come *before* the blotting out of sins. It is just the same as saying,

“There has been a long drought but the grass will grow again when the rains come.”

Now we all know that the falling of the rain must come before the grass will grow. Again we might say to one,

“Hurry and get ready so that you might meet Henry *when* the train comes in.”

Now we know that the train must come in and actually finish coming in and be stopped at the platform before you will meet Henry as he alights from the carriage.

Thus *Acts 3:19* provides no contradiction with the rest of the Scripture and means exactly what it says when applied as Peter applied it on the days after Pentecost. And when given a wider application than the original one, then it must be given that application in harmony with the principle that the order of events in regard to justification or the blotting out of sins is reversed in the judgment.