

Key Thoughts:

- Mark 1:4 — 27 translations say “Forgiveness” — 14 translations say “Remission”
- Luke 3:3 — 25 translations say “Forgiveness” — 16 translations say “Remission”
- Where is “Remission of sins” used before Acts 2. — Mark 1:4; Luke 3:3; Matthew 26:28.
- Do both words mean the same thing and can they be used interchangeably?
- Did Christ ever grant the “remission of sins,” or was it only the “forgiveness of sins”?
- Was John’s baptism for the “remission of sins” or for the “forgiveness of sins”?
- Was the “remission of sins” ever granted under the Old Law?
- Define forgiveness, remission, and redemption.

Introduction

An important question that has led us in this entire study:

If Jesus was already forgiving people's sins during His earthly ministry, what exactly was different about the “remission of sins” preached by Peter in Acts 2:38?

The Bible uses several words to describe God's answer to the problem of sin. Three important terms that used:

- **Forgiveness**
- **Remission**
- **Redemption**

These words are closely related, but they emphasize different aspects of God's work through Jesus Christ.

A helpful summary is:

- **Forgiveness** emphasizes God's pardon of the sinner.
- **Remission** emphasizes the release or sending away of sins.
- **Redemption** emphasizes the price paid to deliver the sinner from bondage.

Consider this analogy:

A man is imprisoned for debt:

- **Redemption** is someone paying the debt in full to secure his release

- **Remission** is the court's formal record showing the debt is now canceled
- **Forgiveness** is the relationship restored between the man and the one he owed, now welcoming him back as a friend rather than a debtor

The three concepts come together in one remarkable statement by Paul:

“In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace.”— Ephesians 1:7

1. THE PROBLEM: SIN SEPARATES MAN FROM GOD

- A. Sin is man's fundamental problem.
 - 1. *“For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God.” — Romans 3:23*
 - B. Sin is not merely a mistake. It is a transgression against God's will.
 - 1. *“Whosoever committeth sin transgresseth also the law: for sin is the transgression of the law.”— 1 John 3:4*
 - C. Sin brings death.
 - 1. *“For the wages of sin is death...” — Romans 6:23*
 - D. Isaiah explains the separation caused by sin:
 - 1. *“But your iniquities have separated between you and your God...” — Isaiah 59:2*
 - 2. Therefore mankind needs more than moral improvement.
 - 3. We need **pardon, release from sin, and redemption.**
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2. FORGIVENESS OF SINS

- A. What does forgiveness mean?
 - 1. Biblically, forgiveness means that God **pardons the sinner and does not hold the sin against him.**
 - 2. David wrote:
 - a. *“Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered.” — Psalm 32:1*
 - 3. Paul quotes this passage in Romans 4:7.
 - B. Forgiveness therefore answers:
 - 1. **What has God done with my sin?**
 - a. He has pardoned it.
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3. GOD FORGAVE SINS UNDER THE LAW OF MOSES

- A. This is an important point.
 - 1. The Law of Moses absolutely did provide for **forgiveness.**
 - a. *“And the priest shall make an atonement for him for his sin that he hath*
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committed, and it shall be forgiven him.” — Leviticus 4:26

2. Similar statements occur in Leviticus 4:20, 31, 35; 5:10, 13, 16, 18.
 - B. Therefore, we should not say:
 1. “Nobody was forgiven under the Law of Moses.”
 2. They were.
 - C. But **how** that forgiveness ultimately worked is where the deeper question begins.
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4. THE LIMITATION OF THE MOSAIC SACRIFICES

- A. The sacrifices under Moses were commanded by God and provided a means of atonement.
 1. But the animals themselves could not permanently remove sin.
 2. Hebrews states plainly:
 - a. *“For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins.” — Hebrews 10:4*
 - b. *“And every priest standeth daily ministering and offering oftentimes the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins.” — Hebrews 10:11*
 - B. This gives us an important distinction:
 1. **God could forgive under the Mosaic covenant, but the blood of animals was not the ultimate basis for permanently removing sin.**
 - C. The sacrifices pointed forward to Christ.
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5. REMISSION OF SINS

- A. What does remission mean?
 1. The New Testament word translated “**remission**” is *aphesis*.
 2. The basic idea includes:
 - a. Release
 - b. Letting go
 - c. Dismissal
 - d. Pardon
 - e. Forgiveness
 - B. Therefore, we should not treat **forgiveness** and **remission** as completely unrelated acts.
 1. They **overlap** substantially.
 - C. A useful distinction of emphasis is:
 1. Forgiveness emphasizes God's pardon.
 2. Remission emphasizes the release or removal of the sin.
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6. REMISSION AND THE BLOOD OF CHRIST

