

Baptized in the Name of the Lord Jesus

Water, the Holy Ghost, and the New Testament's Own Idiom for the New Birth, Traced Through Acts

A verse-by-verse study of every baptism named in the book of Acts, tracing what "baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus" actually reports.

Copyright 2026

Distribution of this study as is in its entirety is permitted & encouraged.

Author: John Lobota

Research Assistant: Claude Cowork

papertiq@bellsouth.net

Table of Contents

Introduction.....	3
Why this study exists, what it checked, and the settled position stated up front.	
Chapter 1 — Two Baptisms Named at the Threshold (Acts 1:5).....	5
Water and the Holy Ghost, named as two different things in every Gospel, and why the distinction was drawn so carefully.	
Chapter 2 — "Baptized with the Holy Ghost": Six Occurrences, One Event.....	7
The phrase's full occurrence list, what actually happened at Pentecost, and why every occurrence points to that one event alone.	
Chapter 3 — "Baptized in the Name of Jesus Christ": Tracing the Idiom.....	9
Why the new phrase introduced at Acts 2:38 names the new birth, not water.	
Chapter 4 — Testing the Idiom Against Every Account.....	11
Samaria, Cornelius's household, Saul of Tarsus, and Ephesus, checked one account at a time.	
Chapter 5 — Where the Water Is Real: The Ethiopian, Lydia, and the Jailer.....	15
The genuine, literal water baptisms this study does not explain away.	
Chapter 6 — Fitting the Administration Framework: Pentecost Is Grace, Not Law.....	17
Where Acts 2:38 actually falls among the periods of scripture called administrations.	
Chapter 7 — Closing: The Settled Position.....	18
What this study settles, and what it leaves honestly open.	
Scripture Index.....	19
Every scripture quoted in full across this study, in canonical order, with the chapter and section where it appears.	

Introduction

A. Why This Study Exists

Acts 1 and 2 use the single word "baptize" in ways that, read quickly, can sound like they contradict each other. John the Baptist baptized in water, a baptism of repentance he preached throughout his own ministry in the wilderness of Judaea. Jesus, in His last recorded words to the apostles before the ascension, promises something else entirely: a baptism "with the Holy Ghost," arriving "not many days hence" (Acts 1:5). Then, on the very day that promise is fulfilled, Peter turns to a crowd of thousands gathered at the temple and issues a charge that uses neither of those two phrases: "Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ" (Acts 2:38). Three baptisms, in three verses, inside the span of a single chapter and a half of one book — and the same English word, "baptize," used to translate every one of them.

This study exists to work out, directly from the text, whether those three are three names for one reality or three genuinely different things sharing one English word. Three specific questions govern everything that follows. First, what did John's own baptism actually accomplish, and why does scripture itself call the baptism that replaced it the greater of the two? Second, what does it mean, precisely, to be "baptized with the Holy Ghost" — and did that happen once, or does it recur every time someone is born again? Third, once Pentecost has come and gone, when the book of Acts goes on to describe someone as baptized "in the name of Jesus Christ" or "in the name of the Lord Jesus," is water baptism still what is being described — carried forward from John's own ministry, now performed under a new name — or has the phrase itself changed to name a different reality altogether: the new birth? Every chapter that follows answers one part of that question, taken up in the same order the book of Acts itself raises it.

B. What This Study Checked, and What It Found

Three things were checked directly against scripture, rather than assumed:

1. What this library's own primary hermeneutics source on Pentecost and the gift of holy spirit — the *Living in God's Power* series, Part V, Hours 2 and 3 — says about every single baptism named in the book of Acts, worked out verse by verse (Chapters 2 through 4 below).
2. Whether Acts 2:38 belongs to a period of biblical history — an administration — in which water was itself a stated requirement for standing right with God, checked against this library's own completed *Seven Administrations* study (Chapter 6 below).
3. What the New Testament states, in its own words, as the requirement for the new birth under the present administration (Chapter 3 below) — and whether water appears anywhere inside that stated requirement.

C. The Settled Position, Stated Plainly Before the Argument

"Baptized with the Holy Ghost" and "baptized in the name of Jesus Christ [the Lord Jesus, the Lord]" are two different phrases, naming two different things. The first occurs exactly six times in scripture and names one unrepeated event: the initial outpouring of the gift of holy spirit at Pentecost (Acts 2:1-4). The second is the New Testament's own new idiom — introduced for the first time at Acts 2:38, and never once used before that verse — for the new birth itself: receiving the gift of holy spirit by confessing Jesus as Lord and believing God raised Him from the dead (Romans 10:9-10), not a report that water was applied to a person's body. Read this way, a verse like Acts 8:16, "baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus," reports that the Samaritans were already born again before Peter and John ever arrived from Jerusalem; it is not, by itself, evidence that a water rite took place that day. This study also draws a second line just as plainly, so that its conclusion is not mistaken for a claim it does not make: a small number of other baptisms recorded in Acts — the Ethiopian eunuch on the desert road, Lydia and her household at Philippi, the Philippian jailer in the middle of the night — carry none of this idiom at all, and this study reads every one of them exactly as written: genuine, literal, historical water baptisms, which nothing here explains away.

D. Method

Same method as every study in this library (*Research-Method.md*): the King James Version as the base text, cross-references tracked rather than merely mentioned in passing, Greek word studies run against Strong's and Thayer's, differing views shown honestly rather than smoothed over, and every claim flagged for its own epistemic status — direct statement, reasoned inference, or outside corroboration. Per the "source authority vs. source usefulness" principle already stated in *Research-Method.md*, the *Living in God's Power* series and Victor Paul Wierwille's own framework are treated here exactly as this library treats them everywhere else: as a standing hermeneutical authority on holy spirit, tongues, and the seven administrations, cited directly and by name wherever its own argument is used, and checked, not merely assumed, against the specific texts this study addresses.

