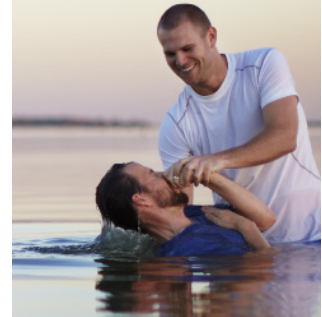


# Preaching "Jesus" Includes Preaching Baptism

by Eric Lyons, M.Min.

It is very common today to hear people say something like, "We just need to preach Jesus and not trouble each other with the Bible's peripheral teachings." Or, "We mustn't get caught up in the details, just in Jesus." Oftentimes, such things are said in an attempt to avert controversy. "Since all professed Christians believe in Jesus, but not all are united upon His doctrine, let's just talk about Jesus, and leave the secondary issues alone."



One of these alleged "secondary" or "peripheral" teachings that frequently is avoided in religious discussions is that of baptism. Since so much controversy has been "caused" by this subject through the years (e.g., Are we to immerse or sprinkle? Should we baptize infants? Is baptism really necessary for salvation?), some believe we can, and should, "teach Jesus" to the lost world, and somehow bring them to Christ, without ever introducing the doctrine of baptism. This may sound like a good idea to some, but we must ask, "Is this a **biblical** idea?" Did the apostles, prophets, preachers, and teachers of the first century have this mindset? Did they distinguish between "preaching Jesus" and "preaching baptism"?

In Acts 8:26-40, we read how the Spirit of God instructed Philip to approach a non-Christian from Ethiopia, a man of great authority under Candace, queen of the Ethiopians. When Philip came near the Ethiopian eunuch, he sat beside him, and, beginning at Isaiah 53, "**preached Jesus to him**" (vs. 35). Now, if Philip had the mindset of some twenty-first-century Bible teachers, his preaching would have been limited to only the "central truths" about Jesus (e.g., His death, burial, and resurrection; His deity; etc.). The very next verse, however, indicates that Philip's preaching of "Jesus" must have included preaching on the importance of baptism, for the Bible indicates that the eunuch asked, "See, here is water. What hinders me from being baptized?" (vs. 36). From this one question, we learn that Philip had to have instructed the eunuch previously concerning the necessity of water baptism. Respected Bible scholar J.W. McGarvey commented on this verse, saying,

He [the Ethiopian—EL] had learned not only that there was such an ordinance, but that it was the duty and the privilege of men to observe it when properly prepared for it. He also desired to be baptized, and his only question was whether he was a suitable candidate. As he had known nothing of Jesus as the Christ up to the moment of Philip's preaching to him, he had certainly learned nothing definite concerning the baptism which Jesus had ordained; and we are consequently forced to the conclusion that what he now knew he had learned from Philip's preaching (n.d., pp. 157-158).

Indeed, Philip included baptism in his preaching of Jesus. Unlike some preachers today, there was no hesitation about meshing Jesus and baptism together. Why would there be? After all, Jesus stressed the necessity of baptism before His ascension into heaven (Matthew 28:18-20; cf. Mark 16:15). Peter commanded those who heard him preach on Pentecost to "repent and be baptized" (Acts 2:38). Philip had preached it among the Samaritans (Acts 8:12-13). And it was a part of the lesson Ananias taught Saul (Acts 22:16). As H. Leo Boles once wrote, "No inspired preacher of the gospel then preached Jesus without preaching the baptism that Jesus commanded; no gospel preacher today can preach Jesus without preaching the command to be baptized" (1941, p. 138). Amen.

## REFERENCES

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McGarvey, J.W. (no date), *New Commentary on Acts of Apostles* (Delight, AR: Gospel Light)

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