

# A Baptism in the New Testament

Allen Webster

It is interesting to go back in time to see the church in its primitive state, a time when the Spirit was still directly instructing Christians on how God wanted religion practiced.

One of the most detailed cases of conversion is that of the Ethiopian whom Philip taught while traveling down a lonely road (Acts 8:26–40). This treasurer requested baptism, and Philip conducted his baptism in the way God approves.

Note carefully how baptism was done in the New Testament.

**The treasurer made a confession of faith before baptism.** He said, “I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God” (8:37). No one can be scripturally baptized unless he has faith in Jesus (John 8:24; Mark 16:16) and is willing to make it known (Romans 10:9–10). Note that he did not confess that God had for Jesus’ sake *already* forgiven his sin, since his baptism was for the purpose of having his sins forgiven (Acts 2:38; 22:16; 1 Peter 3:21).

**The treasurer was immediately baptized.** He neither hesitated nor procrastinated. He was not told he would have to be voted on (unheard of in the New Testament) or that he would be on probation for some time. He did not have to go through weeks of classes, or have to wait for others who also wanted to be baptized. Someone noted that no sinner recorded in the book of Acts as being converted ate, drank, or slept before

being baptized once he learned that he was lost.

**Both the candidate and the administrator got in the water.** They both went down into the water and came up out of the water (Acts 8:38–39). Some have supposed that the eunuch was holding up a water jug when he said, “See, here is water,” but this does not fit the text. (Insert “jug” for “water” in the text and follow it through this account.)

Baptism in the New Testament was always a burial—never sprinkling or pouring. John chose Aenon near to Salim as his place for baptisms “because there was much water there” (John 3:23; cf. Mark 1:10). Just as Jesus was buried in a tomb, “we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life” (Romans 6:4; cf. Colossians 2:12).

## **Baptism began a joyful journey with God.**

Acts 8:39 says this new Christian “went on his way rejoicing.” Why? Because his sins were washed away and he had been added to God’s family, the church (Acts 2:47). Each of God’s steps to salvation is important:

- ▶ Faith changes a person’s thinking (Hebrews 11:6).
- ▶ Repentance changes his lifestyle (Acts 3:19).
- ▶ Confession of faith forces him to “come out in the open” (Matthew 10:32–33).
- ▶ Baptism changes his guilty state from “outside” to “inside” Christ’s body (Galatians 3:26–27).

Study the other cases of conversion in the book of Acts and note carefully the original pattern. Let’s do what they did!

Another Look...

## Baptism in the Book of Acts

Wade L. Webster

Twenty-seven times the student of Acts finds the words “baptize,” “baptized,” and “baptism.” Over and again, the diligent Bible student is impressed with what this book has to say on this subject.

### **First, we see the necessity of baptism.**

In the book of Acts, when men and women asked what they needed to do to be saved, baptism was always a part of the answer (Acts 2:38; 16:33). For example, on the Day of Pentecost, the people who were “pricked” by Peter’s preaching were told to “repent, and be baptized . . . for the remission of sins” (Acts 2:38). Did Peter tell these men and women to do something that wasn’t necessary to their salvation? Those who teach salvation by faith only have to say that he did.

However, Peter’s language makes clear the essentiality of baptism. Notice that he told them to be baptized for the “remission” of their sins (Acts 2:38). Based upon Peter’s inspired statement, we would have to say that baptism is as essential to salvation as having one’s sins remitted.

To argue that baptism is unessential is to argue that having one’s sins remitted is unessential. Surely no one would say that having one’s sins remitted is unessential. After all, Jesus shed His blood “for the remission of sins” (Matthew

26:28). Was it necessary for Jesus to die? Almost all would agree that the death of Jesus was essential to man's salvation (Hebrews 2:9). Yet many reject the essentiality of baptism when the same language is also used to describe it.

Later in Acts we find the word "must" connected with baptism on two different occasions. On the road to Damascus, Saul was told to go into the city and there it would be told him what he "must" do in order to please Jesus (Acts 9:6). In the city, Saul was told to arise and "wash away" his sins in baptism (Acts 22:16; cf. 1 Corinthians 6:11).

In Acts 16, the Philippian jailor asked what he "must" do in order to be saved (16:30). A part of what Paul and Silas instructed him to do was to be baptized (16:33).

### **Second, we see the urgency of baptism.**

Those who learned the truth on the Day of Pentecost were baptized that same day (Acts 2:41). The apostles did not delay baptizing people into Christ. They realized that until men and women were baptized, they were still in their sins (Acts 2:38).

In Acts 8, the eunuch was baptized by Philip on his way home from worship. From the context, it is easy to see the urgency that the eunuch placed upon baptism. When they came to water, he asked if anything was standing in the way of his being baptized (Acts 8:36). They then stopped, and based upon his confession of his faith that Jesus is the Son of God, Philip baptized him into Christ (Acts 8:37-38).

