

**My Journey to Easter
Through Baptism
Acts 8:26-38**

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Text Introduction: Last week, we observed the Lord's Supper as a way to contemplate the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus. Today, in very similar fashion, I want to talk about baptism. For those who are already baptized and for those who have not been baptized, I believe this message offers needed perspective for us as we take a personal journey to Easter.

Text: An angel of the Lord spoke to Philip: "Get up and go south to the road that goes down from Jerusalem to Gaza." (This is the desert road.)²⁷ So he got up and went. There was an Ethiopian man, a eunuch and high official of Candace, queen of the Ethiopians, who was in charge of her entire treasury. He had come to worship in Jerusalem²⁸ and was sitting in his chariot on his way home, reading the prophet Isaiah aloud.

²⁹ The Spirit told Philip, "Go and join that chariot."

³⁰ When Philip ran up to it, he heard him reading the prophet Isaiah, and said, "Do you understand what you're reading?"

³¹ "How can I," he said, "unless someone guides me?" So he invited Philip to come up and sit with him.

³² Now the Scripture passage he was reading was this:

He was led like a sheep to the slaughter,
and as a lamb is silent before its shearer,
so He does not open His mouth.

³³ In His humiliation justice was denied Him.

Who will describe His generation?

For His life is taken from the earth.

³⁴ The eunuch replied to Philip, "I ask you, who is the prophet saying this about—himself or another person?"³⁵ So Philip proceeded to tell him the good news about Jesus, beginning from that Scripture.

³⁶ As they were traveling down the road, they came to some water. The eunuch said, "Look, there's water! What would keep me from being baptized?" [³⁷ And Philip said, "If you believe with all your heart you may." And he replied, "I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God."] ³⁸ Then he ordered the chariot to stop, and both Philip and the eunuch went down into the water, and he baptized him.

Introduction—Baptism is one of the issues that clearly defines us as Baptists. You should not be surprised that baptism is an important part of the doctrine of a group named "Baptists." Others teach infant baptism, sprinkling, and the necessity of baptism for salvation. We do not believe or teach any of those things. So, how should we understand baptism?

I have asked you to wear your uniform today. I said all along the way that “There would be a point.” So, here it is.

Baptism identifies us as believers in Jesus Christ.

Uniforms identify us, and baptism identifies us. This statement gets at the question of “Who Should be Baptized?” Baptism should be reserved for those who have identified with Christ.

Key Scriptures

Acts 2:37-41 helps us to understand who should be baptized. Some people, in error, read verse 38 to mean that an individual is not saved until he/she is baptized. However, the record of the whole counsel of God negates this understanding. Just a few verses later, Luke tells us this in *Acts 3:19*.

Acts 3:19 helps us to clarify that repentance and faith result in salvation. This verse gives no mention of baptism in the process of salvation. The early church so closely associated repentance and baptism that to speak of one was to speak of the other. However, the emphasis in salvation is repentance and faith.

In giving directions, we leave out details depending on our audience. If I am giving directions to our church to someone who lives in our city I might say, “Turn on Lee Avenue going towards Downtown and you will see our church.” To give those directions to a visitor from out of town would be useless. Depending on the situation, sometimes details are left out, but the assumption is that the listener would know how to understand.

Who should be baptized? Any person who has come to that place of understanding that eternal life is found in faith in Jesus Christ. In baptism, we identify with the death, the burial, and the resurrection of Jesus Christ. If we have believed that, we need to declare that.

A little girl asked her pastor, “Can I get advertised?” She meant baptized, but she had it right, because our baptism is our advertisement, our public declaration that we identify with Jesus.

Baptism communicates the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus.

This statement gets at the Question of “How Should a Person be Baptized?” As you know and have observed even today, our church believes in baptism by immersion. The word *baptizo* has the connotation to “dip.” It was a word that was used in reference to dying clothes.

Key Scriptures

Acts 8:38—“They both went down into the water.”

Mark 1:9-10—“It came to pass...that Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee, and was baptized by John in the Jordan. And immediately, coming up from the water....” (They could have traveled some 60 miles to get to the Jordan.)

John 3:23—“There was much water there.” (In reference to the place where John the Baptist baptized.)

Baptism testifies to our obedience.

Baptism testifies both to immediate and continued obedience. If you cannot be obedient in baptism, you will struggle with other matters of obedience.

This statement gets at the question of “When Should a Person be Baptized?” I believe that a person should be baptized immediately after having made that declaration to follow Jesus—not before, but not indefinitely later. Our baptism should be immediate in the sense of not putting off indefinitely.

Key Scriptures—Acts 2:37 and Acts 8:36-38

Our baptism should be immediate after our repentance and acceptance of Jesus, not because it is a requirement for eternal life, but because there is no other requirement to be baptized. Sometimes people will say, “I’m not ready.” You are ready if you have given yourself to Jesus Christ.

Your baptism cannot be before your commitment to Christ, but it ought to come immediately following your commitment to Christ.

The prominent biblical scholar and author, T. R. Glover, while visiting India for the YMCA, met some Indian students who said they wanted to be Christians, provided they would not be compelled to make a profession of faith or join a church. They wanted to remain inside the Hindu or Muslim community and subscribe privately to Christian beliefs. That experience convinced Glover that Jesus had put baptism in just the right place, at the very beginning of a life of Christian discipleship.

Baptism cannot be allowed to deceive us.

This statement gets at the question of “What is the Significance of Baptism?” The importance is in the symbolism.

What is the symbolism

Key Scripture:(Romans 6:1-10)

- Baptism should reflect that you have died to sin.
- Baptism should reflect that you have come to life.
- Baptism should reflect that you have made a “once-and-for-all” commitment to Christ.

I see an analogy between my baptism and my wedding ring. My wedding ring does not mean I am faithful nor does it ensure that I will be faithful, but it is a symbol of my commitment and faithfulness, so I wear it with pride. Likewise, our baptism does not mean that we are faithful in our commitment to the LORD nor does it ensure that we will be faithful, but it is a declaration of our intention.

I suspect that for some the issue is not that we have not been baptized, but that we have been baptized with no real commitment to Jesus.

Uniforms sometimes deceive. Just because you find a jersey of some sports team does not mean you were ever on that sports team.

I read about a gentleman in New Orleans a few years ago who was sentenced to a year of home confinement, two years of supervised release and fined \$500 for wearing a U.S. Navy Captain's dress white uniform decorated with medals including a Silver Star, a Purple Heart and a Navy Cross to his wedding. The problem with wearing the uniform was it was not the groom's. He never even served in the armed forces and wearing military medals without proper authority is a federal crime.¹

I wonder if Christ looks at any of our baptisms like that Judge looked at this groom's Navy Captain's uniform.

¹ The judge was U.S. District Judge Jay Zainey. The man's name was Andy Jerome Ticker. *The Daily Advertiser*, Thursday, October 1, 2008.