

Episode 97

“And he gave orders to stop the chariot. Then both Philip and the eunuch went down into the water and Philip baptised him.”

- Acts 8.38

For many years, I thought that baptism was limited to the New Testament, a simple sacrament added to the weekly rhythms of church gatherings as an outward celebration of the inner work of salvation. But you may be surprised to know that as early as Exodus, we find baptism in the bible, and through the lens of Old Testament scripture, we see the rich and powerful significance of what baptism represents as it roars through the corridors of history, declaring that our God is mighty to save.

The Old Testament references to baptism stand not only as types and shadows of baptism, but they shed light on the dramatic, monumental, and miraculous work of God expressed through baptism. Even in the earliest accounts in scripture, baptism represented a massive shift in the trajectory of God’s people, a complete reshaping of their history and recommissioning of their futures.

For example, Peter points to the account of Noah and the ark as a type and shadow of baptism. Consider the miraculous demonstration of God’s deliverance of His people, the power and purposes of God in full living colour, and the unprecedented magnitude of God’s salvation. Paul points to the crossing of the Red Sea as a type and shadow of baptism. Consider the mighty works of God: the ten plagues, the blood of the lamb, and the deliverance from the angel of death, all culminating in the supernatural crossing of the red sea. These are all remarkable history-making moments of God’s glory on display. In the same way, Isaiah pointed to John the Baptist as one who would prepare the way of the Lord, with valleys being filled up, mountains and hills made level, crooked stairs straightened and rough places made smooth as they all got to see the salvation of God on display through each and every baptism.

This is the power and reverence that surrounded baptism in the early church. Actually, to a Jewish believer, baptism was a radical act of treason in the face of a lifetime of religion. It was a drawing of a line in the sand, as clear as cutting a covenant, the changing of arms, and the planting of a flag.

Baptism is a radical, personal, undeniable act of obedience, and as the eunuch came to understand this, he gave orders to stop the chariot, went down into the water, and got baptised. Have you?

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