

God and Water

INTRODUCTION:

1. Water has been a part of God's interaction with this world from the very beginning.
 - A. Water played a significant role in creation.
 - i. In the beginning water covered the world and God's Spirit hovered over it (Gen. 1:2).
 - ii. The heavens were formed by separating the waters above from those below (Gen. 1:7).
 - iii. Land appeared only after God gathered the waters into one place (Gen. 1:9-10). Yet, God left 3/4 of the earth covered with water.
 - B. Water continues to play a significant role in the life God created.
 - i. Animals and people can go for a long time without food, but not without water.
 - ii. People, under the best of conditions, can only survive about 3 days without water.
2. Water has also played a significant role in God's dealings with man, which is what I want to focus on today. In doing so I hope to impress upon you the importance water continues to play in our relationship with God today.

BODY:

I. God used water for His purposes in the O.T.

A. God used water to save and to condemn as seen in the Great Flood:

1. God determined to condemn the world for its sin (Gen. 6:5-8 – “Then the LORD saw that the wickedness of man was great on the earth, and that every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually. ⁶ The LORD was sorry that He had made man on the earth, and He was grieved in His heart. ⁷ The LORD said, “I will blot out man whom I have created from the face of the land, from man to animals to creeping things and to birds of the sky; for I am sorry that I have made them. ⁸ But Noah found favor in the eyes of the LORD.”).
 - a. God told Noah that condemnation would come through water (Gen. 6:17 – “Behold, I, even I am bringing the flood of water upon the earth, to destroy all flesh in which is the breath of life, from under heaven; everything that is on the earth shall perish.”).
 - b. Those flood waters killed every living land creature, including man (Gen. 7:11, 21, 23 – “In the six hundredth year of Noah's life, in the second month, on the seventeenth day of the month, on that day all the fountains of the great deep burst forth, and the windows of the heavens were opened...²¹ And all flesh died that moved on the earth, birds, livestock, beasts, all swarming creatures that swarm on the earth, and all mankind...²³...Only Noah was left, and those who were with him in the ark.”).
2. What made the difference? Or, why did Noah and his family find grace and survive when the waters condemned the rest of the world?
 - a. Because Noah righteous (Gen. 6:9 – “These are the generations of Noah. **Noah was a righteous man**, blameless in his generation. Noah **walked with God**.”).
 - b. Noah was righteous because he **obeyed** God (Gen. 6:13-14, 22-7:1 – “Then God said to Noah, “The end of all flesh has come before Me; for the earth is filled with violence because of them; and behold, I am about to destroy them with the earth. ¹⁴ **Make for yourself an ark of gopher wood**; you shall make the ark with rooms, and shall cover it inside and out with pitch...²² **Thus Noah did; according to all that God had commanded him, so he did.** ^{7:1} Then the LORD said to Noah, “**Enter the ark**, you and all your household, **for you alone I have seen to be righteous before Me in this time.**”).
 - c. Noah was righteous because he expressed his faith in that obedience which saved him (Heb. 11:17 – “By **faith** Noah, **being warned by God about things not yet seen**, in reverence **prepared an ark for the salvation of his household**, by which he condemned the world, and became an **heir of the righteousness which is according to faith.**”).
 - d. The rest, however, were lost because of their disobedience. For, as 2 Pet. 2:5 says, God “did not spare the ancient world, but preserved Noah, **a preacher of righteousness**, with seven others, when He brought a flood upon the world of the **ungodly.**”).

3. So, here we find God using water to separate the righteous who obeyed Him from the rest of the world who were condemned and perished in ungodliness!