- A. Jesus specifically connected His blood with remission:
 1. *“For this is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many for the re-*
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mission of sins.” — Matthew 26:28

- B. This is very important.
 - 1. Christ's blood is the basis of the remission of sins in the New Covenant.
 - C. Hebrews says:
 - 1. *“And almost all things are by the law purged with blood; and without shedding of blood is no remission.” — Hebrews 9:22*
 - D. Christ therefore did not merely teach forgiveness.
 - 1. He came to provide the sacrifice through which God's promise of remission would be accomplished.
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7. DID JESUS FORGIVE SINS BEFORE HIS DEATH?

- A. Yes! — This is one of the most interesting aspects of Jesus' ministry.
 - 1. Jesus told the paralytic: *“Son, thy sins be forgiven thee.” — Mark 2:5*
 - 2. The scribes objected: — *“Who can forgive sins but God only?” — Mark 2:7*
 - 3. Jesus responded: — *“But that ye may know that the Son of man hath power on earth to forgive sins...” — Mark 2:10*
 - B. Jesus therefore **exercised authority to forgive sins while He was on earth.**
 - 1. He also told the sinful woman: — *“Thy sins are forgiven.” — Luke 7:48*
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8. WHY COULD JESUS FORGIVE SINS BEFORE THE CROSS?

- A. Because Christ's sacrifice was God's established plan.
 - B. Jesus' death had not yet occurred, but God's plan of redemption was already certain.
 - C. Paul explains:
 - 1. *“Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the **remission of sins that are past**, through the forbearance of God.” — Romans 3:25*
 - D. This is a crucial passage.
 - 1. The cross provided the ultimate basis for God's righteous treatment of sins committed **before Christ's death.**
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9. FORGIVENESS BEFORE THE CROSS AND THE NEW COVENANT

- A. There is nevertheless a major covenant distinction.
 - 1. Jesus' death was necessary for the New Covenant to come into force.
 - 2. Hebrews *says, “For where a testament is, there must also of necessity be the death of the testator.” — Hebrews 9:16*
 - B. Therefore: During Jesus' earthly ministry Jesus could say:
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1. *"Thy sins be forgiven thee." — Mark 2:5*
- C. At the cross Jesus shed His blood:
 1. *"this is My blood of the new testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins." — Matthew 26:28*
- D. After the resurrection the apostles were commanded to preach:
 1. *"...repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations..." — Luke 24:47*
- E. On the day of Pentecost, Peter proclaimed:
 1. *"Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins." — Acts 2:38*
- F. It is to be noted that "Remission" connected with sins is not found in the Old Testament.
 1. It is a New Testament teaching and found in ten verses.
 - a. Matt. 26:28; Mk. 1:4; Lk. 1:17; Lk. 3:3; LK. 24:47; ACTS 2:38; ACTS 10:43; Rom. 3:25; Heb. 9:22; Heb. 10:28.
 2. We know that Christ lived and died under the Old Testament law.
 3. His usage of the phrase "remission of sins" was forward looking after his death and resurrection.
 4. John the Baptist baptized for the remission (forgiveness) of sins and was also forward looking.
 - a. *John did baptize in the wilderness, and preach the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins.— Mk. 1:4*
 - i. KJV and the ASV say "Remission"
 - ii. NASB, ESV says "Forgiveness"
 - b. John's baptism was a baptism of repentance for the remission of sins (Mark 1:4), preparing people for the Messiah.
 - c. Christian baptism was instituted by Jesus after His resurrection (Matthew 28:19), that connects the believer with Christ's death, burial, and resurrection.
 - d. Acts 19:1-7 — Paul explains, *"John's baptism was a baptism of repentance. He told the people to believe in the one coming after him, that is, Jesus.*
 - e. Acts 2:38 — Peter says now it was a baptism for the remission of sins.
 - i. *"...Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins. ..."* — Acts 2:38
 - f. It stands to reason that those baptized with John's baptism of repentance would need to be rebaptized into the death of Christ.

