



Bible Student's Notebook™

The Herald of His Grace

Presenting *every man* mature in Christ Jesus. Colossians 1:28

Volume 44
Issue 1076

A Study on Baptism

or,

From Infancy to Maturity in Christ

Part 7 of 8¹

Baptism in Paul's Epistles

by — A.E. Knoch (1874-1965)

The distinctive truth for the present time is given us through the apostle Paul (Ephesians 3:8-9) in the epistles written *after* Israel is set aside. In perfect accord with the grace revealed, the least of all saints is chosen to enlighten all as to the Secret Economy hitherto concealed by God.



Two epistles were written *before* the truths most characteristic of the present dispensation had been made known. These are I and II Thessalonians.

Four epistles were written on the verge of the present period, and were sent to the Romans, the Corinthians and the Galatians.

If we seek to *reconcile* the various dispensations in which baptism obtains and fuse them all into one general and indistinct whole, we only obscure the truth. *Truth must be rightly apportioned, or it is no longer truth.*

Even in Paul's letters there are various presentations of this subject which *seem* contradictory. If, however, we remember the economy in which each truth finds its place, all is clear. What seemed contradictory falls into perfect order. Thus, we are enabled to give each Scripture its full weight. We are not forced to tone down or clip his word to make it fit some other passage.

The Three Groups of Paul's Epistles

Paul's ecclesia epistles fall into three groups, according to the measure of the manifestation of God at the time when they were written.

Three epistles were given after the public repudiation of Israel (Acts 28:25-28), in the full blaze of the glorious grace which is now dispensed. These were written to the Ephesians, the Philippians and the Colossians.

The remaining four are *personal* epistles.

This is the key to the various ways in which the truth of baptism is presented in each. Perfect harmony prevails when we apprehend the progress of revelation.

Baptism is not mentioned in Paul's earliest letters of I or II Thessalonians.

PAUL'S TRANSITIONAL LETTERS

Galatians

In Galatians baptism is mentioned once.

1. Parts 1-6: [BSN 1060](#), [1061](#), [1063](#), [1065](#), [1067](#), [1074](#).

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Bible Student's Notebook™

Paul Our Guide – Christ Our Goal

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Scripture education in a weekly format!

This free electronic publication is dedicated to:

- the absolute sovereignty and deity of God (Romans 11:36);
- the proclamation of the riches of God's abundant, exceeding grace (Romans 5:20; 11:6; Ephesians 1:7);
- the affirmation that God will save all through the death, burial and resurrection of Christ (I Timothy 2:3-4; 4:10; Titus 2:11);
- the universality of death and resurrection (I Corinthians 15:21);
- the unique gospel of Paul – which he calls "my gospel" (Romans 2:16; 16:25; II Timothy 2:8; I Corinthians 15:1-4; Acts 13-28; Acts 20:24);
- the "preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery, which was kept secret in ages past" (Romans 16:25);
- the epistles of the present Secret Administration being Ephesians & Colossians (Ephesians 3:2, 9; Colossians 1:25);
- true freedom and liberty apart from law (Galatians 5:1);
- the organic nature of the One Body (Ephesians 4:16);
- the Secret Administration, being the operational revelation for today (Ephesians 3:9);
- the unprophesied, Celestial hope and calling of the One Body (Colossians 3:4);
- the distinct message and ministry of Paul, the apostle to the nations (Ephesians 3:1-3);
- the importance of receiving all whom Christ has received (Romans 14-15);
- the recovery of rich Biblical truth that has too long remained hidden under the veils of traditionalism, prejudice,

misunderstanding and fear (Mark 7:7, 13);

- the completeness of the believer in Christ (Colossians 2:10), with:
 - total freedom from sins (Colossians 1:14);
 - union in His death, burial and resurrection and ascended seated position among the celestials (Ephesians 2:6);
 - adult sonship position (Ephesians 1:5).