Chapter 1 — Two Baptisms Named at the Threshold (Acts 1:5)

A. What John's Own Baptism Was

Before Acts 1:5 draws its contrast, the Gospels have already spent three of their own accounts describing exactly what John's baptism was. John preached it in the wilderness of Judaea, along the Jordan, as "the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins" (Mark 1:4; Luke 3:3) — a real, physical immersion in water, performed on people who came to him confessing what they had done wrong. Matthew records the same crowds "confessing their sins" as they came out to him (Matthew 3:6). It was not a private rite reserved for a small circle of disciples; it was public, and it drew crowds from Jerusalem, all Judaea, and the region around the Jordan (Matthew 3:5). John's own preaching made its purpose explicit: it prepared a heart for someone still to come, someone John himself named as "mightier than I" (Matthew 3:11; Luke 3:16).

Even Jesus Himself came to John to be baptized (Matthew 3:13-17). John's own reaction is worth pausing over: he "forbad him, saying, I have need to be baptized of thee, and comest thou to me?" (Matthew 3:14) — John recognized immediately that the one standing in front of him had no sin of His own to repent of, the very thing his baptism was for. Jesus answers only that it is fitting "to fulfil all righteousness" (v.15), and nowhere does the text record Him confessing sin the way the crowds around Him did. John's baptism, in other words, was a rite suited to those under the Law who needed to repent and be made ready for the Messiah's arrival. It was real, it was commanded, and it accomplished exactly what it was for — but it was, by its own stated purpose, preparatory. It pointed forward to someone else, and to something else John himself said he could not give.

B. The Contrast Itself

Acts 1:5 *For John truly baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost not many days hence.*

This is the last time scripture records anyone in this company hearing the word "baptize" before Acts 2:38, and it names two baptisms, setting them against each other by their own different elements — water, and the Holy Ghost — not offering two names for the same thing. Every Gospel records John himself drawing the identical contrast, well before Acts 1 was ever written:

Matthew 3:11 — *"I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance: but he that cometh after me is mightier than I, whose shoes I am not worthy to bear: he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost, and with fire."*

Mark 1:8 — *"I indeed have baptized you with water: but he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost."*

Luke 3:16 — *"I indeed baptize you with water; but one mightier than I cometh, the latchet of whose shoes I am not worthy to unloose: he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost and with fire."*

John 1:33 — *"I knew him not: but he that sent me to baptize with water, the same said unto me, Upon whom thou shalt see the Spirit descending, and remaining on him, the same is he which baptizeth with the Holy Ghost."*

Four separate records, written by four different men for four different audiences, state the identical contrast. Matthew and Luke both add a phrase the other two do not include — "and with fire" — tied in both Gospels to the same discourse's picture of chaff burned "with fire unquenchable" (Matthew 3:12; Luke 3:17), a picture of a coming judgment rather than a description of the gift given at Pentecost (compare Malachi 4:1). This study does not attempt to unfold that separate line of prophecy here; its narrower point in citing Matthew and Luke together is only that both writers record the water/Spirit contrast in the very same breath as that further note, without ever confusing the one for the other.

This library's own *Living in God's Power* series (Part V, Hour 2) holds the fourfold repetition as deliberate, not accidental: "Do you think God wants us to know something?" John's water baptism was a baptism of repentance — sins confessed, forgiveness signified by water applied to the body. It was real, and scripture nowhere calls it a false or empty rite. But it belonged to what was about to be replaced: "John's water baptism was replaced by the baptism of the holy spirit on the Day of Pentecost." Not a value judgment scripture states outright as a rebuke of John, but a sequence scripture does state outright: water first, superseded by spirit, and the superseding element named every single time as the one still to come, "not many days hence."

C. Old Testament Roots of the Promise

The promise itself did not begin with John or with Jesus. Israel's own prophets had already joined the picture of a coming cleansing to the deeper picture of God's own spirit given from within, long before John ever stood in the Jordan:

Ezekiel 36:25-27 — *"Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean: from all your filthiness, and from all your idols, will I cleanse you. A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh. And I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments, and do them."*

Ezekiel's own water here is figurative language for cleansing, not a literal rite scripture anywhere commands administered under this specific promise; what actually accomplishes what Ezekiel describes is not water at all but God's own spirit, poured out and put within a person. Joel's own oracle — the very passage Peter quotes in full at Pentecost itself (Acts 2:16-21) — promises the same outpouring directly, and names no baptismal water anywhere in it: "I will pour out my spirit upon all flesh" (Joel 2:28). By the time John stands at the Jordan calling Israel to repentance, the promise the nation had been waiting for was already understood, from her own prophets, as a giving of God's own spirit — not a repeated washing performed again and again. John's own baptism could ready a heart to receive that gift when it finally came; it could not itself be the gift.

In Short

John baptized people in water as a real, visible sign that they had turned from their sin — necessary in its own day, but always described, by John himself and by every Gospel writer, as pointing forward to something greater still to come. What Jesus promised in its place was not more water, or better water, but an entirely different kind of baptism: the Holy Ghost itself, God's own spirit given to a person from within, exactly the gift Israel's own prophets had already promised long before John was born. Acts 1:5 draws that line on purpose, and every Gospel records Jesus drawing it the very same way. From this point forward, the question this study keeps asking, chapter by chapter, is simple: whenever scripture goes on to say that someone was "baptized," which of these two things — water, or the Holy Ghost — is actually being named?

