

Three Benefits of Water Baptism

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It came to pass in those days that Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee, and was baptized by John in the Jordan. And immediately, coming up from the water, He saw the heavens parting and the Spirit descending upon Him like a dove. Then a voice came from heaven, "You are My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased."
– Mark 1:9-11

We are people of the Kingdom—in touch with heaven but assigned to minister to earth. The Lord's purpose in bringing people into the Kingdom is not just to take us to heaven, but to transform the world around us. We are to be people who recognize our resources in the invisible realm and usher them into the realm of reality.

Water baptism is one of the most common practices in the whole tradition of Christianity. It is not merely a religious ritual; Jesus commanded we repent and be baptized (Matthew 28:19; Mark 16:16). There are many people who have received Jesus Christ as Savior but have not come to the waters of baptism. The Bible very clearly calls us to baptism in this sequence: repent and be baptized. If you were baptized before you received Jesus, you need to be baptized now.

Directly tied to being baptized are incredible points of release, illustrated in the baptism of Jesus Himself.

The baptism of Jesus

Jesus is the only Person in history who didn't need to be baptized. His purpose was not to command us to be; He could have done that without going through it Himself, or to indicate His repentance; He was sinless.

Jesus was baptized so that we could see what the expected benefits would be. At His baptism there came an infusion of things from heaven. Those are the things He wants to release in our life. Three things happened when Jesus was baptized:

1. The heavens were parted
2. The Spirit came on Him like a dove
3. A Voice spoke from heaven: "You are My Son in whom I am well pleased."

Baptism not only has benefit in obedience, it unlocks something in the invisible realm for us. That unlocking not only takes place when you are baptized, but is a fresh resource that may be re-appropriated throughout your life.

Why was Jesus baptized?

The Bible says in the early portion of this same chapter that there were a host of people coming to Jordan to be baptized by John for confession of sins and

repentance. Jesus not only was born the sinless Son of God, conceived in the womb of the virgin and conceived by the power of Almighty God, not only born without sin but He lived a life of sinlessness. We know that because of the Father's approval upon Him when He comes up from the waters of baptism (v. 11). That was the Father's seal of approval on the first thirty years of His Son's life.

So Jesus was not there for confession of sin. He was not there for repentance. What was He doing? What Jesus was doing was opening to what happened as He came up out of the waters. Essentially, wrapped up in the Holy Spirit's coming upon Him. Though He had been born of the Spirit and the presence of the Spirit was with Him and upon Him all those years, the anointing of the Spirit as Messiah for the ministry that He had to bring and for the sacrifice He was going to present of His own life unto death – that required the anointing from heaven of the fullness and the power of the Holy Spirit.

It is not clear in some believers' minds that there's a difference between being born by the Spirit of God and being baptized by the Spirit of God. Jesus is the first example we have. He was born by the power of the Spirit—it was a biological birth but there was a spiritual presence of the Holy Spirit in Him that was never violated. Just as Adam, if he had never sinned at the original creation, would always have had a continual touch with the Father God, the Creator, but that was violated when man fell into sin.

So Jesus, who the Bible calls the second Adam (1 Corin. 15:45-48) for He's come to start a whole new race of the freed and the forgiven. So the second Adam comes and He does in fact live sinlessly, and we come to this moment when He's baptized in Jordan, and He's just said to John, by doing this, will fulfill all righteousness (Matthew 3:15).

The concept of fulfillment in the Scripture has to do with not just meeting a criteria, but with an overflow of abundance. So He's said this will overflow what is intended in the righteous counsels and purposes of the Father.

So as He was baptized, there came the launching of His ministry. He becomes anointed for His messianic ministry and mission. The ministry of the three and a half years; his mission, to become the Lamb of Sacrifice who will rise from the dead and become our Savior.

Jesus opened a doorway for a dynamic to be released at baptism. Water baptism is not intended to be a mere ritual. If it were only a ritual we would still do it because Jesus commanded us to be baptized. It's His idea, and He says that it's not an issue of choice. You have to be baptized to evidence your obedience to Him.

There's always the argument: Do you have to be baptized to go to heaven? Isn't faith in Christ enough? Then they'll point to the classic example—what about the thief on the cross who professed faith in Jesus and then died and didn't get baptized. The exceptions are never any case you use to argue for anything of incipient rebellion in your soul. The issue is, if you happen to be nailed to a cross and dying and you receive Christ, God in His great mercy will probably take care of it the same way.