This publication is the product of humble efforts of saints intended to stimulate the earnest study of Scripture. We do not claim infallibility for the contents of this publication; thus they are not meant to imply finality on any subject discussed, or that further research would not add further light from the Word of God. God's storehouse of truth is inexhaustible, so draw on its wealth by prayerful study. Our readers are asked to be as the Bereans and search the Scriptures (Acts 17:10-11; I Thessalonians 5:21).

This publication is not connected with any "church," "denomination," "movement," "organization," "mission," "creed," "meeting," "school," "conference" or "fellowship."

We are always open for discussion, but never for disputation. – André Sneidar

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Now on the coming of faith we are no longer under an escort. For ye are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as were **baptized into Christ** did put on Christ. There cannot be Jew and Greek, there cannot be bond and free, there cannot be male and female, for ye are all one in Christ Jesus (Galatians 3:25-28).

Those under the law were children, kept in ward by its wall of ordinances and commandments. But when faith had come, the saints were given the place of a grown son.

This was not a matter of attainment for some. It was the portion of *all*. It is not a question of individual experience. It is not, as in nature, that saints become sons through infancy and youth. It is a question of dispensation.

All under law, however godly or experienced, were *children*. All who are of faith are *sons*. To illustrate this the apostle points their having been “*baptized into Christ*.” They had been clothed with Christ. And so, being clothed with Him, they themselves were not seen, but Christ. *In Christ* fleshly distinctions are obliterated. The differences between the Greek and the Jew, the slave and the freeman – even the sexes – were all gone *in Him*. They were “*all one in Christ Jesus*” (:28).

Let us for a moment allow that baptism in water made them one, as it did those in Jerusalem and Samaria. Then only those baptized in water were clothed with Christ. There would then be a fleshly distinction – a conclusion diametrically opposite to the apostle’s words. No ordinance could make them one in *sonship*. That was by faith alone. Having begun by spirit, it was impossible for them to be perfected by flesh (3:3).

Romans

The epistle to the Romans reveals the baptism under what Paul terms “*my gospel*.” Its introduction follows from that most astounding revelation of God’s favor found in the fifth chapter. The sovereignty of sin, from Adam until Moses, was absolute. No less so is the present reign of grace. Yet as much as sin may abound, grace always superabounds.

“A most dangerous doctrine,” some would say. “Then a man may do just as he pleases! He may revel in sin and still be saved. Why, his very sin will call forth still greater grants of grace!”

Just so.

*What, then, shall we declare? That we may be persisting in sin that grace should be increasing? May it not be coming to that! We, who died to sin, how shall we still be living in it? Or are you ignorant that whoever are **baptized into Christ Jesus** are baptized into His death? We, then were entombed together with Him through baptism into His death, that, even as Christ was roused from among the dead through the glory of the Father, thus we also should be walking in newness of life (Romans 6:1-4).*

Christ – having been baptized at the cross, having died and been buried, and having been raised again – it was unto Christ Jesus that they were baptized, and this united them to Him.

They, too, had been put to death, had been buried, and had been raised again, and this put them beyond the



Water Baptism

A Compilation

This work answers the question as to whether or not water baptism is a part of this current dispensation. Nine chapters from the following authors: Oscar M. Baker, Denis Durham, Stephen Hill, Richard Jordan, Kenneth J. Morgan, Clyde L. Pilkington, Jr., Ike T. Sidebottom.

108 pages

See [order form](#) under “Compilations.”

boundaries of sin's realm. Indeed, "We, who died to sin, how shall we still be living in it?"

But some had not been baptized in water. Were they excluded from this unity with Christ? Were they forbidden to identify themselves with Him in His baptism? Or were they charged to undergo the baptism ordinance in order to obtain these privileges? No, none are told to be baptized in water.

It was not Paul's object to teach the Romans to observe the water rite, for a more fitting juncture could not be found in which he might have charged them to fulfil it, but he does not do so. The fact that God does not charge them to be baptized in water is a clear indication that it was not according to His will.

