

THE THEORY OF BAPTISMAL
REGENERATION

ACTS 2:38

by

B. H. Carroll

Copyright (Public Domain)

www.reformedontheweb.com/home/.html

(Reformed on the Web)

The Theory of Baptismal Regeneration

Acts 2:38

by

B. H. Carroll

We now come to an important subject growing out of Acts 2:38 to which I devote two whole chapters because:

- (1) the two opposing theories of interpretation to this and other passages, supposed to be kindred, have divided the Christian world since the second century, resulting in modern times in the formation of the distinct domination, the “Campbellites,” and
- (2) the consequences are that one of these two theories has changed the plan of salvation, necessitated a new system of theology, introduced new ordinances, changed the subjects of church membership, prepared the way for a new church polity, and for a union of church and state. That being the case, and as that battle has been going on from the second century till this day, it justifies these two whole chapters being devoted to the subject.

The first theory mentioned above, is expressed in the following propositions:

- (1) The plan of salvation by grace has ever been, is now, and will ever be, just one plan in its essential requirements of man.
- (2) These requirements are all spiritual.
- (3) They are the new birth, repentance toward God, and faith toward (in) the Messiah.
- (4) The great model of the faith which brings salvation is the faith of Abraham, prior to his subjection to any external ordinance.
- (5) Salvation before ordinances.
- (6) Blood before the laver. That is the first theory.

The opposite theory is:

- (1) Salvation by ordinances.
- (2) Baptismal regeneration.
- (3) Baptismal remission.

(4) Baptism, like repentance and faith, a condition of the new birth, salvation and remission of sins.

The entire New Testament usage of the verb, *baptizo*, and its noun when followed by the preposition, *eis*, with the accusative for its object must be considered, in order to correctly interpret Acts 2:38. The New Testament usage of the verb, baptize and its noun, when followed by the preposition, *eis*, with the accusative as its object, is more important than classic usage. When you write down all such New Testament passages, in their order, and look at them carefully, each in its context, then we must render that preposition, *eis*, by an English word or phrase that will meet the requirements of every context. When you write down sentences in the New Testament from Matthew to Revelation, that have the verb, *baptizo*, or its noun, followed by the preposition, *eis*, and that followed by the accusative for its object, look at those in their respective groups, then stop and rub out that preposition, *eis*, in every case, and substitute its meaning in an English word or phrase, you must see that it would give a rendering in English that would fit everything. The meaning of a word when substituted for that word, will make sense. That is a fine text which takes the entire New Testament usage. Take an English-Greek Concordance – it will save much trouble – and make out a list of passages, commencing with Matthew 3:11: “I baptize you in water unto repentance.” The verb, baptize, is there, the preposition, *eis*, and *metanoian* in the accusative, which is the object of the preposition. Go thus through the whole New Testament and note every passage. Each passage, however, must have baptize, or its noun, followed by the preposition, *eis*, with the accusative as the object.

As we go through the New Testament in this manner we find a circle of scriptures used to support the theory that water baptism, like repentance and faith, is a term, or condition, of salvation. Here are those passages on which the people rely who hold that baptism is in order to remission of sins: The passages in which the verb, *baptizo*, or its noun, is employed, followed by the preposition, *eis*, with the accusative as its object; they select only three.

They select as their first group the following:

1. Acts 2:38; Romans 6:1-4; Galatians 3:27. They take the passages only of “baptized *eis*” with the accusative. One of them is, “baptized *eis* remission of sins”; another is, “baptized *eis* Christ”; and the other, “baptized *eis* his

death.” These passages form their first group. The grammatical construction is the same in every case, and they say, “You Baptists have no plan of induction.” If we ask them how they get into the remission of sins, they say, “We are baptized into it.” If we ask, “How do you get into Christ?” they answer, “We are baptized into Christ.” If we ask, “How do you get into the death of Christ?” they say, “We are baptized into the death of Christ.” They also say, “We know how to get in, but you have no method of induction.” When I come to these passages I will tell you what to say to them. One scripture will answer: “By faith we enter into this grace wherein we stand.” That is our method of induction.

2. Their second group is that which connects baptism with the washing away of sin, without the preposition, *eis*. “And now why tarriest thou? – arise and be baptized, and wash away thy sins” (Acts 22:16). This is the only passage in this group.

3. The third group consists of those passages which connect baptism with salvation, Mark 16:16: “He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved,” and 1 Peter 3:21: “Baptism doth also now save us.”

4. The fourth group is that which seems to connect baptism with regeneration, consisting of, “Except one be born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God” (John 3: 5). “Christ also loved the church, and gave himself up for it; that he might sanctify it, having cleansed it by the washing of water with the word” (Ephesians 5:25). “According to his mercy he hath saved us, through the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit” (Titus 3:5).

