

Sacred Rhythms: Baptism

Galatians 3:27; Leviticus 14:8; Colossians 2:12; Romans 6:3-5; Matthew 28:19-20

Guest Speaker: Skylar Holloway

Sacred Rhythms: We all live by rhythms: seasons, workweeks, school schedules, family routines, etc. God also designed rhythms for His people which are guideposts that orient our lives toward Him. These rhythms remind us who God is, what He has done, and what He promises to do.

Jewish Rhythms (Sacred Traditions): God gave Israel festivals and practices as sacred rhythms. They included Passover (remembering God's deliverance), Pentecost (celebrating God's provision of His law and harvest), Sabbath (rest and trust in God's care), Sukkot/Feast of Tabernacles (remembering the wilderness journey when God provided for and dwelt with His people in temporary shelters (Leviticus 23:39-43))

These rhythms were not just about the past. They shaped daily life, reminding them of God's past provision, protection, and preservation as well as pointing forward to God's future promises. These rhythms were not just optional traditions though. It was written into the Hebrew Law (given by God). Israel was commanded to observe these celebrations.

Sacred Rhythms are about rediscovering how the practices of our faith (salvation, baptism, communion, sabbath, prayer, worship, anointing) are not empty rituals. They are God-given rhythms that shape us into people of love. They root our lives in God's story and form us into His people here and now. Just like the Israelites built booths at Sukkot to remember God's provision, our rhythms help us remember and live in God's saving presence.

Today Skylar Holloway joins us on the stage. Last semester she had to write a paper on baptism and its significance. Rather than me doing the research again, I decided just to let Skylar come and chat with us instead. We are going to do this kind of interview style. I might add a thought or two, but understand that Skylar did all the work here.

1. What is Baptism?

Essentially, baptism is a public declaration of faith. It is the act of being submerged in water to represent how someone has died to their old, sinful ways and is resurrected into a new life in Christ.

2. What does the Greek word for Baptism mean and why is it important for us to look back at the original text for this?

The word baptism has a very strong religious context for us. It isn't something that we use on a daily basis, and is really primarily used in some sort of church setting. My mindset going into writing this paper was that I wanted to be able to view and understand baptism in the full context of what the scriptures were saying. So, for me that

meant to pull apart any learned theology and knowledge and simply look at what the words really meant in the context of when and how they were written. Now, I knew that Paul was writing in Greek, so that's where I started. The greek word for baptism is “Βαπτίζω” (Baptizō), which literally means “to immerse” or “to submerge.” I think it is important to understand that Baptizo was not translated, but transliterated. What this means is that when something is translated from one language to another, that word or sentence is taken with all its context and changed into the new language so that it can be fully understood in the same way. Whereas transliteration does not take the context of the word, but instead just mimics the sound in another language. So, this means that baptism was not originally a “religious” word, but a description of being completely immersed.

I think this context is shown really well when Paul is writing in Galatians. Galatians 3:27 says, *“for all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ.”*

So what Paul is saying here is that baptism is not just about water, but it is about being clothed and immersed in the life of Christ. It is about being so submerged in his love, goodness, and character that we begin to “wear” His characteristics. Understanding baptism in all its context helps us to see that it is more than a ritual or box to check off, but it’s a lifestyle. It is a total surrender to Christ.

3. Where did the idea of baptism start? Was there a custom or tradition that this stemmed from?

Baptism has very deep roots—specifically in Jewish traditions. Baptism primarily is rooted in Jewish purification rituals. In this culture and time (before Jesus’ life), people would immerse themselves in ritual baths (Mikvah) when they were considered unclean, or in preparation for days they considered holy. This ritual was a way of cleansing themselves so that they would be pure in the eyes of God and the law.

We can see this in Leviticus as a part of the Torah and the Jewish laws on purity. Leviticus 14:8 says, *“The person to be cleansed must wash their clothes, shave off all their hair and bathe with water; then they will be ceremonially clean. After this they may come into the camp, but they must stay outside their tent for seven days.”*

4. What does baptism actually do?

Baptism does not cause salvation. Baptism is not a required step for salvation. Instead, it is a public demonstration of how salvation has already taken place. Being submerged in the water represents the death of a sinful life/nature, and being raised out of the water represents being cleansed and purified, starting a new life in Christ.

Paul talks about this transformation in Colossians. Colossians 2:12 says, *“Having been buried with him in baptism, in which you were also raised with him through your faith in the working of God, who raised him from the dead.”*

Baptism is not just about the action, but about representing what God has already done. There are many things that people say about baptism such as it is a sign of repentance from sin, that it's a symbol of dying to self and being raised to new life in Christ, a public declaration of faith and belonging to God's family, and a celebration of what God has already done in a believer's heart.

5. Are all of these things that happen when you are baptised and is Baptism just symbolic or is there something deeper here?

These descriptions are true, yes, but I do think it goes a bit deeper. I think if we limit baptism to ONLY being a symbolic representation of salvation, we put it in a box. Baptism is not just a ritual to take part in once so that it can be checked off a list of requirements. I think this is what Paul was trying to say, that baptism is not just a one time action, but rather something that we should do daily to be connected and immersed in Christ.

Romans 6:3-5 says, *'Or don't you know that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life. For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we will certainly also be united with him in a resurrection like his.'*

If we remember, baptism really means to be immersed. That means that when Paul is saying that we are baptized in Christ's life and death, and united in His resurrection, we are immersed in all of these things. To be baptized in Christ is to be immersed fully in His presence, His love, grace, and life. This immersion does not just end when you come out of the water, but instead something that we live out every single day.

6. If Baptism isn't the thing that actually saves you, then why do you think that we still practice the tradition?

Baptism does not save us, but in a way it shapes us. It is a sacred rhythm that continually reminds us to keep our hearts and minds immersed in Christ. Baptism is a very special moment with us and God, giving us a chance to openly declare our love and faith in Him.

Jesus does not only affirm, but commands this to continue. Matthew 28:19-20 says, *"Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you."*

Baptism helps us remember how God has saved us, and how we lead our lives obediently in love like God has commanded from us.

7. When should someone get baptised? If someone was baptised as an infant, do they need to be baptized again?

We are not given a list of requirements for when someone should be baptized. We aren't given a certain age, place, or any other conditions. Baptism isn't about legalities, it's about the heart. Baptism should come after someone has made the personal decision to follow Jesus, and when they fully understand the importance and significance of baptism. I think getting caught up in "laws" of baptism takes away from its meaning. It's not about if you did it a certain way, but more about why you did it. I think if we say someone was not truly baptized if they were baptized as a baby, we are focusing on the wrong thing. But, I think if that person wants to be baptized again when they are older as a way of confirming their faith and decision, then I think that is a beautiful representation of what baptism truly is. It's not a checklist item, but a reflection of the heart.

Who should baptise people? Who has the authority to do it?

Maturity and heart condition should be what is considered. Phillip baptised the Eunuch in Acts 8 but was not an apostle or preacher, or prophet.

I don't think there are special people who can and can not baptise. I think it has more to do with your maturity and being a leader to those around you. I think you already hit it when you read Matthew 28 earlier. Our authority does not come from our position, but instead from Christ.

Reflection Questions:

- Have your thoughts on baptism changed any with this teaching? How?
- While we typically think of baptism as a one time event, we see in the answer to question #5 that Paul seems to indicate that immersion in Christ is a daily action.
 - What would being immersed in Christ look like in your life?
 - Are you living your life fully immersed in Christ?