But the Lord is calling us to a pathway of obedience, and the deep concern is for any who indeed love the Lord, have received His love for you, now there are things He wants to unfold to you. Water baptism opens the way to things that will never happen in your life until you take that pathway to obedience.

There's also an endless fund of resource for all of us who have been baptized, as well as received Christ as Savior, and that resource can be drawn on across the pathway of all of our life. These things are threefold, wrapped up in the things you see took place at Jesus' baptism.

1. Father says, "This is My beloved Son in whom I am well pleased."
2. The heavens were parted
3. The Holy Spirit came upon Jesus

In Mark's rendition, he gives us a little more detail – "while he was praying". coming up from the rivers of baptism, then the Holy Spirit descended upon Him and the anointing for messianic ministry and mission took place.

1. These same three things have points of application to all of us. There is a divine approval God wants to seal to your heart and mine and for the same reason that He spoke the words to His Son.
2. There is a breakthrough. The parting of the heavens that it mentions has to do with not an opening of a space in the sky but with a rending open of the invisible realm for something to break through—perception, grasp, an availability to things supernatural. Not weird, but people with two feet on the ground and a clear perception in their understanding that "I am a person of the horizon. I touch the things of heaven."
3. The overflowing river of life of the Holy Spirit coming upon the person for the purpose of ministry and mission. Every one of us have a ministry to live out—whatever it is in your particular vocation, to have the Holy Spirit enabling you by the power of Christ to serve what you were made to be. Every one of us also have a mission in life—a specific target that our life is about. It takes the power of the Holy Spirit for that to occur, and the Lord wants to open up that resource to us at special dimensions that are illustrated at what happened to Him at baptism.

Do all believers need to be baptized?

Baptism is a meaningless exercise if a person doesn't believe in Jesus the Savior. Many people are sincerely deluded that by having at some time or another been baptized, that covers the issue with God. However sincere their motivation or the motivation of their parents, baptism is only a human work that can earn nothing from God apart from coming to Christ and receiving salvation as the free gift. Then baptism is a sign of our obedience to His lordship. He calls us to be baptized.

There are many people who have received Jesus Christ but who have not come to the waters of baptism. The Bible very clearly calls us to baptism in this sequence: repent and be baptized. So if you were baptized a long time ago, before you received Jesus, you need to be baptized now. This doesn't impugn the sincerity of your parents who may have brought you for baptism as an infant.

Some might ask, "How do you feel about people who are baptized as infants?" I thank God for parents who had enough spiritual savvy that they at least cared enough to do something that indicated that they thanked God for that child and wanted to acknowledge it to the Almighty God. It's not a matter of saying anything unkind in that arena, but looking at the fact that you and I have our own responsibility after we receive the Lord—you need to get baptized in water. That's the Word of God.

At The Church On The Way, we dedicate babies but we do not baptize them, not as a feisty opposition, but because it avoids the child later being confused, thinking because they got baptized then that now, after they've received the Lord, they don't need to be baptized. "Repent and be baptized"—those things are to go in tandem. That's the Word of God.

And directly tied to being baptized are incredible points of release, illustrated in the baptism of Jesus Himself. Beside establishing obedience to your Lord and opening to His promise through baptism, baptism provides these three things:

Benefit #1: Baptism provides an occasion for a heavenly announcement to your soul

When the Father spoke, "This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased,"—those words were spoken as a confirmation of the sinlessness of His Son. The Father's pleasure with His humility. Jesus did not need to come to this point of baptism, but it pleased the Father that Jesus full submission to identifying with the people He had come to reach.

There is something about the beauty of Jesus coming to baptism, and something about the Father's confirmation of the absolute purity of His Son that speaks to not only our hearts of who Jesus is, but speaks about something that we need for ourselves as well.

There's got to be somebody in this room who knows the Lord, you know that you're born again, you know you have relationship with God, but sometime this week, at some moment, there was something that occurred and you felt less than really like an effective, efficient, pleasing son or daughter of the Most High. It could be because of something you did that you knew displeased the Father, and having done that, presumably, you then confessed to the Lord—Lord, I'm sorry. I ask You to forgive me. But those are moments the adversary loves to capitalize on. For our common adversary, the devil—recognizing any failure on our part, takes great delight in not letting us off the hook. Condemnation is the name of his game. Everything that he can do to rub your nose in it. Make you feel that you are a total flop. The argument goes something like this: God's okay with it but don't expect anything significant to happen in your life now. You've blackballed yourself from the possibilities of anything worthwhile happening.