When you can correctly interpret these four groups of scriptures you have the heart and the body, the center and the circumference, the substance and the shadow of it all. This is the second theory, and it thus makes salvation to come through ritualism – through ordinances.

The real substance of this contention is this:

(1) It is a salvation by ritual.

(2) It is a sacerdotal salvation, since it requires the presence, the office and performance of another party, the administrator of the ordinances, and thereby securing our salvation, making you responsible, when your salvation is dependent upon somebody else, and on what somebody else does. That is

what we call “sacerdotal” – *sacer*, a Latin word for priest – a priestly salvation.

(3) This requires competent authority to pronounce on the fitness of the “*sacer*” (priest) or administrator, and thus makes it an endless question with any man as to whether he is saved until he can prove that the one that baptized him is a qualified administrator, and thereby contradicting the statement of Paul, that God made salvation by faith, is. e.i., I may repent and believe by myself, just thinking about the Bible, or reasoning about it.

(4) Now this other thing: the theory is that, like repentance and faith, it is a term of salvation, but this is unlike repentance and faith, in that they are personal, and this other is not personal; it is still more unlike repentance and faith in this, that the scriptures expressly say, “Except you repent, you shall perish,” and, “He that believeth not is condemned.” Nowhere in the Bible do we find an expression of that kind about baptism.

The greatest modern advocate of their theory is Alexander Campbell, and a short history of his contention is this: He came over from Scotland and settled in Virginia. He had a certain *quasi* connection with a Baptist church. Anyhow, he was present at Baptist associations, and named his first paper *The Christian Baptist*. But he says, “When I began my debate on the act of baptism with McCall, who was a Presbyterian, while studying for that debate I found out that baptism, unless it was intended to secure the remission of sins, was as empty as a blasted nut.”

That was the germ of the idea in his mind, according to his own statement, hence Mr. Campbell, from that time on, began to publish things that the Baptists did not believe, and soon he brought out a new paper, which he called the *Millennial Harbinger*. In other words, he considered himself to be the harbinger, the forerunner, the “John the Baptist” of the millennium; and that it was this new theory of his that was bringing about the millennium. In that *Millennial Harbinger* was an “Extra” on the remission of sins. It was a little too long to go into his little paper. In this Extra, which was the first general and formal announcement of his proposition, he took the position of baptismal regeneration, baptismal remission, or baptismal salvation – that wherever you find “purifying” or “sanctifying” it means baptism. In other words, he made it mean the whole thing.

When he brought out that extra the “fur began to fly.” All over the land the

Baptists rose up and said, “This man does not belong to us,” and their leaders began to reply to his extra, among whom were the celebrated Andrew Broadus, the elder J. B. Jeter, both of Virginia; also Carr, pastor of one of the great Richmond churches. Whereupon everybody knew there would be a war at the next meeting of that association. The association met and a committee was appointed to consider the state of the churches. That committee, of which Carr was chairman, found that the churches were being wrecked by a new doctrine, set forth in the extra of the *Millennial Harbinger*. So the committee recommended that the churches withdraw fellowship from the preachers who advocated that doctrine, and from the members who accepted it. The churches acted instantly, all over Virginia. And since they drew that line of cleavage, Campbellism has no longer hurt the Baptists. This heresy passed into Kentucky. There it divided the associations and the churches. Wherever it went a fire arose. Where there are two horses going in opposite directions, no man had better try to ride both at the same time. Where two are not agreed they ought not to try to walk together. Then Mr. Campbell organized his own denomination. In the meantime, he held debates with quite a number of people on the subject.

His two great lines of argument were as follows: He relied most upon the grammatical construction, i.e., *Metanoesate, kai baptistheto hekastos human en to onomati lesou Christou eis aphenin ton hamartion humon, kai lempsesthe ten dorean tou hagiou pneumatos*. He said that the grammatical construction placed *aphesin hamartion*, remission of sins, as the object to be secured by the *baptistheto*, and he attempted to prove his points by the citation of many scholars who admitted his grammatical constructions. His second argument was that from the second century down to the present time, great multitudes of Christians had held to that, and the majority of those who claimed to be Christians, which would include all the Romanists, all the Greek Catholic churches, and a number of others. Those are the main lines of his argument.