Chapter 2 — "Baptized with the Holy Ghost": Six Occurrences, One Event

A. Running the Phrase to Its Full Occurrence List

Rather than settle the meaning of a phrase from a single verse taken on its own, this study runs "baptized with the Holy Ghost" to every place it occurs in scripture — its full occurrence list — before drawing any conclusion. The phrase occurs exactly six times, and nowhere else:

Matthew 3:11; Mark 1:8; Luke 3:16; John 1:33 — *the four Gospel records already quoted in Chapter 1, each one spoken in advance of the event itself, as a promise still to be fulfilled.*

Acts 1:5 — *"ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost not many days hence" — Jesus' own restatement of the same promise, spoken just before His ascension, still in advance of the event.*

Acts 11:16 — *"Then remembered I the word of the Lord, how that he said, John indeed baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost" — Peter, years later, recalling Acts 1:5 word for word while defending his own ministry at Cornelius's household to the church at Jerusalem.*

Living in God's Power (Part V, Hour 2) states the finding plainly: "all six uses of the phrase, 'baptized with the holy ghost,' refer to what happened in Acts 2:1-4 'when the Day of Pentecost was fully come.'" The phrase never recurs anywhere else in the whole of scripture — not in Acts 8's account of Samaria, not in Acts 10's account of Cornelius's household, not in Acts 19's account of the disciples at Ephesus, and not once in any of the letters written afterward to instruct believers in ordinary Christian living.

B. What Actually Happened, and What the Phrase Names

What the phrase names is a specific, historical, one-time event, described in the verses immediately following Acts 1:5:

Acts 2:1-4 — *"And when the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place. And suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all*

the house where they were sitting. And there appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance."

"Fully come" (Acts 2:1) means completed — arrived in its own fulness, not partially or provisionally. The baptism with the Holy Ghost is what happened at that one arrival: the initial, unrepeated outpouring of God's own gift, poured out on the company gathered that day, opening what this library's own *Seven Administrations* study names the Grace administration (Chapter 6 below traces this placement directly). J. Edwin Hartill's own definition of baptism — being "introduced into a new sphere of service" — fits the event exactly: those present that day were introduced, at that single moment, into an entirely new administration none of them, nor anyone born before them, had ever yet stood inside.

This is also, as a distinct but closely related point, not a doctrine of two separate, sequential works of grace laid one on top of the other. *Living in God's Power* states this directly and by name, addressing a teaching some hold to this day: "There are not two baptisms like some people teach. Some groups teach that you get born again, then you have to have a second work of grace and get baptized with the holy spirit which is usually indicated by their being able to speak in tongues." Against that teaching, the same source points directly to Ephesians 4:5:

Ephesians 4:5 *One Lord, one faith, one baptism.*

Not two baptisms — one. "That one baptism is the baptism in the name of Jesus Christ, which is the new birth." This is the hinge the rest of this study turns on. Once "baptized with the Holy Ghost" is confined to this single event at Pentecost, every later occurrence of a different phrase — "baptized... in the name of Jesus Christ [the Lord Jesus, the Lord]" — needs its own separate identification, since it cannot simply be assumed to mean the same thing already settled in this chapter. Chapter 3 takes up exactly that question.

In Short

"Baptized with the Holy Ghost" appears exactly six times anywhere in scripture, and every one of those six occurrences points to the very same event: the outpouring of God's own spirit at Pentecost, described in Acts 2:1-4. It happened once, to the company gathered that day, and it is not described anywhere in scripture as a separate, later experience layered on top of being born again — scripture calls it "one baptism" (Ephesians 4:5), not two. Since this specific phrase belongs entirely to that one historical event, the next task is to work out what an entirely different phrase — "baptized in the name of Jesus Christ" — actually names, since it is not the same wording, and was never used by anyone before that day.

Chapter 3 — "Baptized in the Name of Jesus Christ": Tracing the Idiom

A. The Phrase Itself, and Where It First Appears

Acts 2:38 *Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.*

Peter does not repeat Acts 1:5's own phrase here. He does not say "be baptized with the Holy Ghost" — that baptism has already happened, once, to the company gathered with him, only moments earlier (Chapter 2 above). He introduces an entirely new phrase instead, one that occurs nowhere in scripture before this verse: "baptized... in the name of Jesus Christ." *Living in God's Power* (Part V, Hour 2) names this transition directly: "After the original outpouring of the holy spirit upon the 12 apostles on the Day of Pentecost, this change of life style through the new birth became known as 'baptized in the name of Jesus Christ.'" The same source collects the phrase's own variant wordings as they recur across the rest of Acts: "It is also called 'baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus' (Acts 8:16; 19:5), 'baptized in the name of the Lord' (Acts 10:48) and similar expressions."

It is worth pausing on what "in the name of" itself ordinarily signals elsewhere in scripture, since the phrase recurs often outside any baptismal context and its meaning there is well established. "In my name shall they cast out devils" (Mark 16:17); "whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name, he will give it you" (John 16:23); "if ye shall ask any thing in my name, I will do it" (John 14:14). None of these describe a person literally pronouncing the syllables of a name as a spoken formula; each describes acting under someone's authority, standing identified with that person, invoking who they are rather than reciting what they are called. Read against that ordinary pattern, "baptized in the name of Jesus Christ" is, on its face, at least as naturally a statement of whose authority and reality a person is being brought into as it is a description of words spoken over water.

B. Why the New Phrase Names the New Birth, Not Water

Four converging lines of evidence support this reading, held together rather than resting on any single one alone.