There's other things besides condemnation—a whole pattern of inadequacy that many people feel. In the brokenness of our society, there are hosts of people who have enough abuse from past relationships they've been through—not necessarily violent abuses, but things where relationship was mistreated and violated and there is something that it's done to you that can reach as far back as your childhood or teenage years. The wound leaves a residue in your soul that anytime anybody talks about relationship—or if they don't talk about it—still, relationship is always got a shadow over it as far as you're concerned. Even though you know in your head that you have a relationship with God through Jesus Christ, but there is something of a deficiency of confidence that you live with all the time. It hinders your feeling as a bold person for the Lord. It drains off the joy of the Lord that's intended to be strength to you. It has to do with a residue of rejection that you feel from things past.

Just as surely as Satan comes to condemn for failure, there are things of failure by other people that impact you. It takes away from that sense of confidence of who you are as one of the Lord's own.

These things are so counterproductive to our being the person the Lord has re-created us in Christ to be. God has brought us to Jesus in order that we might know the release of the full sense of God's pleasure in our lives. When we come to the Lord and gain that initial sense of forgiveness, He says, I want you to come to the waters of baptism because in that moment, as you designate your obedience to My Son, I want to tack down at a specific, inescapably clear time and place on earth a physical action you can refer to the rest of your life. You put your trust in the Lord in a moment in the realm of the ethereal; it's not invalid, but it happened between your heart and heaven. But there's something about having come to a time and place and the God who created us and know the degree of our attachment to earth says, I want to nail down a time and a place and a moment, and it will be marked, and at any time in your life you can point back and say, at that point, I pleased the Father's will, and I am not a person who will live or accept these kinds of pressures that come from the liar, the devil who

would condemn me, or from the things that creep around the edges of my mind from any residue of my own past brokenness.

I am a person to whom God has spoken over me the same thing He spoke over His Son, and for the same reason. God said of His Son, You are My Son in whom I am well pleased. And the reason is because Jesus was sinless to that moment. And of you and me, when we come from the waters of baptism, God is making a statement that is equally true—that in the eyes of heaven, because of my having put my faith in Jesus Christ, my Savior, and having obeyed His call to me to come to the waters of baptism, Father says, through the Cross, where My Son died, I have cut away the record of any residue of remembrance of sin against you, in the eyes of heaven, you have been made sinless. I call you one of my sinless children, and I am well pleased with you.

When people say they felt so good at their baptism, that is not just an emotion—that's a sense of divine pleasure God wants everybody to know. But beyond that moment the Lord wants anybody in a situation in which the adversary is trying to suffocate you with doubt or condemnation, the same fund of His pleasure may be drawn on no matter how long ago you were baptized.

Benefit #2 – Baptism provides a setting for spiritual breakthrough in your circumstance

In Mark 1, the heavens parted, the verb that occurs is a different one than used in the Gospels of Matthew and Luke where it speaks of the heavens were “opened” to Him. The drama of how that opening took place is forcefully put in Luke. The verb is the Greek verb “schizo” Adapted into our language into a word we use—schizophrenic, talking about where there's come a tearing of the mind or soul. This is a negative illustration, but the drama of the concept of tearing is what's wrapped up in this verb.

The Bible is saying there is a tearing open in the invisible realm. This was not just a slit in the sky that allowed you to see further than before. This was going on in perception; Jesus will go from this moment with a greater capacity now that ministry requires. By ministry not meaning the office of a pastor or spiritual leader; by ministry in the sense of people doing what they are capacitated to do.

Ministry has to do with taking what you have to give and giving it to the moment, as in “to administer”. Every one of us are capacitated by God with resources that He says, Now that you're Mine, I want to use those resources that I've given you those capacities, and I want to minister My life through you wherever you are.”

One of the most destructive ideas in the whole mind of the church is that ministry is isolated to a pulpit, where the Lord said the reason for the existence of pulpits is to help all the people to learn how to live in their ministry and to be what they were created to be.

For that to take place, there needs to come a sensitivity to the reality of the spiritual realm. From this moment, Jesus is going to go into an immediate situation of confrontation with the powers of darkness. The Bible says, "immediately, He was driven into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil." In that season of temptation, you have two factors: There's a period of time that's extensive, and there's also a confrontation where the enemy tries to break Jesus down. Each time, Jesus responds with quotations from the Word of God. That becomes a devastating impact against the adversary. It cuts the capacity of the adversary to withstand Jesus.