A kindred theory, similarly based, which he combated to the very last, stands or falls with the theory, viz.: the proposition that the Lord’s Supper at the hands of the priest, after it has been converted into the very body and blood of Christ, is essential to salvation. The advocates of this theory would say, on grammatical construction, Jesus said, “This [holding up the bread, after they had blessed it] is my body broken for you,” and then [holding up the cup]:

“This cup is my blood, shed for the remission of sins,” and then they would quote a passage in another part of John: “Except a man eat this flesh and drink this blood he has no life in him.” So they made much of grammatical construction, and also of historical argument. They made out a stronger case for their part of the theory than Campbell did for his, and on precisely the same line of argument. I have always contended that the Campbellites must abandon their theory, or accept this one as here stated.

If it is true that there is no way to get into Christ except through baptism, then there is no way to get Christ into us except through the Lord’s Supper.

The induction must be both ways: “I in you and you in me.” There is no shadow of a doubt that the two are like two pillars which support an arch. The arch is one, and the pillars are the two supporters of the arch.

The antecedent arguments opposing both Campbell’s theory and the kindred Romanist theory, similarly based, are as follows:

(1) The plan of salvation from the book of Genesis to Revelation is one plan. Whatever has been essential as a requirement is always essential, *just* as much so in the Old Testament as in the New Testament, and yet baptism and the Lord’s Supper were not parts of the Old Testament. And all must admit that some Old Testament people were saved. If so, according to their theory, they were saved by compliance with terms that *we* do not have to observe, and we are saved by compliance with terms that *they* did not have to observe; therefore, the plan was changed in the essential terms of salvation.

(2) But the model case of Abraham, the model case of salvation by faith as in Abraham, utterly nullifies any change in the plan: “Abraham believed Jehovah, and it was imputed to him for righteousness,” or justification, and Paul says, “This was written not for Abraham’s sake alone, but for our sake.” When we believe in Christ it is imputed unto us for righteousness, and we must follow in the steps of our father, Abraham, showing that the plan of salvation was the same.

(3) Another antecedent, argument is the testimony of the prophets. Peter said to Cornelius, “To him [that is, to Jesus] bear all the prophets witness, that through his name every one that believeth on him shall receive remission of sins.” Here is remission of sins conditioned upon faith, and all the prophets bore witness to the fact that a man who believed on him received the

remission of sins, and there was no baptism at the time that the prophets bore that testimony.

(4) Acts 16:30 is the only place in the Bible where the express question is put, “What must I do to be saved?” and the express answer is, “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved.”

(5) In many instances in the life of Christ he said to men and women, “Thy faith hath saved thee,” and that where there was no baptism at all.

(6) A certain passage in Hebrews goes to the heart of the matter. Talking about the ritual of the Old Testament it says, “It was not possible that the blood of bullocks and of goats could take away sin.” Why?

Because there was no intrinsic merit in the blood of bulls and goats. Apply that principle: It is not possible that baptism in water shall take away sin. There is no intrinsic merit in it.

“The blood of Jesus Christ, his Son, cleanseth us from all sin.” The Old Testament ritual did not do it, and the New Testament ritual does not do it.

(7) If we make some external act to be performed by another party essential to our salvation, then the promise of salvation can never be made sure to us, and yet the scriptures teach that God made salvation by faith that it might be made sure.

That penitent thief, for instance, was up there dying, hanging on his cross. Suppose baptism is an essential condition to salvation; he is lost, for he could not come down. But Jesus looked at him who had complied with no ritual, and said, “To-day shalt thou be with me in Paradise.”

I discuss this subject at length because I want to solemnly impress upon the mind the way these two theories fight, have been fighting, and will continue to fight until the end of the world.

(8) I will assume a perpendicular line as upon a blackboard. Write on one side of it, “Lovers of God,” and on the other side, “Haters of God.” On one side are believers; on the other side, unbelievers. Now, from which of these two sides will you take the subjects for baptism – people who love God, and believe in Jesus Christ, or haters of God and unbelievers? A follower of Campbell will say, “Take lovers of God and believers in Jesus Christ.” Then I say, “Whosoever loveth is born of God,” and “we are all the children of God

by faith in Christ Jesus,” and “He that believeth has been born of God.” They may wrestle with that perpendicular line as much as they please – they can never break it.

(9) Paul says, “I thank God I baptized none of you; God sent me not to baptize but to preach the gospel.”

If baptism were one of the terms of salvation, Paul was thanking God that he had refused to perform one of the things essential to salvation.

Does he not make a distinction there between the essence of the gospel that saves, and baptism? No man can deny it if he carefully studies the passage.

(10) The repeated declarations in the Bible, e.g., take this one: “God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, *that* whosoever believeth on him should not perish, but have everlasting life,” and “he that believeth shall not come into condemnation, but *hath* everlasting life.” So the scriptures might be multiplied, but I must stop here.