B. God used water to cleanse and heal.

1. We see this in Naaman being healed of his leprosy (2 Kings 5)
 - a. Naaman learned from his enslaved Jewish servant girl that a prophet in Israel could heal him and travelled to the house of Elisha (5:1-9) to receive it.
 - b. There is where he learned his **healing would come through the waters of the Jordan river** (5:10 – “Elisha sent a messenger to him, saying, ‘Go and wash in the Jordan seven times, and your flesh will be restored to you and you **will be clean.**’”).
 - c. God’s instructions through Elisha became a test for Naaman’s faith which he initially failed **because of the water** (5:11-12 – “But Naaman was furious and went away and said, ‘Behold, I thought, ‘He will surely come out to me and stand and call on the name of the LORD his God, and wave his hand over the place and cure the leper.’ ¹² **Are not Abanah and Pharpar, the rivers of Damascus, better than all the waters of Israel? Could I not wash in them and be clean?’**”) So he turned and went away in a rage.”).
 - i. So, Naaman’s initial faith to come to Elisha for healing would have meant nothing.
 - ii. And, contrary to common thought today, his sincere thoughts about how God would heal him accounted for nothing as well.
 - iii. Fortunately, Naaman had a wise servant who understood that God’s way of cleansing had been clearly revealed and could be easily obeyed (5:13 – “Then his servants came near and spoke to him and said, ‘My father, had the prophet told you to do some great thing, would you not have done it? How much more then, when he says to you, ‘Wash, and be clean?’”).
 - d. And, when Naaman choose to accept the words of God’s prophet and obey he was cleansed (5:14 – “So he went down and dipped himself seven times in the Jordan, according to the word of the man of God; and his flesh was restored like the flesh of a little child and he was clean.”).
 - e. So, here we see God using water in connection with one’s faith to determine whether one will be delivered, or cleansed, from the uncleanness of his flesh.
2. We see this in God’s healing of the man born blind (John 9:1-7):
 - a. After rubbing the clay on the man’s eyes to complete his healing Jesus told him to “Go, wash in the pool of Siloam (which is translated, Sent). So he went away and washed, and came back seeing” (9:7).
 - b. Why Jesus chose to impart his grace to heal in this way we do not know.
 - c. But the fact remains that this was the revealed way, and it was not until the blind man obeyed and *went* and *washed* in the pool that he “came back seeing.”
 - i. I am sure that it was with some difficulty that he made this trip to the pool.
 - ii. But he still had to have enough faith in Jesus to obey by going and washing in that pool before he received Jesus’ grace to heal.

C. God used water for spiritual cleansing.

1. Priests were made clean for service by being washed in water.
 - a. This was required in their anointing (Ex. 29:4, 7 – “Then you shall bring Aaron and his sons to the doorway of the tent of meeting and wash them with water...⁷ Then you shall take the anointing oil and pour it on his head and anoint him.”).
 - b. They had to wash with water every time before approaching God in service (Ex. 30:17-21 – “The LORD spoke to Moses, saying, ¹⁸ “You shall also make a laver of bronze, with its base of bronze, for washing; and you shall put it between the tent of meeting and the altar, and you shall put water in it. ¹⁹ Aaron and his sons shall wash their hands and their feet from it; ²⁰ when they enter the tent of meeting, they shall wash with water...”
2. Now, people will typically call these “ceremonial” cleansings.

- a. But that did not mean these were optional or unimportant (Ex. 30:19-21 – “Aaron and his sons shall wash their hands and their feet from it; ²⁰ when they enter the tent of meeting, **they shall wash with water**, so that **they will not die**; or when they approach the altar to minister, by offering up in smoke a fire sacrifice to the LORD. ²¹ So they shall **wash their hands and their feet**, so that **they will not die**; and it shall be a perpetual statute for them, for Aaron and his descendants throughout their generations.”).
- b. Without having faith enough to obey and wash in the water, the priests would forfeit their lives!

