

# LIVING SENT

## Week Ten: Talking about Baptism

### INTRODUCTION

This week, we consider the topic of "baptism." So, let's begin by reflecting upon what baptism is. The word baptism in Greek, baptitso, means to dip or immerse. The early Christian church showed commitment to Jesus Christ through immersion in water or baptism. The Ethiopian Eunuch, in Acts 8:37-38, is a beautiful example of this. God calls Phillip into the desert to witness to the Eunuch. He comes to a saving faith in Jesus, stops the Chariot, and says, "See here is water! What prevents me from being baptized?" This is symbolic. Baptism is a religious ritual that derives its importance and meaning from Jesus. His death, burial, and resurrection are represented in baptism, as we see in Romans 6:3-4. Now let's look to the Bible for a biblical understanding of baptism.

### BIBLICAL MATERIAL

*What is a biblical understanding of baptism?*

Scholars generally believe that the first representation of baptism is shown in Mark 1:9-11. It is modeled by none other than Jesus. Here John the Baptist is tasked with the baptism of Jesus. How humbling that must have been! Although Jesus isn't going through the act of baptism because of sin in his life. Rather, he is being baptized for the glory of God and to "fulfill all righteousness," as we see in Matthew 3:15. In this account, we see the Savior of all, modeling an ordinance of God in baptism for all of God's people. If Jesus is our Lord and Savior, then we, as his disciples, look to the Author and Perfector of our faith and model his behavior.

So what? What is baptism anyway? Baptism is the public profession of faith that displays our union with Christ. Baptism in and of itself is NOT salvation. It is the first act of publicly professing our union with Jesus. An excellent resource for those wanting an introduction to the ordinance of baptism is "Understanding Baptism" from the Church Basics series written by Bobby Jamieson. In this resource, Bobby defines baptism as "a church's act of affirming and portraying a believer's union with Christ by immersing him or her in water, and a believer's act of publicly committing him or herself to Christ and his people, thereby uniting a believer to the church and marking him or her from the world" (pg. 6). Not only is baptism representative of the new you in Christ, but it also simultaneously separates you from a broken and depraved world. These are powerful words: union, committing, uniting. Baptism only happens once, though, right? So why does it matter?

*Why does baptism matter?*

Baptism matters because it is commanded by God, a commitment from/to God, and the beginning of a life conformed to God's will. First and foremost, baptism is a command of Jesus, as we see in Matthew 28:18-20: "And Jesus came and said to them, 'All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.'" This isn't a parent shaking their finger at you and saying, "because I said so." No, the Creator of all is commanding his people to go and change the world with the good news of the gospel, displaying this transformation in their own lives.

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Next, baptism is a symbol of commitment. Consider the example of a wedding ring. In and of itself, it holds no substantial value but symbolizes the commitment a man and woman have made to each other in the marriage union. Similarly, baptism is representative of the commitment between God and man. God has committed to cleanse this new believer of sin. This new believer has committed to live their life with Jesus as Lord. Yet, unlike marriage, there is also a third commitment symbolized in baptism: a commitment to God's people. When a person is baptized, they are symbolizing their unity with the people of God.

Finally, baptism matters because it begins the process of conforming our lives to God's will. Baptism represents a union with Christ. Union signifies a new identity. We publicly profess Christ as Lord and Savior, and our lives must align with the transformation we are claiming. How effective of a witness in the great commission can we be when our lips profess Christ, but our lives speak otherwise?

*Who can be baptized?*

Bobby reminds us in his book "Understanding Baptism" that baptism isn't our first priority. Instead, it is confessing our sins, turning from our sinful ways, and trusting Jesus to save us. This unites us with Jesus; when God looks at us, he sees his precious Son, not wicked sinners. This now means we carry the identity of Christian because we have lives united with Christ. If Christ is not Lord and Savior, then baptism is not for you, but if he is, then every Christian should be baptized. Jesus will not accept any "closet Christians", and we cannot fulfill the command of the great commission in daily profession of faith if we cannot commit to the first command of baptism as new believers.

## MISSIONARY TASK RELEVANCY

*What happens after baptism?*

Ok! Baptism is a singular event of importance, but what happens afterward? Baptism is our first act of obedience as Christians through a public profession of faith, but it doesn't stop there. This first act of obedience now becomes daily obedience as we conform our wills to his. We were created by God for God, and we are created in his image. This design wasn't happenstance. Instead, we are the only part of creation that can have a personal relationship with God. This means we move from the single first act of obedience in baptism to daily time praying to God and reading his Word so that we might know him more deeply. Imagine someone you love dearly; would you not also know them intimately? Baptism is the begins the journey of understanding the heart of our Creator and sharing his love with the world.



## LIFE APPLICATION

- Have you received biblical baptism? If so, tell your baptism story.
- If you have not been baptized, do you know how to begin that conversation?
- How can our lives, on the other side of baptism, show the beauty and importance of this command?
- Why is baptism connected to discipleship in the Christian faith?