We have for the next chapter the interpretation of the four groups of scriptures which are very necessary to the understanding of the things that oppose one of these theories, as follows: The first group, Acts 2:38; Romans 6:1-4; Galatians 3:27; the second group (just one), Acts 22:16; the third group, Mark 16:16; Is Peter 3:21; the fourth group, John 3:5; Ephesians 5:26; Titus 3:5.

I have now led up to the exegesis of these four groups. I want to settle some things while I am on this. I would go to the end of the earth to oppose any man who says that he is necessary to my salvation by making any rite or ceremony a term of salvation.

I would never go and look for the remissions of sins in a pool of water.

QUESTIONS

1. What justifies two whole chapters devoted to Acts 2:38?
2. What the propositions of the first theory?
3. What the propositions of the second theory?
4. What particular usage must be considered, that we may correctly interpret Acts 2:38?
5. What the method pursued in the investigation of this truth?

6. What the first group of New Testament scriptures used to support the theory that water baptism, like repentance and faith, is a term, or condition of salvation, and what the distinguishing characteristic of this group?
7. From these scriptures, what their method of induction, and what the opposite theory of induction?
8. What the second group, and its distinguishing characteristic?
9. What the third group, and its characteristic?
10. What the fourth group, and its characteristic?
11. What the real substance of this contention?
12. What the meaning of “sacerdotal”?
13. Who the great modern advocate of this theory, and what is a short history of his contention?
14. What were his two lines of argument?
15. What kindred theory, similarly based, which he combated to the very last, stands or falls with this theory?
16. What antecedent argument opposes Campbell’s theory, and the kindred Romanist theory, based on the unity of the plan of salvation?
17. What one based on the model case of Abraham?
18. What one based on the testimony of the prophets?
19. What one based on the plain question and answer?
20. What one based on the teaching of Christ?
21. What one based on a passage in Hebrews?
22. What one based upon the promise of a sure salvation to them that believe?
23. What one based on the illustration of the dividing line?
24. What one based on Paul’s statement that he did not baptize certain people?
25. What one based on the repeated declaration in the Bible?

The Theory of Baptismal Regeneration

(Concluded) Acts 2:38

The last chapter was devoted to the great principles which interpret Acts 2:38, and I would have you bear in mind everything that was said in that chapter. The object of the present discussion is to give a brief exegesis of the circle of scriptures cited. I showed that four classes of scriptures were generally cited in favor of the Campbellite position, i.e., that Acts 2:38 should be interpreted to mean that baptism is “in order to” remission of sins; that these cases are where the verb, *baptizo*, or its noun, is followed by the preposition, *eis*, and the accusative case, of which the most notable is Acts 2:38. There we have the verb, *baptistheto*, let him be baptized, and the preposition, *eis*, with the accusative case, *aphesin hamartion*, the remission of sins.

Words in all languages may have, and do have:

- (1) the common, ordinary meaning;
- (2) a frequent meaning, different from the ordinary;
- (3) a rare meaning, different from both the others.

Just so this Greek preposition, *eis*, in the New Testament with the accusative case, commonly means, in order to; frequently it means with reference to, or in token of, or concerning and it rarely means because of.

There are three principles of interpretation which enable us to safely determine when to depart from the ordinary meaning and render this word according to the frequenter rare meaning.

These principles are

- (1) the bearing of the local context;
- (2) the bearing of the general context (by general context I mean the trend of the whole Bible teaching, or what is called the “canon,” or rule of faith);
- (3) the nature or congruity of things.

You do not need any more than those three principles when you come to study that Greek preposition in the New Testament to enable you to know whether to give in its ordinary, its frequent or its rare meaning.

I will illustrate these principles in reverse order:

(1) The ritualistic Jews, holding to the letter of the law of sacrifices and strict grammatical construction, insisted that their compliance with the law of appointed sacrifices did secure to them the actual remission of sins, and hence there was no necessity for a new covenant, with a nobler Sacrifice. But Paul, in the letter to the Hebrews, shows that it was impossible for the blood of bullocks and goats to really take away sin. They had not the intrinsic merit. It was incongruous, contrary to the nature of things, that the blood of a soulless brute should expiate the sins of a man. Just so when the Romanist quotes Christ's words: "This cup of the covenant which is poured out for many unto the remission of sins" claims a literal, ordinary meaning for the word, *eis*, according to strict grammatical construction, we reply: It is impossible for grape juice to take away sins.

(2) To illustrate the power of the general context in determining the meaning of a word in a specific case, we say, scripture must interpret scripture. The trend of the Bible must govern a literal, grammatical construction of a single passage. The passage must harmonize with clear, abundant passages elsewhere. If the book teaches in a thousand passages that only the blood of Christ, apprehended by faith, can take away sin, we are not warranted in attributing to an external rite the same power, merely on the ground or literal, grammatical construction in a few passages. These few detached passages concerning external rites must be interpreted in harmony with the spiritual trend of the entire revelation. That is an unquestioned principle of interpretation.