The eunuch did not even wait until he got home to be baptized. He obeyed God immediately. In like manner, when the Philippian jailor and his family understood the precious plan of God,

they were baptized the "same hour of the night" (Acts 16:33). From the context, we know that their baptism took place in the early hours of the morning. They were not taught until after midnight (Acts 16:25). Why did Paul and Silas not wait until daybreak to baptize the jailor and his household? What does this tell us about the urgency of baptism?

### **Third, we see the authority of baptism.**

Throughout the book of Acts, baptism is done "in the name of Jesus Christ" (Acts 2:38; 8:12, 16; 10:48; 19:5). To do something in the name of Jesus is to do it by His authority. In giving the great commission to His disciples, Jesus connected baptism with His authority. He said,

All power [authority] is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen (Matthew 28:18-20; cf. Colossians 3:17).

It is not surprising, then, that the apostles made this same connection between baptism and the authority of Christ throughout the book of Acts.

Any Bible student who studies the book of Acts must be impressed with what this great book says about baptism. Those who reject baptism as being essential to salvation put themselves in the unenviable position of rejecting the book of Acts.

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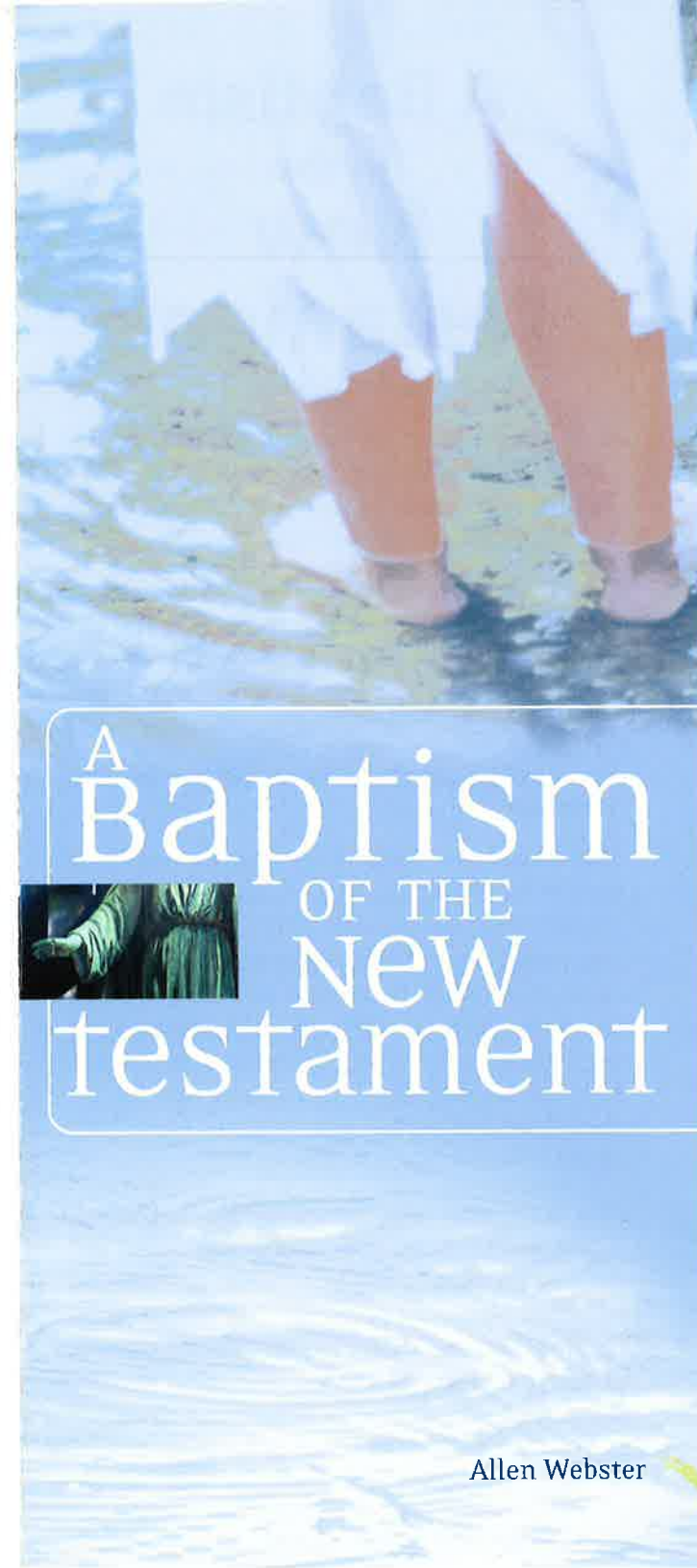
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