The uncertain footing upon which baptism in water rested during Paul's ministry among the nations, previous to the present economy, is in sharp contrast to its firm hold in early Pentecostal times. This becomes very apparent by Paul's course at Corinth, and his subsequent thankfulness that he had not baptized in water more freely (I Corinthians 1:14-17).

*I thank God that I baptized none of you, but Crispus and Gaius; lest any should say that I had baptized in mine own name. And I baptized also the household of Stephanas: besides, I know not whether I baptized any other. **For Christ did not commission me to be baptizing**, but to be preaching the evangel, not in wisdom of words, lest the cross of Christ should be made void.*

The cross put an end to man as to flesh. Oceans of water applied to one's body could not cleanse; neither could it sanctify for God's presence, nor produce a spiritual unity. The power of that cross, once known,

put an end to all that concerns the flesh. Flesh availed nothing. If it was reckoned, to be baptized in water, then it was to deny the cross and its condemnation of the flesh.

Here we arrive at the very heart of our subject. All baptism hitherto had been but shadows; but there can be no shadow without the substance. The washings of the law and the waters of Jordan did not even remove the defilement of the flesh. What can wash away such? Nothing but the death of Christ. And not death alone, but resurrection also.

In his great argument on resurrection the apostle makes a point of this:

*Now if Christ is being heralded that He has been roused from among the dead, how are some among you saying that there is no resurrection of the dead? Now if there is no resurrection of the dead, neither has Christ been roused. Now if Christ has not been roused, for naught, consequently, is our heralding, and for naught is your faith ... Consequently those also, who are put to repose in Christ, perished. If we are having an expectation in Christ in this life only, more forlorn than all men are we ... **Else what shall those be doing who are baptized?** It is for the sake of the dead absolutely if the dead are not being roused. Why are they baptized also for their sake? Why are we also in danger every hour? (I Corinthians 15:12-29).*

Paul died daily (:31). The death here spoken of is that which baptism sets forth: death with Christ. What shall be done for those who died with Christ if there is no resurrection (Romans 6:3)?



31 Days of Grace: Daily Reflections on Living with Kindness and Peace

compiled by — Steve Martin

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If death is the end of all, if there is no resurrection, then those baptized into “*Christ Jesus*,” acknowledging their death with Him, simply are sealing their own doom and destruction. It was the hope of resurrection alone that put meaning and joy into the rite for them. But they *did* rejoice in “*Christ Jesus*” (I Corinthians 15:31). The apostle bases his protest upon this.

How inconsistent for them to have rejoiced in Christ Jesus (the title of His glory) when they had destroyed the only real cause of rejoicing: the resurrection! How inconsistent for them to identify themselves with Him in death, and then deny His glorious resurrection and their part in it!

In I Corinthians 10 (one of the earlier transitional epistles) the baptism of the fathers into Moses is made the point of a solemn warning. Many of their descendants were sheltering themselves under the fact that they had been baptized. But, like Simon of Samaria, their hearts were not right in the sight of God. Every one of the fathers had been baptized into Moses, and enjoyed the same spiritual gifts, but this did not shield them from God’s displeasure. The great bulk of them were strewn along the wilderness.

So that, let him who is supposing he stands beware that he should not be falling (I Corinthians 10:12).

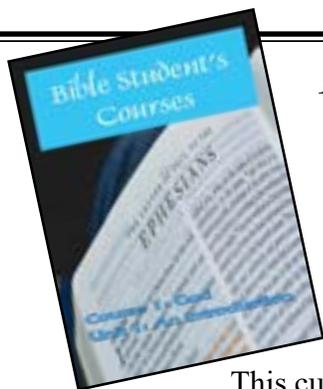
Those who had based their assurance on baptism in water or spiritual gifts needed to take heed! They may have *thought* that they stood, but they were certain to have fallen. The *baptism of Christ* with holy spirit was the only one that could have established their hearts in God’s sight.

The last Scripture in the transitional epistles remains to be noticed.