(3) To illustrate the power of the local context in determining the meaning of the Greek preposition, *eis* (here we have the preposition with the accusative case after it), we now cite most pertinent New Testament examples: Matthew 12:41: "They repented *eis* the preaching of Jonah." Because *eis* ordinarily means in order to, must we so render it here? It is a fact, according to chapter 3 of Jonah, and did our Lord so mean it? If so, they failed in the object of their repentance, because Jonah never preached to them after they repented – not a word. The only preaching he did preceded the repentance, and was the cause of the repentance. Therefore, Dr. Broadus teaches in his *Commentary on Matthew* that *eis* here must have its *rare* meaning – because of. They repented because of, *eis*, the preaching of Jonah. But they say we must make

the ordinary meaning the meaning in every case.

(4) We will now consider a frequent meaning of *eis*, also determined by local context, in the following still more pertinent passage, for in it we have the verb, *baptizo*, as well as the preposition, *eis* (Matthew 3:11): “I indeed baptize you in water *eis* repentance.” All the context shows that John required repentance, and even its fruits, as a condition precedent to baptism. It would be foolish to render it, “I baptize you in order to repentance.” Here the preposition has not its ordinary meaning, in order to, nor its rare meaning, because of, but its frequent meaning, with reference to – a repentance that they had exercised. “Is baptize you with reference to that exercising of it,” is what John means. Or, as Tyndale, in his version (it was a very fine version for his time) says, “I baptize you in token of repentance.” That makes fine sense.

Matthew 3:11 has a bearing on Acts 2:38. It is the first New Testament use of the verb, *baptizo*, followed by the preposition, *eis*, with the accusative case, and is the key passage for unlocking the meaning of Acts 2:38. They stand or fall together, so exact is the parallel. That they do stand or fall together is evident from their exact parallelism. A further evidence that they stand or fall together is found in the fact that both Mark and Luke tie them together: Mark 1:4: “John preached the baptism of repentance” – *eis aphasis halation*; Luke 3:3: “He came preaching the baptism of repentance” – *eis aphin hamartion*. Here are two gospels, then, that tie those passages together. And right after them is used Acts 2:38: “Repent ye, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ” – *eis phesin hamartion*. If we then translate Matthew 3:11, “I baptize you with reference to repentance,” and “John indeed baptized with the baptism of repentance with reference to the remission of sins,” why not here go right on and say, “Repent ye, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ with reference to the remission of sins?” Remember that in every case we render the preposition in all these conjoined cases (Matthew 3:11; Mark 1:4; Luke 3:3; Acts 2:38) by “unto” in the frequent sense of with reference to. Now that will fit the local context, and it will fit the general context.

To find another instance of *eis* is nearer to Acts 2:38 we have only to glance back to verse 25, another unmistakable instance of *eis* in the sense of concerning, and not in order to. Note that it is in the same speech: “For David saith *eis* (concerning] him,” speaking of Christ. What is to hinder us, then,

from taking Acts 2:25, where the *eis* means concerning, or with reference to, and putting that meaning of it in verse 38?

The classics abound with this sense of the preposition, *eis*. Dr. Broadus quotes three:

(1) From Aristophanes: “To jeer at a man *eis* his rags,” i. e., with reference to his rags. Now we would not jeer at a man in order to his rags.

(2) From Xenophon: “To reproach *eis* friendship.” We do not reproach a man because of his friendship, and certainly not in order to his friendship.

(3) From Plato: “To differ from one *eis* virtue.” We do not differ from a man in order to virtue.

We may apply the *ad hominem* argument to our Campbellite brethren. They evade the many cases of remission through faith and without baptism, in the life of our Lord, by saying, “The law of pardon was not given till Pentecost.” How, then, do they dispose of Mark 1:4 and Luke 3:3, paralleling remission under the preaching of John the Baptist with the preaching of Peter at Pentecost in Acts 2:38? John baptized *eis aphesin hamartion*, exactly paralleling what Peter did in Acts 2:38. Then, briefly, the meaning of *eis* in Acts 2:38 is this: Repent ye – plural, and a strong imperative – “and let every one of you who has repented be baptized” – a mild imperative – “in the name of Jesus Christ *eis aphesin hamartion*” – with reference to remission of sins.

I am willing to risk my scholarship on that. One thing I am sure of is that however much a man may rely on the technical, grammatical construction, his common sense is constantly pushing him off that platform when it leaves him to the idea that he cannot obtain remission of sins from God unless he submits to an external rite. All the world revolts at that, and so does the teaching of the Bible.