Capture a sense that this is more than just a Scripture quotation quiz. This is not just Jesus saying, when the enemy confronts Him, "Well, let's see. Let me give you a verse." But it is Jesus saying, "It is written." And then He speaks the Word and it cuts through.

This kind of capacity to lay hold of what God has said in His Word, where it becomes vibrant and alive to you, is something you see as other than just a set of ideas. It becomes something of tangible grasp in your hand, a sword with which you can do battle. That's something that comes because of spiritual breakthrough, a parting in the heavens. The invisible realm becomes real to a person.

Hosts of believers today live their lives as believers in Jesus Christ but always at the mercy of circumstances where they say, "What do you do in this kind of situation?" It is not just a case of immaturity. So many times, it's people who have walked with the Lord for a long time but they need a religious professional to tell them what to do.

God did not raise up the church and then give a band of gurus to tell people how to live. A pastor should not be a substitute for somebody else's spiritual growth. A pastor's mission should be to help people find out what the Lord wants to do with them so there can come the fulfillment of the purpose of the Living God through you with the same resources that God poured out upon His Son Jesus.

It has to do with a perception that comes where the Spirit of God enables you to see beyond the limits of human sight; seeing, transcendentally, the realm of the reality that is there.

Jesus recognizes His adversary and He recognizes His resources. The Bible says you and I are not wrestling against flesh and blood; the struggle for our life isn't trying to figure out a way to get out of this marriage because I can't live with this flesh and blood person, but to recognize how you can deal with the hell that's trying to invade your home, and to separate you and the person you've made a commitment to live with, and who God can enable you to live with them if you come and deal with the things that would try and tear your home and hearts apart, that are coming out of hell, not just out of flesh and blood alone.

It has to do with recognizing the adversary that attacks us – not just the person (flesh and blood) or the circumstances, and affliction. You come to recognize what has a physiological explanation and what is being imposed on you in the invisible realm that's trying to take hold of you in the physical/visible. For example, children that are well all week and then get sick Saturday night, preventing the family from coming to church on Sunday and hindering what God wants to flow into that family because one of the kids is sick.

The eyes of the understanding, Paul said to the Ephesians, need to be enlightened; the eyes of the heart seeing. It needs to be renewed in us as well as initiated in us. Baptism initiates it; we need to appropriate this "second sight" into the realm of spiritual confrontation.

Benefit #3 – Baptism opens the way to a ceaseless overflowing of the Holy Spirit upon your life

We already said it, Jesus needed to receive the fullness of the Holy Spirit for the ministry ahead of Him. Two verses stand starkly side by side. In John 3 and 20 (all the chapters in between have to do with the ministry of Jesus three years) In John 3:34, shortly after Jesus began His ministry these words are spoken: That the Son of God was sent, He whom God has sent, God gives the Spirit without measure to Him. God sent His Son and gave Him unlimited power of the Holy Spirit. Unlimited resource.

In John 20 (we've now gone through the whole life of Jesus, the death, resurrection and He's meeting the disciples) Jesus says, "Now you receive the Holy Spirit." He saying that what I've been here doing is opening a doorway to what I want to multiply in hosts of My own. I received the Holy spirit for the ministry I conveyed; now salvation has accomplished and redemption is complete, and you redeemed, now I want you to receive the Holy Spirit. "As the Father sent Me, so I send you."

Join these words to " He whom God has sent, God gives Him an unlimited resource in the Holy Spirit." Jesus means us to understand that He is not living and serving the Father's will in His life with a resource that is transcendent to what Father God wants you and me to have. The one vast difference between Jesus' life and ours is that He never sinned and we have. But through the blood of the cross, that's been neutralized so that we have the privilege of standing before the Father sinless in His sight. As children, sons and daughters in whom He is well pleased. He forgives us because of Jesus.

When we receive Jesus Christ as our Savior, we are redeemed to live in the new dimensions of life the Lord has, including the power to serve, to love, to live in the purity and power of the Holy Spirit which is intended to have the same resource He whom God has sent, God gives the Spirit without measure—like the Father

sent Me, Jesus said, I'm sending you. That's sending you with an unlimited drawing power on the resources of the Holy Spirit.

This is what water baptism not only opens up to those who haven't been baptized, but provides a continuing fund of availability for those of us who have.