For even as the body is one and has many members, yet all the members of the one body, being many, are one body, thus also is the Christ. For in one spirit also we all are baptized into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free, and all are made to imbibe one spirit (I Corinthians 12:12-13).

The Corinthians had been the subjects of the washing of baptism. Not, indeed, necessarily in its outward ceremonial form, in water, but in the substantial spiritual cleansing of which water was but the shadow. After mentioning various classes of the wicked, the apostle says,

And some of you were these, but you are bathed off, but you are hallowed, but you were justified in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ and by the spirit of our God (I Corinthians 6:11).



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The bathing which resulted in their sanctification was by the spirit of God. "Bathing" cleanses the flesh; "baptism" does not. So, the thorough spiritual cleansing is here spoken of as "bathing," rather than "baptism."

Unity had hitherto been by water. Now for the first time we read of a unity by spirit-baptism. We have seen how the laver gives place to the sea, which in its turn is transformed into a life-giving river, the source of life and fruitfulness wherever it flows. The spirit which baptized them into one body is a river of life. Neither laver nor sea furnished a draught for the thirsty soul. Cleansing exhausted their mission. They were not "living" or running water, like the river. But the spirit not only bound them one to another, but it was a draught of delight and life. They had all been caused to imbibe the same spirit; they all had the same life; we all were one.

Thus, was baptism set forth in the transitional epistles. They were pointed back to what had been, and were led on to look forward to still clearer light. "Out of an installment [were they] knowing," says the apostle, so that "whenever maturity [was] coming, that which [was] out of an installment [was] discarded" (I Corinthians 13:9-10).

When I was a minor, I spoke as a minor, I was disposed as a minor, I took account of things as a minor. Yet when I have become a man, I have discarded that which is a minor's (:11).

Paul's Three Economies

The apostle had the unique experience of emerging

from one economy, of passing through a second, and was about to enter the third.

The first was characterized by the concrete forms of *childhood*; the next, the dignity of *sonship*; the last is to be the maturity of the *full grown man*.

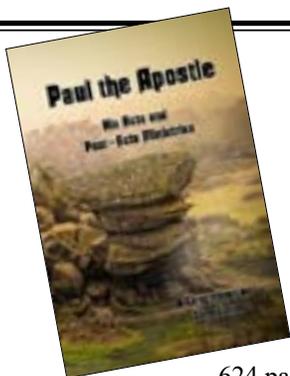
Thus, we can easily see the ground for "putting away" things he once held dear. It is the contempt of the matured man for the infantile playthings which had fully served their purpose.

The present Secret Economy was not made known until Ephesians was written. Still there were indication after indication pointing forward to it.

The manner of Paul's conversion was itself a very remarkable indication, even though he was brought into the (then) existing order of things. He was called *as an enemy, outside of the land*. His preaching of the Messiah as the Son of God is another very prominent point of divergence from the rest. His separation along with Barnabas and his sermon at Pisidian Antioch drove the wedge in still further.

At that time, those who were recipients of Paul's ministry had no hope of their own but the hope of Israel. The secret (or mystery) of Israel's blindness had been revealed to the initiated as well as the mystery of the gospel, or secret good news – the conciliation.

After all of this, Israel was publicly and finally repudiated, and the way was thus cleared for the acknowledgment of the nations (Acts 28:25-28).



624 pages

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Paul the Apostle: His Acts and Post-Acts Ministries

(A Comprehensive Compilation)

This ultimate dispensational collection of 97 works by 28 authors spans over 130 years. It is an extensive reference work that is essential for every library. Authors include: Sir Robert Anderson, Oscar Baker, A.E. Bishop, Robert C. Brock, E.W. Bullinger, J.J.B. Coles, E.H. Clayton, Vladimir Gelesnoff, Stephen Hill, Richard Holden, M. Jaegle, Win Johnson, A.E. Knoch, Adlai Loudy, William Mealand, D.L. McCroskey, William R. Newell, Alan Reid, Danny Russino, John D. LaVier, Clyde L. Pilkington, Jr., Frank Neil Pohorlak, A.A. Sandoz, R.B. Shiflet and Charles H. Welch.