The second group of scriptures is where baptism is connected with the washing away of sins, without the preposition, *eis*, in it. There is only one passage of that kind (Acts 22:16): “Arise [Ananias said to Paul], and be baptized, and wash away thy sins.”

The points here are:

- (1) Paul is commanded to wash away his sins;
- (2) to wash them away in being baptized.

Two simple questions will unveil the meaning:

- (a) Can a man himself really wash away his sins?
- (b) Can water on the outside really wash away sins on the inside?

The two are answered by the scripture: “God alone can forgive sins,” and when we come to the real remission it must come from God. Again: “The blood of Jesus Christ, his Son, cleanseth us from all sin.” Therefore, it is evident that when Paul was commanded to wash away his sins – Paul himself, not God, was commanded to wash them away – that it is not a real washing away of sins that is meant, because that contradicts the other scripture, that God alone can take away sin. And when it says that he was commanded to wash away his sins in baptism, it is evident that it is not a real cleansing from sin that is contemplated, for the scriptures so abundantly teach that the blood of Jesus Christ alone really cleanses from sin. Then what does it mean? That Paul in baptism might symbolically wash away his sins. What God himself accomplished through the sacrifice of his Son, Paul might show forth in a symbolic cleansing, just as what Christ’s blood accomplishes in the remission of sins, the wine of the Lord’s Supper may symbolically accomplish. As there must first be a substance to cast a shadow, so the symbolic cleansing is just like taking the Lord’s Supper, if we are not really saved.

So baptism is unmeaning without a prior and real remission of sin. Being really saved, we may picture symbolically that salvation in a memorial. Otherwise it would be like Bunker Hill Monument without a previous battle to commemorate.

Peter expressly declares that baptism does not put away the filth of the flesh, using the term “filth” in the sense of spiritual defilement (not dirt on the body), and using the word “flesh” in its common meaning of the carnal nature (not the physical man). I think Peter in that little parenthesis, “not the putting away of the filth of the flesh,” was inspired of God to put in a precaution against attributing to baptism real cleansing of the defilement of sin. He foresaw the coming of the Campbellites, and put in a word against them.

The third group of scriptures is apparently connected with regeneration:

- (a) “Except one be born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter into the

kingdom of God” (John 3:5).

(b) “According to his mercy he saved us, through the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit” (Titus 3:5).

(c) “Christ also loved the church, and gave himself up for it; that he might sanctify it, having cleansed it by the washing of water with the word” (Ephesians 5:25).

These three passages constitute the third group of scriptures. For a full explanation of John 3:5, see author’s first volume of sermons, page 181, on, *The Human Side of Regeneration*. The following is a quotation from it:

He must be “born of water and Spirit.” There is just one birth, “born of water and Spirit”; and it means exactly what “born again” means; and it means exactly what “born of the Spirit” means; and it means exactly what “born of God” means; just that and no more. Then, if it means just that, why put it in this form: “born of water and Spirit”! I will tell you why. In the new birth there are at least two distinct ideas:

(1) cleansing;

(2) renewing.

If you took only the idea of cleansing and left out the renewing, cleansing would not do any good. The sow that is washed returns to her wallowing in the mire, — because she is a sow. If you do not change her nature, then you do no good to cleanse her, but if you change the nature and do not cleanse, then you have left purity imprisoned in filth. So there are two ideas always, at least two, in the new birth:

(1) cleansing;

(2) renewing.

For explanation of Titus 3:5 see the same volume, page 183:

“For we ourselves also were sometime foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving divers lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful, and hating one another. But after that the kindness and love of God our Saviour toward man appeared, not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost; which he shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Saviour; that being justified by his

grace, we should be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life.” Notice how overwhelmingly conclusive and how comprehensive is this scripture:

- (1) We were every way evil and lost till the love of God to man appeared in our Saviour.
- (2) It appeared not by our works of righteousness. And baptism is a work of righteousness (Matthew 3:15).
- (3) But it appeared in the shedding on us abundantly the Holy Spirit, through Jesus Christ. This is the new birth.
- (4) But this new birth consists of two things:
 - (a) The washing of regeneration, i.e., the cleansing from sin secured by the Spirit’s application of Christ’s blood, in other words, “born of water.”
 - (b) The renewing of the Holy Spirit i.e., the giving of a new heart, which is “born of Spirit.”