1. Grammar and sequence within the verse itself. Peter's own sentence divides naturally into four clauses: "repent"; "be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ"; "for the remission of sins"; and "ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost." Read against *Living in God's Power's* own gloss on this verse — "'Repent' means 'change.' You are baptized in the name of Jesus Christ and you should receive, *lambanō*, God's gift, holy spirit" — the second and fourth clauses describe one continuous transaction rather than two separate, sequential acts: repentance, a change of mind, issuing directly in the new birth itself, named here by the idiom "baptized in the name of Jesus Christ," with the gift's own *manifestation* (*lambanō*, speaking in tongues) following as a distinguishable further step, not a fourth unrelated item tacked onto the end. Nothing in the verse itself requires water to make sense of it; it requires only what the verse already states, read in its own order.

2. Romans 10:9-10, the New Testament's own stated requirement for the new birth. Scripture states, in its own words, what is required to be saved and born again under the present administration, with no water clause anywhere in the statement:

Romans 10:9-10 — *"That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation."*

Living in God's Power applies this same text directly to Cornelius's household as "the two requirements for the new birth... to confess Jesus as lord and believe God raised him from the dead," and reads Peter's own invitation at Acts 2:38 as offering that identical "two-fold promise... to be born again of God's spirit and to operate manifestations" — the same standard stated in different words. If Romans 10:9-10 is the New Testament's own settled account of what is required, and Acts 2:38 is read as stating that same standard, then reading Acts 2:38's "be baptized" as an additional water requirement standing alongside Romans 10:9-10 introduces a second, unstated condition scripture itself never names.

3. The word "baptize" does not, by itself, lexically require water. The Greek word *baptizō* (Strong's G907) means to immerse, dip, or overwhelm; the element the person is immersed *in* is always supplied by the surrounding context, never by the verb alone. Scripture itself uses the word of things that plainly are not water: "baptized with the Holy Ghost and with fire" (Matthew 3:11); "baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea" (1 Corinthians 10:2) — a description of Israel's own crossing of the Red Sea, in which the people themselves stayed dry the entire time, walking through on dry ground (Exodus 14:22), yet scripture still calls it a baptism; "baptized into his death" (Romans 6:3), of a believer's identification with Christ's own death and resurrection, plainly not a description of water at all. The verb names an immersion into whatever its context specifies. "Baptized in the name of Jesus Christ" supplies, by its own wording, *whose authority and identity* the person is immersed into — a different question from *what element* does the immersing, and nothing in the phrase itself answers that second question with water.

4. The phrase's own consistent pairing with the new birth, everywhere it recurs. Chapter 4 below tests this claim directly against every account in Acts where it appears, rather than simply asserting it here. This section states the claim; the next chapter checks it.

C. What This Does Not Yet Settle

This study does not conclude from the above that no water was ever used anywhere in the book of Acts — Chapter 5 below shows several places where it plainly was. Nor does it claim that Matthew 28:19's own baptismal formula, "baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost," is fully reconciled here with Acts 2:38's own different wording; how those two texts relate to one another is a genuinely separate question, touched on only briefly in Chapter 6 below and left honestly open rather than forced to a conclusion this study has not earned. What this chapter establishes is narrower: "baptized in the name of Jesus Christ [the Lord Jesus, the Lord]" is an idiom for the new birth, run consistently from Acts 2:38 forward — not, by default, a report that a water rite was performed. Chapter 4 now tests that claim against every specific account in Acts where the phrase, or something close to it, occurs.

In Short

Peter's charge at Acts 2:38 does not repeat the promise of Acts 1:5. It introduces brand-new wording — "baptized in the name of Jesus Christ" — that had never once been used in scripture before that moment. Traced through the verse's own grammar, through Romans 10:9-10's own stated requirement for salvation, and through how the word "baptize" is actually used elsewhere in scripture to describe things other than water, this new phrase reads most naturally as another way of naming the new birth itself: a person made new by confessing Jesus as Lord and believing God raised Him from the dead, entering into all that His name now stands for — not a report that a water rite has taken place. The next chapter puts that reading to the test against every specific account of baptism recorded afterward in the book of Acts.

Chapter 4 — Testing the Idiom Against Every Account

A. Samaria (Acts 8:5-17)

Philip goes down to a city of Samaria and preaches Christ there, and the whole city responds: unclean spirits crying out, the palsied and the lame healed, and "great joy in that city" (Acts 8:5-8). Already established there is Simon, a sorcerer who had "bewitched the people of Samaria" and been held in awe by them as "the great power of God" (Acts 8:9-11) — the background against which Luke sets what happens next.

Acts 8:12-13 — *"But when they believed Philip preaching the things concerning the kingdom of God, and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women... Then Simon himself believed also: and when he was baptized, he continued with Philip, and wondered, beholding the miracles and signs which were done."*

Living in God's Power (Part V, Hour 3) reads both verses as describing the new birth, with its own footnote pointing directly back to the pattern already established at Acts 2:38: "Remember from Acts 2:38 that 'baptized in the name of Jesus Christ' refers to being born-again." Simon's own baptism is read the identical way: "when he was baptized [born again, like the others mentioned in verse 12]."