So, we see that, before the present Secret Economy was revealed, things were in a ripe state to receive its wondrous message.

All the while that the evangel of God was being proclaimed among the nations, God was still holding out the offer of the Kingdom to His disobedient people.

Before this, while our Master was still on Earth, He had proclaimed the Kingdom as Yahweh's prophet. When they reject the offer, He quotes the words that Yahweh spoke to Isaiah, blinding their eyes and stopping their ears. He no longer proclaims the Kingdom openly, but veils His teaching in parables concerning the interval of its rejection (Matthew 13).

When, later on, they rejected the King Himself, He hid Himself from them, and the word through Isaiah (which he heard when he saw His glory) was again announced (John 12:37-41).

All manner of sin and blasphemy was forgiven them, even though they rejected Yahweh and His Messiah. Only one more way was open. After He ascended, the promised holy spirit was given, renewing the offer of the Kingdom, and promising to send back their Messiah if they would repent (Acts 3:19-20). It is the last call. If the spirit is rejected there is no other resource. Sin against holy spirit cannot be pardoned in this eon or that which is impending.²

The book of Acts is the record of this final ministry. It begins with the coming of the spirit: it chronicles the rejection of the spirit: it ends with the spirit's repudiation of Israel. Its subject is the Kingdom of

2. [Editor:] For more information, see:
– [The Transfiguration \(A Compilation\)](#).

God – the same Kingdom which they had twice rejected in Messiah's preaching and His person. Isaiah's thrice quoted testimony against them (this time referred to as the holy spirit's especially solemn words) concludes their history. Their dreadful wars and the sickening horrors of the destruction of Jerusalem pass unnoticed by their God. Thenceforward they were out of His reckoning.

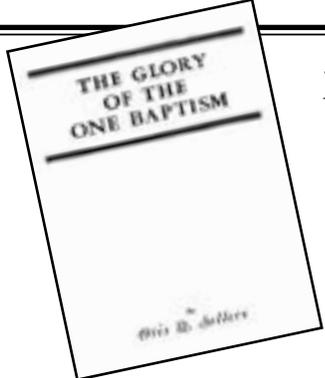
They had rejected Yahweh.
They had rejected Messiah.
Now they had rejected holy spirit.
This is final.

How solemn and far-reaching, then, must be the proclamation from Rome, the seat of earthly sovereignty, of the spirit's withdrawal of the offer of the Kingdom to Israel.

In the first proclamation of the Kingdom, by the Master Himself, the nations had no place. The Son of David was not sent but to the House of Israel. Neither had they any part in the Kingdom. The Greeks who desire to see Him are not accommodated.

When the Kingdom first began to be proclaimed by the spirit's power, no one dreamed of such a thing, even though Israel, by the murder of Messiah, had forfeited every claim to the Kingdom. After this dreadful deed they had no more right to God's blessing than the other nations.

The spirit must [necessarily] act upon the principle of *grace*, even with the people of the covenant. But this principle takes in the other nations too! The first hint we get of this is in Cornelius' case. The spirit's gifts are freely bestowed on *aliens*. Fleshly distinctions were ignored. Through Paul's ministry among the nations



THE GLORY
OF THE
ONE BAPTISM

The Glory of the One Baptism

by — Otis Q. Sellers (1901-1992)

A dispensational look at the subject of baptism throughout the Scriptures, with a special focus on the glory of the "one baptism" for today.

32 pages

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the spirit gets a larger and still larger place. The nations received the spirit. Israel rejected the spirit.

Israel was not cast aside for failure to carry out the ordinances. Far from it. They were fiercely zealous for the rituals, and even tried to force the other nations under its yoke. This was why Isaiah's words at the close of Acts are quoted as the words of *holy spirit*, and not, as previously, as Yahweh's words or the Master's.