From the same work, page 187, is also taken this extract on Ephesians 5:25:

“Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it; that he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word,” Therefore “born of water,” which means the “washing of regeneration,” which means “the sprinkling of our hearts from an evil conscience,” which brings justification, which is apprehended by faith, must be such a “washing of water” as comes “by the word,” because faith comes by hearing and hearing by the word of God, and, therefore, the *rantizer* of babes who finds literal water-baptism in Ezekiel’s “Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you,” exchange – the blood of Jesus, and an essential part of the “new birth” for water, and very little of that. And the immersionist who finds literal water-baptism in John’s “born of water,” makes the same exchange, only getting a little more of the water. But even this compensation is lost in a birth for a burial. His more water has drowned him.

The fourth group of scriptures consists of two: “He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that disbelieveth shall be condemned” (Mark 16:16), and “which also after a true likeness doth now save you, even

baptism, not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the interrogation of a good conscience toward God, through the resurrection of Jesus Christ; who is on the right hand of God, having gone into heaven; angels and authorities and powers being made subject unto him” (1 Peter 3:21-22).

The first thing I have to say on Mark 16:16 is that it is very doubtful whether it is a part of the word of God. Certainly if you were in the Vatican library in Rome, and they were to hand you the old Vatican manuscript of the New Testament and you were to read Mark’s Gospel you would not find in it the last twelve verses of chapter 16. And if you had before you the Sinaitic manuscript, discovered by Tischendorf, and which is supposed to be the oldest manuscript, you would find that this last paragraph of twelve verses is not in it. On that account I never preach from any part of those twelve verses. I never preach from a passage where it is really questionable as to whether or not it is a part of God’s Word, and especially would I not attempt to build up a doctrine on it.

And there is only this one passage in the whole Bible upon which you can plausibly build a baptismal salvation argument (Mark 16:16).

It is very easy to answer all those other passages; it is not go easy to answer this one. But let us suppose that it really belongs to God’s Word. “He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that disbelieveth shall be condemned.” I would construe it just exactly as I construe the passage, “He that endureth unto the end shall be saved.” “He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved”; that is true. He that endures to the end and is baptized shall be saved; that is true also. But when the negative is stated, it does not say, “He that believeth not and is not baptized shall not be saved, or shall be condemned.” When you put it negatively it has no reference to baptism. It does not say, “He that is not baptized shall not be saved.” It does not make any difference how many things one may put in – believe, be baptized, keep the law, go to church – with salvation, it does not affect salvation. If the first one was to secure salvation, it will be true if you put all of them in. That will not take away from the truth. He that believeth hath everlasting life; he that believeth and is baptized shall be saved. Some would make it read: “He that believeth and is baptized and goes to church every Sunday, etc., etc. etc., hath everlasting life.” You can put in as many as you please and they all follow from the first one. But to put it negatively, you could not say, “He that does

not go to church every Sunday will be lost.” And in negation it does not say, “He that believeth not and is not baptized” – it stops at the believer. This is the explanation of this passage, assuming it to be a part of the Bible.

I once had a controversy with a Methodist brother on falling from grace. I was stating the fact that if you have your name in the Lamb’s book of life God will in no wise blot it out – that it stuck. He said, “I can disprove that.” I said, “Where is the passage?” He said, “Over there where Jesus is talking about those who have their names in the Lamb’s book of life (Revelation 3:5).” I said, “That does not say what he will *do*; it says that he will not *blot* the name out.” So when you come to prove a thing you must not rely upon an implication. You must bring up a clear-cut statement of God’s Word. If that text had said, “He that believeth not and is not baptized shall be condemned,” I would not know what to do with it.

Bear these in mind then:

- (1) It is a very doubtful text
- (2) Saving faith is faith that is fruitful (fruit-bearing).
- (3) It does not mean that baptism is a condition of entrance into a saved state, by what follows – “He that believeth not shall be condemned,” like “except ye repent, ye shall perish.”

On 1 Peter 3:21 I make this point on the picture of baptism: “Baptism doth now save us.” Baptism doth now save us in a figure; baptism doth now save us through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. That is the figure, but baptism does not put away the impurity of the carnal nature – does not put away the filth of the flesh.

These are the four points:

- (1) Baptism saves us in a figure.
- (2) That figure is the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.
- (3) Paul says, “You have been planted in the likeness of his death, so ye shall be in the likeness of his resurrection.” Wherever you see a baptism you see a burial and a resurrection. This is not a real salvation, but a pictorial one – a figure of salvation, and baptism does save us that way, and nobody will deny it.
- (4) The injury of a good conscience toward God. And the force of this

last is:

- (a) The conscience is bad before it is cleansed,
- (b) How made good? Hebrew 9:14: “By the blood of Christ.”
- (c) The place of a good conscience – 1 Timothy 1:5 explains.