Acts 8:14-17 — *"Now when the apostles which were at Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the word of God, they sent unto them Peter and John: who, when they were come down, prayed for them, that they might receive the Holy Ghost: (for as yet he was fallen upon none of them: only they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus.) Then laid they their hands on them, and they received the Holy Ghost."*

This is a passage sometimes read as describing two separate, completed acts — the word believed, then water applied — with only the gift of the Holy Ghost still missing when Peter and John arrive. *Living in God's Power* reads the parenthetical the opposite way: "[They were born again, but they did not speak in tongues.]" On this reading, verse 16 is not describing a water rite performed on top of an already-completed conversion; it is describing one completed act — the new birth itself, named by the idiom — whose *manifestation* (speaking in tongues) has not yet followed. This is the same distinction that runs

throughout the rest of Acts between *dechomai* (receiving something inwardly, spiritually) and *lambanō* (taking hold of something in visible, manifested form). Read this way, the gap Samaria displays is not "word believed, water applied, gift still absent" but the tighter and more internally consistent "born again, not yet manifesting" — the Samaritans already possessed what they had received; what they had not yet done was exercise it.

B. Cornelius's Household (Acts 10:1-48)

Cornelius is introduced as "a centurion of the band called the Italian band, a devout man, and one that feared God with all his house, which gave much alms to the people, and prayed to God alway" (Acts 10:1-2) — a Gentile already living toward God as fully as he knew how, long before Peter ever arrives. An angel tells him to send for Peter (Acts 10:3-8); Peter, meanwhile, sees his own vision of a sheet let down from heaven, three times, and hears the words "what God hath cleansed, that call not thou common" (Acts 10:9-16) — a vision Peter himself does not yet understand until the men from Cornelius arrive at his door (Acts 10:17-23). Peter goes, preaches Christ to the whole household, and before he has finished speaking:

Acts 10:44-46 — *"While Peter yet spake these words, the Holy Ghost fell on all them which heard the word. And they of the circumcision which believed were astonished, as many as came with Peter, because that on the Gentiles also was poured out the gift of the Holy Ghost. For they heard them speak with tongues, and magnify God."*

This account is often treated as the clearest single comparison text in the whole of Acts for reading Acts 2:38 as water, since Peter appears to call for water only after the gift has already fallen — as though water were the one item still outstanding once everything else was already settled. *Living in God's Power* (Part V, Hour 3) reads the same verses, and the ones immediately following them, to the opposite conclusion:

Acts 10:47 — *"Can any man forbid water, that these should not be baptized, which have received the Holy Ghost as well as we?"*

Acts 11:15-17 — *Peter, reporting back to the church at Jerusalem: "the Holy Ghost fell on them, as on us at the beginning. Then remembered I the word of the Lord, how that he said, John indeed baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost. Forasmuch then as God gave them the like gift as he did unto us... what was I, that I could withstand God?"*

"The excitement of the occasion so overwhelmed Peter that he ordered John's water baptism, but he never carried it out... Water baptism was not needed nor administered... They never got around to using the water. Peter initially thought that they should use water. When proselytes were made, water was used... Peter's first reaction was to do the same. However, the magnitude of what happened... convinced Peter that water was not necessary... No water was used to baptize them." On this reading, Acts 10:47's question is Peter's own first instinct — the reflex of a Jew watching Gentiles convert, on the pattern by which a proselyte to Judaism was customarily received — immediately overtaken by what he had just watched happen without any water at all: the gift already given, tongues already spoken, before he had said another word. Acts 10:48's "he commanded them to be baptized in the name of the Lord" is

read the same way this study read Acts 8:16 above: not a directive to go perform a rite, but Peter *naming* what had already happened to them, using the very idiom Acts 2:38 introduced. The Greek itself supports this reading: the word translated "commanded," *prostassō*, carries the sense "to assign or ascribe, to join or enjoin, to appoint or to define" (Thayer), a broader range than the ordinary word for issuing an instruction — "Peter did not direct them to be baptized... He simply ascribed or defined what they had done as being baptized in the name of the Lord."

What Peter's own retelling adds, worth stating in its own right rather than resting on any single source, is this: Acts 10:47 is Peter speaking *in the moment*, at Cornelius's house, and it is a question, not a report — "Can any man forbid water..." Luke's own narrative never answers it; the chapter ends at verse 48 without once stating that water was in fact applied. When Peter is called to account for the whole episode in the very next chapter, defending himself to "they that were of the circumcision" (Acts 11:2-3) — men whose actual complaint was that he had eaten with uncircumcised Gentiles, not a complaint about missing water — his own defense does not reach for the one fact that would have most directly answered a proselyte-minded objection on its own terms: "and we baptized them." Instead he reaches back past the moment recorded at 10:47 to the original contrast Jesus Himself drew before Pentecost ever came:

Acts 11:15-16 — "*And as I began to speak, the Holy Ghost fell on them, as on us at the beginning. Then remembered I the word of the Lord, how that he said, John indeed baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost.*"

"Then remembered I" is the operative phrase. Peter is not simply repeating himself; he is correcting his own first reaction with a recollection that arrives, by his own account, only *after* the moment recorded at 10:47 had already passed — the very structure of a man catching himself mid-course. His entire defense to Jerusalem rests on the water-versus-spirit contrast of Acts 1:5, restated as the standard that actually governed what happened, with no mention anywhere in his own recorded speech that water was ever administered at Cornelius's house at all. If water had in fact been applied, it is the single plainest fact Peter could have offered his accusers — a completed, proper, proselyte-pattern rite, beyond dispute — and he simply does not offer it. What he offers instead is Acts 1:5's own contrast, run again, as though it were the whole of his answer. Read together, Acts 10:47's unanswered question and Acts 11:16's substituted recollection make the same case from the text alone that *Living in God's Power* makes directly: not merely that water was unnecessary in principle, but that Peter's own testimony, given under direct challenge and with every reason to state plainly that water had been used if it had been, never once says so.