10. GREEK TERMS AND THEIR NUANCES

- A. "Forgive" (Greek: *aphēmi* or *charizomai*)
- B. *Aphēmi* (to send away, to pardon): emphasizes the act of forgiving or pardoning sins.
- C. *Charizomai* (to show favor or grace): emphasizes the gracious nature of God's forgiveness.
- D. "Remission" (Greek: *aphēsis*)
 - 1. Derived from *aphēmi*, meaning "to send away" or "to remit."
 - 2. Focuses on the aspect of sins being "sent away," "forgiven," or "remitted."
- E. Reasons for Different Terms
 - 1. Emphasis on Action vs. Result:
 - 2. "Forgive" often highlights the action — the act of pardoning or absolving someone from sin.
 - 3. "Remission" emphasizes the state or result — sins are "remitted" or "sent away," implying a completed act.
- F. Contextual Usage:
 - 1. In some contexts, writers use "forgive" to focus on God's mercy and the personal act of pardon (e.g., Luke 23:34: "Father, forgive them").
 - 2. "Remission" (or "forgiveness") appears more in theological or doctrinal contexts, emphasizing the official or complete removal of guilt (e.g., Acts 2:38, "for the remission of sins").
- G. Translation Variations:
 - 1. Different English translations choose words based on the subtle distinction they want to convey.
 - 2. For example, "forgiveness" in many passages reflects the Greek *charizomai* (grace), while "remission" often reflects *aphēsis*.
- H. Theological Emphasis:
 - 1. Sometimes, "remission" emphasizes the legal aspect — sins being legally forgiven or remitted before God's justice.
 - 2. "Forgiveness" emphasizes the relational aspect — God's mercy and grace toward the sinner.
- I. To Summarize These Terms:
 - 1. The New Testament writers use both terms to highlight different facets of God's gracious act of forgiving sins.
 - a. "Forgive" stresses the act of pardoning,
 - b. "Remission" emphasizes the complete removal or sending away of sins.
 - c. Both are deeply connected and often used interchangeably depending on the emphasis of the passage.

11. REDEMPTION

A. What is redemption?

1. Redemption emphasizes **deliverance through a price**.
2. Peter says:
 - a. *"Ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold..." — 1 Peter 1:18*
3. Instead:
 - a. *"But with the precious blood of Christ..." — 1 Peter 1:19*
4. Christ paid the price of our redemption through His blood.

B. Redemption from the curse

1. Paul says:
 - a. *"Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us..." — Galatians 3:13*
2. Christ's redemption therefore involves **deliverance**.

C. Redemption from iniquity

1. Titus 2:14 says Christ:
 - a. *"gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people..."*
2. Redemption is much broader than simply having an individual sin pardoned.
3. It describes Christ's work of **purchasing and delivering a people from the bondage and consequences of sin**.

12. EPHESIANS 1:7 BRINGS THE THREE IDEAS TOGETHER.

- ### A. This one verse is particularly valuable for this study:
1. *"In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace." — Ephesians 1:7*
 2. Notice the progression:
 3. **CHRIST'S BLOOD → REDEMPTION → FORGIVENESS OF SINS**
 4. The blood is the means of forgiveness and the remission of sins.
 5. Redemption describes the deliverance accomplished through that blood.
 6. Forgiveness describes the pardon of sins resulting from that work.

13. FORGIVENESS, REMISSION, AND REDEMPTION COMPARED

Term	Basic emphasis	Key thought
Forgiveness	Pardon	God does not hold the sin against us
Remission	Release/pardon	Sin is released or dismissed

Term	Basic emphasis	Key thought
Redemption	Deliverance through a price	Christ paid the price to deliver us
Atonement	Reconciliation/covering	God provides a means of dealing with sin
Reconciliation	Restored relationship	The sinner is brought back into fellowship with God

These concepts overlap, but each highlights something different.

14. THE OLD COVENANT AND THE NEW COVENANT

A. This is perhaps the most important part of the study.

B. OLD COVENANT

1. God established:
 - a. **Sin → prescribed sacrifice → priestly service → forgiveness**
 - b. *But: — “For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins.” — Hebrews 10:4*
2. The sacrifices were temporary and pointed toward Christ.

C. NEW COVENANT

1. Christ established:
 - a. **Sin → Christ's sacrifice → His blood → remission/forgiveness → redemption**
 - b. *“Neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by his own blood he entered in once into the holy place, **having obtained eternal redemption for us.**” — Hebrews 9:12*
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15. CHRIST AS THE HIGH PRIEST

A. This also explains why Jesus' relationship to the Jewish priesthood was so significant.

1. The Levitical priests offered animal sacrifices repeatedly.
2. Christ offered **Himself**.
3. *“But this man, after he had offered **one sacrifice for sins for ever**, sat down on the right hand of God.” — Hebrews 10:12*

B. And Hebrews calls Christ:

1. *“a great high priest” — Hebrews 4:14*
 2. Therefore, Jesus did not simply become another priest within the Levitical system.
 3. **He became High Priest of a superior covenant and offered a superior**
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sacrifice.