This, my last general remark, is on the evil consequences of this doctrine. In the history of the doctrine of baptismal regeneration, baptismal salvation, or baptismal remission, the consequences have been fearfully evil. By its fruits ye shall know it. What has been its fruit in history?

(1) The first fruit was that as soon as Christians, after the apostles, reached a conclusion from these scriptures that I have been expounding that sins were really remitted in baptism, and that baptism is never to be repeated, they instantly began to postpone baptism, so as to include, when they were baptized, just as many of their sins as possible. From the time of Augustine and Tertullian it was very manifest. Tertullian said, “Why hurry baptism? All the sins you commit up to that time are washed away. Then put it off as long as possible.” That is consequence number one.

(2) If baptism means the absolution, or remission of sins, “Why not,” said the mother, “baptize my baby?” And just as sure as the sun shines in the heavens this doctrine of baptismal remission forced “infant baptism.” There never would have been any but for that. And the testimony of history is as clear as a sunbeam as to the relation between these two things – that infant baptism is the product of the doctrine of baptismal regeneration. That is the second fruit – a fruit that is not good, either.

(3) “Since I may baptize my baby, in order to save it, why not sprinkle it? Why need I *dip* the little fellow? Why not simplify the ordinance, and just sprinkle a few drops of water on it?” And it is certain that that is the doctrine which changed the act of baptism from immersion to sprinkling. It is certainly true. Dr. Burleson was once telling a Campbellite friend of ours, Dr. Carrington of Austin – we both thought a great deal of him – that if there were no infant baptism in the world today, that which he (the Campbellite friend) was preaching would bring it about. “Oh, no,” he said, “that could not do it.” Yet it happened with this very Brother Carrington that he was sent for by a family, and the mother said, “Brother Carrington, my preacher is gone; you are a preacher, not of my faith, it is true, but you are a preacher, and

here's my baby about to die; I believe it is lost if it is not baptized, and I ask you to baptize the baby" – and Dr. Carrington, the Campbellite preacher, sprinkled that baby I That is a fact of Texas history. I do not like that fruit.

(4) The next fruit is sacerdotal salvation – a salvation at the hand of a priest, or some other human being. That is not good, either.

Another fruit is that if you baptize all the babies, and keep up baptizing all the babies, then you banish believer's baptism out of the world.

There would be none at all. You go to a country where this "sacramental" ordinance by baptism has prevailed, and where it has necessitated infant baptism, and where it has necessitated this change in the form of baptism, there is no one in the whole nation to be found, since being administered to infants as they come into the world, not a man could be found who could pass to maturity to be baptized on a profession of his faith, and he is taught to believe that it is all right. They say, "We cannot repeat the baptism." So if these false teachings are accredited there is utterly no use for these scriptures: "Believe and be baptized; repent and be baptized; they that believed his word were baptized, etc."

(5) The next fruit is this: If there is no salvation without baptism, suppose I had a brother, a cousin, or an aunt who died, and was not saved, then I would say, "Why not let us have a baptism for the dead?" And it brought that in just as certain as there is anything in the world; for those who died without having been baptized, and hence, according to that doctrine, were not saved, and therefore there arose a baptism from the dead.

(6) Take again this fact: It reverses the gospel. Instead of *repent, believe and be baptized*, they put it: *Believe, repent and be baptized*.

(7) And it certainly also brings a union of church and state, as sure as the world stands. This is the fruit of the doctrine in history.

QUESTIONS

1. Give a brief statement, in review, of the discussion of Acts 2:38 thus far.
2. What three meanings may a word in any language have?
3. Apply this principle to the Greek preposition, *eis*.
4. What three principles of interpretation enable us to safely determine when to depart from the ordinary meaning and to render this word according to the

frequent or rare meaning?

5. Illustrate the principle of “the nature or congruity of things.”
6. Illustrate the principle of “the bearing of the general context.”
7. Illustrate the principle of “the bearing of the local context.”
8. What the bearing of Matthew 3:11 on Acts 2:38?
9. What further evidence that they stand or fall together?
10. What other instance of *eis* nearer to Acts 2:38?
11. What the classic usage of *eis*? Give examples.
12. What argument may be applied to the Campbellites? Explain fully.
13. Then, briefly, what is the meaning of Acts 2:38?
14. What constitutes the second group of scriptures, and what the explanation?
15. In the light of this explain 1 Peter 3:21.
16. What the third group of scriptures?
17. Explain John 3:5.
18. Explain Titus 3:5.
19. Explain Ephesians 5:25.
20. What the fourth group of scriptures?
21. Explain Mark 16:16.
22. What the picture of baptism in 1 Peter 3:21, and what the points contained therein?
23. What are the evil consequences of the doctrine of Baptismal Regeneration?