C. Saul of Tarsus (Acts 9:1-19)

Saul's own story begins as a persecutor, "breathing out threatenings and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord" (Acts 9:1), struck down by a light from heaven on the road to Damascus and left blind for three days (Acts 9:3-9). Ananias, sent by the Lord directly to him, lays hands on him "that thou mightest receive thy sight, and be filled with the Holy Ghost" (Acts 9:17).

Acts 9:18 — *"And immediately there fell from his eyes as it had been scales: and he received sight forthwith, and arose, and was baptized."*

Living in God's Power draws a careful, deliberate distinction here rather than forcing every occurrence of the bare word "baptize" into the same mold: "It does not say 'baptized in the name of Jesus Christ,' which would refer to the new birth, it just says 'baptized.' Since Saul was already born-again, this baptism may have been in water." This is the control case that keeps this study's own claim from becoming an unfalsifiable rule applied to every occurrence of the word regardless of its actual wording: where the text supplies the specific idiom — "in the name of Jesus Christ," "in the name of the Lord Jesus," "in the name of the Lord" — this study reads the new birth; where the text does not supply that idiom, the ordinary sense of the word, including water, stays entirely open. Saul's own case fits a real, additional water baptism precisely because the text withholds the idiom from it altogether — he was already born again, by his own confession of "Lord" on the Damascus road (Acts 9:5) and by Ananias's own address to him days later as "Brother Saul" (Acts 9:17), and the baptism recorded afterward carries none of the wording this study has traced everywhere else.

D. Ephesus (Acts 19:1-6)

Acts 19:5-6 — *"When they heard this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. And when Paul had laid his hands upon them, the Holy Ghost came on them; and they spake with tongues, and prophesied."*

This text is sometimes read as describing the disciples at Ephesus being rebaptized specifically "in the name of the Lord Jesus," on the ground that their prior baptism, received under John's own ministry by way of Apollos (Acts 18:24-26), was incomplete and needed replacing with a proper water rite performed in Jesus' name. *Living in God's Power* reads verse 5 differently: as a parenthetical remark referring back to what these men had already received earlier, under Apollos's own preaching, rather than describing a new act Paul himself performs in that same verse — and it treats "baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus" here exactly as it treats every other occurrence of the idiom traced in this study: naming the new birth, with verse 6's laying on of hands producing the separate, later manifestation of tongues and prophecy. This study flags, rather than forces, a choice between the two readings. Unlike Samaria and Cornelius's household, where a clear, developed argument stands behind the new-birth reading, the treatment of Acts 19:5 available to this study is comparatively brief, and the water-baptism reading — Paul rebaptizing men whose earlier baptism under John was genuinely deficient — remains a live, textually defensible alternative this study does not close here. A genuinely harder text is better named honestly as harder than either silently forced into a pattern or allowed to overturn everything already established from clearer texts.

E. Closing — What the Pattern Actually Shows

Run across every account in Acts, the idiom holds with real consistency. Acts 2:38 (Pentecost's own three thousand), Acts 8:12-16 (Samaria), and Acts 10:48 (Cornelius's household) all use "baptized in the name of Jesus Christ [the Lord Jesus, the Lord]" of what a careful reading of each text identifies, with its own supporting argument in every case, as the new birth itself. Acts 9:18 (Saul) uses the bare word

without the idiom attached, and is read, consistently, as a real water baptism precisely because the idiom is absent — confirming the distinction rather than breaking it. Acts 19:5 (Ephesus) is held open rather than forced either way. Three of five accounts carry the idiom and point one direction; the fourth lacks it entirely and points the other, exactly as the rule predicts; the fifth is flagged honestly, not silently absorbed into either column.

In Short

Tested one account at a time rather than assumed all at once, the same pattern holds up. Wherever Acts actually uses the specific wording "baptized in the name of Jesus Christ," "in the name of the Lord Jesus," or "in the name of the Lord," the surrounding text supports reading it as the new birth — at Pentecost itself, in Samaria, and at Cornelius's household, where Peter's own later defense of himself never once mentions water. Wherever that specific wording is missing — as with Saul of Tarsus — the ordinary sense of the word, water included, stays open, and this study reads it as real water precisely for that reason. Only Ephesus remains a genuinely harder case, held open honestly rather than forced to agree with everything else.

Chapter 5 — Where the Water Is Real: The Ethiopian, Lydia, and the Jailer

A. Why This Chapter Exists

This study does not conclude that no one in the book of Acts was ever baptized in water, and it does not need scripture stretched to reach any such conclusion. Three separate accounts in Acts describe water plainly, by name, with no trace of the "in the name of Jesus Christ" idiom traced through Chapters 3 and 4 above, and this study lets each of them stand as exactly what it says.

B. The Ethiopian Eunuch (Acts 8:26-39)

An angel sends Philip south, onto the desert road that goes down from Jerusalem to Gaza, where he meets a court official of Candace, queen of the Ethiopians — a eunuch, already returning from worshiping at Jerusalem, reading aloud from the prophet Isaiah as he rides in his chariot (Acts 8:26-28). Philip runs to him, hears him reading Isaiah 53's own prophecy of the suffering servant, and "began at the same scripture, and preached unto him Jesus" (Acts 8:29-35).

Acts 8:36, 38 — *"And as they went on their way, they came unto a certain water: and the eunuch said, See, here is water; what doth hinder me to be baptized?... and they went down both into the water, both Philip and the eunuch; and he baptized him."*

Nothing in this text attaches "in the name of Jesus Christ" or any of its variants to the baptism itself. The eunuch asks for it himself, unprompted, the moment he sees water on the road — nothing suggests Philip withheld the gospel's own benefit from him pending some further rite, and nothing in the text

presents this baptism as anything other than the eunuch's own willing response, freely offered, to what he had just believed.