16. WHO IS THE MEDIATOR?

- A. The New Testament makes this clear:
 - 1. *"For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus." — 1 Timothy 2:5*
 - B. Under the New Covenant, forgiveness is not mediated through a continuing Levitical priesthood.
 - 1. Christ is our mediator.
 - C. Christ is our high priest:
 - D. *"Seeing then that we have a great high priest, that is passed into the heavens, — Hebrews 4:14*
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17. WHAT ABOUT THE JEWISH PRIESTS?

- A. This helps us understand the opposition to Jesus.
 - B. When Jesus said, *"Thy sins be forgiven thee" (Mark 2:5)*
 - 1. The scribes responded, *"Who can forgive sins but God only?" (Mark 2:7)*
 - C. Their objection demonstrates that they understood Jesus to be claiming an authority that belonged to God.
 - D. Jesus then proved that He possessed authority to forgive sins.
 - 1. The issue was therefore **much greater than Jesus merely interfering with the priests' duties.**
 - 2. Jesus was demonstrating **divine authority.**
 - 3. Ultimately, He would establish a priesthood and covenant superior to the Levitical system.
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18. THE ROLE OF BAPTISM IN REMISSION

- A. Peter's command in Acts 2:38 deserves special attention:
 - 1. *"Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins."*
 - B. The purpose stated by Peter is **"for the remission of sins."**
 - 1. This is the first major proclamation of the gospel after Christ's death in which the hearers are told what they must do to receive the promised remission.
 - C. The sequence is:
 - 1. **Hear the gospel → Believe → Repent → Be baptized → Remission of sins**
 - 2. This is consistent with Jesus' commission:
 - a. *"He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved..." — Mark 16:16*
 - b. *"...repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name*
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among all nations...” — Luke 24:47

19. THE CENTRAL DISTINCTION

- A. We can now summarize the study in one statement:
 - 1. Forgiveness describes God's pardon of sin; remission describes the release or dismissal of sin; redemption describes Christ's deliverance of the sinner through the price of His blood.
- B. They are not three separate ways of being saved.
 - 1. They are **three complementary descriptions of God's saving work through Christ**.
- C. A simple illustration
 - 1. Think of a person held captive because of a debt:
 - a. **Forgiveness**: The debt is pardoned.
 - b. **Remission**: The debt is released and no longer held against him.
 - c. **Redemption**: Someone pays the price necessary to release him.
 - 2. In salvation:
 - a. **Christ pays the price** → **redemption**
 - b. **God pardons the sinner** → **forgiveness**
 - c. **The sin is released/dismissed** → **remission**

20. THE CROSS IS THE CENTER OF ALL THREE.

- A. None of these concepts can be separated from Christ.
 - 1. *“In whom we have **redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins...**” — Ephesians 1:7*
 - 2. *“This is my blood of the new testament... **for the remission of sins.**” — Matthew 26:28*
 - 3. *“...having obtained **eternal redemption for us.**” — Hebrews 9:12*
- B. Therefore:
 - 1. **Forgiveness** — what God grants.
 - 2. **Remission** — what happens to the sin.
 - 3. **Redemption** — what Christ accomplished by paying the price.
 - 4. **Christ's blood** — the foundation of the New Covenant system.

21. CONCLUSION

- A. The Bible does **not** present forgiveness and remission as two entirely different types of pardon.
 - 1. Rather, they are closely related terms that emphasize different aspects of

God's dealing with sin.

- B. The major biblical distinction is between:
 - 1. **Forgiveness under the Mosaic covenant**, which God genuinely granted through the covenant's appointed system,;
 - 2. and **the complete redemption and remission accomplished through Christ's blood under the New Covenant.**
- C. The Mosaic sacrifices could not themselves take away sins (Hebrews 10:4).
 - 1. Christ's sacrifice did what those sacrifices could never do:
 - a. *"For by one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified." — Hebrews 10:14*
- D. This leads to one of the most important questions in this entire study:
 - 1. *If Jesus was already forgiving people's sins during His earthly ministry, what exactly was different about the "remission of sins" preached by Peter in Acts 2:38?*
- E. The answer involves **the covenant, Christ's death, His blood, His priesthood, and baptism**, and the distinction can be demonstrated step-by-step from the New Testament.