The first rejection of the Kingdom drew from Him the mysteries of the Kingdom, which the disciples alone could understand. The rejection of Himself led Him to further unbosom Himself to His own, though He hid Himself from the multitude. What, then, would have been expected from the rejection of the spirit?

Publicly and outwardly the spirit withdrew. No mighty works henceforth display its presence; but to His own He reveals the greatest secrets that God's purpose has ever revealed: the full Mystery of Messiah, and the present Secret Economy which God had concealed from all previous ages.

The public proclamation of the spirit's rejection of Israel was the monument that God had erected to guard the boundary-line between the previous and the present dispensation. On one side is inscribed Isaiah's solemn repudiation; on the other, "to the na-

tions was dispatched this salvation of God."

While we have observed with profit the *tendency* of the truth before this time, we must not stop here. We must look to Paul's letters, written *after* this great and distinct dispensation-marking event, to get clear, conclusive and final teaching on our subject.

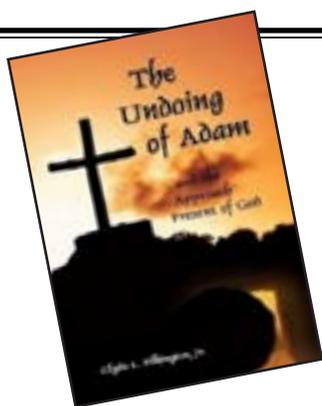
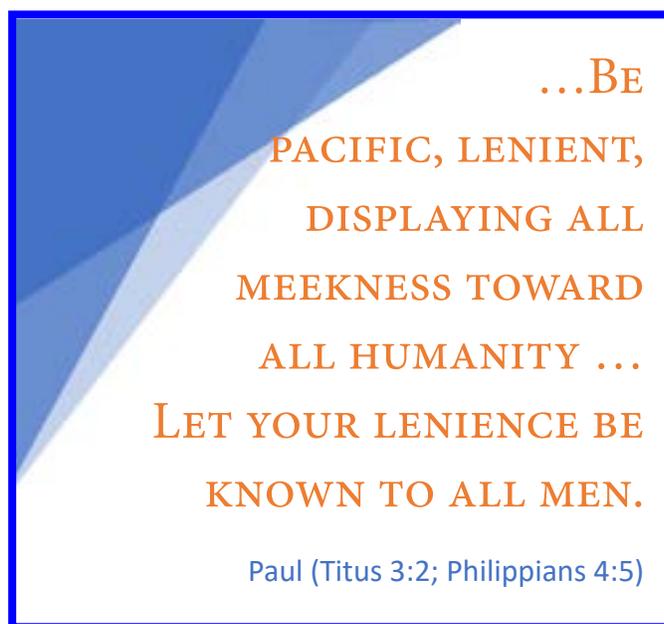
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(to be continued)

TOPICS:

Major: Baptism

Minor: Dispensational; Grace; Paul



The Undoing of Adam and the Approach Present of God

by — Clyde L. Pilkington, Jr.

Christ is greater than Adam, undoing what Adam did. In fact, Christ's work at Calvary is greater than Adam's fall. All of God's creation will be gloriously saved by the successful work of "the Savior of the world" (John 4:42). Salvation is not dependent on us at all; it is all about Christ and His work alone. Paul taught that the exact same "all" who are condemned in Adam are the exact same "all" who are justified in Christ (Romans 5:18), and that the exact same "all" who die in Adam are the exact same

"all" who are "made alive" in Christ (I Corinthians 15:22). Christianity has an Adam who is greater than Christ; however, it is Christ Who is greater than Adam.

A note concerning the cover: We wanted a cover that would immediately convey the theme of the book's content, choosing to go with a traditional "cross" scene to express the work of Christ at Calvary. Yet Christ did not die on a "cross" but was nailed to a simple "stake." An explanation is provided in the appendix.

98 pages

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