C. Lydia and Her Household (Acts 16:11-15)

At Philippi, Paul and his companions go down to a place of prayer by a riverside on the sabbath, where they find women gathered, among them Lydia, "a seller of purple, of the city of Thyatira, which worshipped God" (Acts 16:13-14). "Whose heart the Lord opened, that she attended unto the things which were spoken of Paul" (v.14).

Acts 16:15 — *"And when she was baptized, and her household, she besought us, saying, If ye have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come into my house, and abide there."*

Again, no trace of the idiom this study has traced through Chapters 3 and 4. Lydia's own baptism, and her household's alongside her, is recorded as plain water baptism, following directly on her belief, with no separate report of the gift's own manifestation attached to it one way or the other.

D. The Philippian Jailer (Acts 16:25-34)

The same night, after an earthquake shakes open every prison door, the jailer draws his sword to kill himself, supposing the prisoners had already fled, until Paul cries out that all are present (Acts 16:25-28). "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" the jailer asks, and Paul and Silas answer him and his household with the gospel itself, not with a ritual instruction (Acts 16:29-32).

Acts 16:33 — *"And he took them the same hour of the night, and washed their stripes; and was baptized, he and all his, straightway."*

Once more, plain water, plainly named, with no occurrence of the new-birth idiom anywhere in the verse. "The same hour of the night" and "straightway" both emphasize how immediately this followed his belief — a household's own glad response to what it had just received, not a delayed or separately-timed requirement standing between them and salvation.

E. What This Settles, and What It Leaves Open

Water baptism, wherever scripture actually names it in these terms, is real, and this study does not explain it away. What it is not, on the evidence run across this chapter and the last, is the meaning of the specific phrase "baptized in the name of Jesus Christ [the Lord Jesus, the Lord]" at Acts 2:38, 8:16, and 10:48 — that phrase, traced consistently through every account that uses it, names the new birth. Whether a water baptism such as the eunuch's, Lydia's, or the jailer's was itself required for salvation is a separate question from whether it happened at all; nothing in Romans 10:9-10's own stated requirement (Chapter 3B above) makes water a condition of the new birth, and nothing in these three accounts presents it as anything other than a believer's own willing, subsequent act.

In Short

Not every baptism in Acts carries the idiom this study has been tracing. The Ethiopian eunuch, Lydia and her household, and the Philippian jailer were all baptized in real, literal water — each account says so plainly, and none of them uses the phrase "in the name of Jesus Christ" or anything like it. These three stand exactly as written: genuine water baptisms, offered gladly and received gladly, following directly on belief rather than replacing it.

Chapter 6 — Fitting the Administration Framework: Pentecost Is Grace, Not Law

A. The Question Worth Asking

A natural question follows from everything settled so far: where does water baptism itself fit among the different periods of biblical history scripture treats as distinct administrations, and where, relative to those periods, does Acts 2:38 actually fall? This study checked that question directly against this library's own completed *Seven Administrations* study rather than assuming an answer.

B. What *Seven Administrations* Already States

That study's own summary table is more precise than a simple two-part split between "Law" and "Grace," and the added precision matters directly here. Four administrations run in sequence through the very period this study has been examining, not two:

| # | Administration | Span | Governing Basis |

| --- | --- | --- | --- |

| 3 | Mosaic Law | Sinai to Christ's baptism | Vowed obedience to a written code (Ex 24:7) |

| 4 | Christ — the Kingdom at Hand | Christ's baptism to Pentecost | Repent; the kingdom is at hand (Matt 4:17) |

| 5 | Grace — Administration of the Mystery | Pentecost to the Rapture | Grace through faith, apart from law (Eph 2:8-9) |

The Mosaic Law administration itself, on this library's own dating, ends at Christ's own baptism in the Jordan — not at the cross, and not at Pentecost. What follows is its own distinct administration, "Christ — the Kingdom at Hand," running the full length of Jesus's earthly ministry and closing only at Pentecost, where Grace opens. The governing basis of that fifth administration is stated as plainly as any in the sequence: "Acts 2:38... Ephesians 2:8-9... Romans 6:14... Romans 8:2," concluding that "grace through faith, apart from law, is the same basis already stated at Pentecost (Acts 2:38; Eph 2:8-9)." The same study also explicitly rejects reading Paul's later "mystery" material as marking off a separate, later administration of its own: "Grace remains one administration, Pentecost to the Rapture."

C. Where This Places Water Baptism, and Where It Places Acts 2:38

John's own water baptism belongs to the closing years of the Mosaic Law administration; his ministry precedes Christ's own baptism, the very event that closes Law and opens the fourth administration, "Christ — the Kingdom at Hand." That fourth administration is where water baptism continues throughout: John's own baptizing ministry runs alongside its early years (Matthew 3; John 3:23), and Christ's own disciples, during His earthly ministry, baptized more people than John himself did across that same span (John 3:22; 4:1-2 — held here as a reasoned inference drawn from the text rather than a claim stated outright). Water baptism, then, belongs to the third and fourth administrations together, the outgoing periods — not to the fifth, Grace, which opens at Pentecost. Acts 2:38 sits, on this library's own settled dating, at the very *opening* declaration of that fifth administration — the first moment this specific sequence turns its page from what came before to something new. Water was the outgoing administrations' own rite, superseded the instant the Holy Ghost baptism arrived at the Pentecost threshold (Chapter 1 above), and Acts 2:38's new idiom — "baptized in the name of Jesus Christ" — is that new administration's own new language for the new reality that replaced it, not a carryover of the old rite continued under new management with a different name attached.

In Short

Scripture's own account of biblical history runs the Law administration out to Christ's own baptism, then a distinct further period covering His earthly ministry, and only then, at Pentecost, opens Grace. Water baptism belongs to those two earlier periods, not to Grace; Acts 2:38 stands at Grace's own opening moment, stated in Grace's own governing terms — confession and belief, not a written code and not a water rite carried over from what had already closed.

Chapter 7 — Closing: The Settled Position

A. What This Study Settles

1. "Baptized with the Holy Ghost" names one event only — the initial outpouring at Pentecost (Acts 2:1-4) — never repeated and never commanded of anyone; six occurrences in all of scripture, every one pointing to the same event (Chapter 2).
2. "Baptized in the name of Jesus Christ [the Lord Jesus, the Lord]," the idiom introduced at Acts 2:38, names the new birth itself — confessing Jesus as Lord and believing God raised Him from the dead (Romans 10:9-10) — run consistently at Acts 2:38, Acts 8:12-16 (Samaria), and Acts 10:48 (Cornelius's household) (Chapters 3-4).
3. Acts 10:47-48, a text sometimes treated as the clearest evidence in Acts for reading baptism as water, is in fact the clearest case in the whole book of water being proposed by Peter's own first instinct and then explicitly not used — confirmed independently by Peter's own later defense of himself, which never once mentions water (Chapter 4B).

4. Acts 8:36 (the Ethiopian eunuch), 16:15 (Lydia), and 16:33 (the Philippian jailer) remain genuine, literal water baptisms; this study does not extend its conclusion past the specific texts that actually carry the new-birth idiom (Chapter 5).
5. Acts 19:5 (Ephesus) is held open, a genuinely harder text where the case for either reading is comparatively thin (Chapter 4D).
6. Acts 2:38 belongs to Grace's own opening declaration, not to the Mosaic Law administration nor to the administration that followed it — water's own supersession happened precisely at Pentecost, at the hinge between the old administrations and the new one (Chapter 6).

B. Closing Word

This study set out to answer one narrow question honestly, using the same texts anyone can open and check for themselves: what did the men and women of the early church actually mean when they used the words "baptize" and "baptism"? The answer, run consistently across every account in the book of Acts, is that scripture itself already distinguishes what it is talking about far more carefully than a single English word lets on. John's own water, real and necessary in its own day, gave way to something greater the moment the Holy Ghost was poured out at Pentecost — an event that happened exactly once, named by a single, fixed set of six verses running from the Gospels through Acts. From that day forward, when the New Testament records someone "baptized in the name of Jesus Christ [the Lord Jesus, the Lord]," it is very often naming that same new birth, not a water rite laid over the top of it — verified here account by account rather than simply assumed. And on the handful of occasions where scripture plainly does mean water — the Ethiopian eunuch on the desert road, Lydia and her household beside the river at Philippi, the jailer washing the apostles' stripes in the middle of the night — this study has let those texts say exactly what they say, with nothing explained away to fit a pattern. What remains genuinely open — Ephesus's own harder text, and the fuller relationship between Acts 2:38's own idiom and the Great Commission's triune formula at Matthew 28:19 — is named honestly as still open, in the same spirit as everything settled above: checked directly against the text, not assumed in advance.

Scripture Index

Exodus 14:22 Chapter 3 §B

Ezekiel 36:25-27 Chapter 1 §C

Joel 2:28 Chapter 1 §C

Malachi 4:1 Chapter 1 §B

Matthew 3:5-6 Chapter 1 §A

Matthew 3:11 Chapter 1 §B; Chapter 2 §A

Matthew 3:12 Chapter 1 §B

Matthew 3:13-17 Chapter 1 §A

Matthew 4:17 Chapter 6 §B

Acts 2:1-4 Chapter 2 §B

Acts 2:16-21 Chapter 1 §C

Acts 2:38 Chapter 3 §A; Chapter 6 §C; Chapter 7 §A

Acts 8:5-13 Chapter 4 §A

Acts 8:14-17 Chapter 4 §A

Acts 8:26-36 Chapter 5 §B

Acts 8:38 Chapter 5 §B

Acts 9:1-19 Chapter 4 §C

Acts 10:1-2 Chapter 4 §B

Matthew 28:19 Chapter 3 §C; Chapter 7 §B

Mark 1:4 Chapter 1 §A

Mark 1:8 Chapter 1 §B; Chapter 2 §A

Mark 16:17 Chapter 3 §A

Luke 3:3 Chapter 1 §A

Luke 3:16 Chapter 1 §B; Chapter 2 §A

Luke 3:17 Chapter 1 §B

John 1:33 Chapter 1 §B; Chapter 2 §A

John 3:22 Chapter 6 §C

John 3:23 Chapter 6 §C

John 4:1-2 Chapter 6 §C

John 14:14 Chapter 3 §A

John 16:23 Chapter 3 §A

Acts 1:5 Chapter 1 §B; Chapter 2 §A

Acts 10:9-23 Chapter 4 §B

Acts 10:44-46 Chapter 4 §B

Acts 10:47-48 Chapter 4 §B; Chapter 7 §A

Acts 11:2-3 Chapter 4 §B

Acts 11:15-17 Chapter 2 §A; Chapter 4 §B

Acts 16:11-15 Chapter 5 §C

Acts 16:25-34 Chapter 5 §D

Acts 18:24-26 Chapter 4 §D

Acts 19:1-6 Chapter 4 §D

Romans 6:3 Chapter 3 §B

Romans 10:9-10 Chapter 3 §B; Chapter 7 §A

1 Corinthians 10:2 Chapter 3 §B

Ephesians 2:8-9 Chapter 6 §B

Ephesians 4:5 Chapter 2 §B