II. God continues to use water for His purposes today in the New Covenant of Christ.

A. God still uses water to save and condemn.

1. We see this in John’s work as the **forerunner of Christ** (Mark 1:4 – “John the Baptist appeared in the wilderness preaching a **baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins**.”).
 - a. His **baptism**, which he administered in the **waters of the Jordan Rivers**, concerned **deliverance from God’s wrath** (Matt. 3:5-7 – “Then people from Jerusalem, as well as all Judea and all the region around the Jordan, were going out to him, ⁶ and he was baptizing them in the Jordan River as they confessed their sins. ⁷ But when he saw many Pharisees and Sadducees **coming to his baptism**, he said to them, “You offspring of vipers! **Who warned you to flee from the coming wrath?**”).
 - i. For one to come out to John and submit to his baptism that person had to understand their own condemnation and need for salvation.
 - ii. The Pharisee and Sadducees believed no such thing concerning themselves.
 - b. Therefore, while sinners were being delivered from God’s wrath in the waters of John’s baptism, others were condemned because they refused it (Lk. 7:29-30 – “When all the people and the tax collectors heard this, they **acknowledged God’s justice, having been baptized with the baptism of John**. ³⁰ But the **Pharisees and the lawyers rejected God’s purpose** [or will, same word – rp] **for themselves, not having been baptized by John**.”).
 - c. So, here again, we see God using water to separate those of faith who obeyed John’s words for their salvation, and those who did not and would face God’s wrath.
2. We see this in Christ’s Commission fulfilled by the apostles.
 - a. Jesus commissioned His apostles to offer deliverance to those in sin through the waters of baptism which the apostles preached at Pentecost (Acts 2:36-40 – “Therefore let all the house of Israel know for certain that God has made Him both Lord and Christ—this Jesus whom you crucified.” ³⁷ Now when they heard this, they were pierced to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, “Brethren, what shall we do?” ³⁸ Peter said to them, “**Repent**, and each one of you **be baptized** in the name of Jesus Christ **for the forgiveness of your sins**, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. ³⁹ For the promise is for you and your children, and for all who are far away, as many as the Lord our God will call to himself.” ⁴⁰ With many other words he testified and exhorted them saying, “**Save yourselves from this perverse generation!**” ⁴¹ So **those who accepted his message were baptized**, and that day about three thousand people were added.”).
 - b. So, for those guilty of sin and seeking **forgiveness and salvation**, even those guilty of crucifying Jesus the Christ, the answer offered by the Lord and his apostles is **faith, repentance, and baptism**.
 - c. The same apostle Peter preaching here appealed to baptism in his first epistle as God’s means of saving the lost and cleansing their conscience (1 Pet. 3:21 – “Corresponding to that, **baptism now saves you**—not the removal of dirt from the flesh, **but an appeal to God for a good conscience**—through the resurrection of Jesus Christ”).

B. God still uses water to cleanse and heal our spiritual ills.

1. We see this in the conversion of Saul, who sinned greatly against the Lord and His people as a hater and persecutor of the Way (1 Tim. 1:12-15 – “I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who has

strengthened me, because He considered me faithful, putting me into service, ¹³ even though I was formerly a blasphemer and a persecutor and a violent aggressor. Yet I was shown mercy because I acted ignorantly in unbelief; ¹⁴ and the grace of our Lord was more than abundant, with the faith and love which are found in Christ Jesus. ¹⁵ It is a trustworthy statement, deserving full acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, among whom I am foremost of all.”).

2. For, Saul was confronted by the Lord on the road to Damascus concerning his persecuting of God’s people and was told by Jesus to go to the city and wait for one to tell him **what he must do** (Acts 9:3-6).
 - a. When the Lord sent Ananias to Saul he concluded his instructions from the Lord by offering Saul **cleansing by water** (Acts 22:16 – “Now why do you delay? Get up and be **baptized**, and **wash away your sins**, calling on His name.”).
 - i. So as Paul said earlier in 1 Timothy 1, when he deserved condemnation he instead received the offer of cleansing through the waters of baptism.
 - ii. And at this point Saul had a choice to make. And Saul did not quarrel over “water,” but instead “got up and was baptized” (Acts 22:18).
 - b. And at that point Paul received God’s mercy and grace to cleanse him of his sin so that in his life he says in 1 Tim. 1:16, “Jesus Christ might demonstrate His perfect patience as an example for those who would believe in Him for eternal life.”
- C. Despite God’s long history of using water to **save, cleanse, and heal**, the religious world as a whole continues to claim and teach that the **waters of baptism do no such thing for us today**.
 1. It is argued that **baptism does not save** because we are **saved by faith**.
 - a. But what they forget is that God uses water to show that the **faith that saves is faith that obeys**. For, it was “By **faith** Noah being warned of God...**prepared an ark for the salvation of his household...**” (Heb. 11:17).
 - b. So, as has been true with God through the centuries, all need to take care that their view of water baptism does not find them on the side of unbelief and condemnation.
 - i. For, again, faith and obedience is the difference (Mark 16:16 – “He who has **believed** and **has been baptized** shall be **saved**; but he who **has disbelieved** shall be **condemned**.”).
 - ii. And the Holy Spirit has clearly revealed baptism to be an act of faith (Col. 2:12 – “having been **buried with Him in baptism, in which** you were also raised up with **Him through faith in the working of God**, who raised Him from the dead.”).
 - c. So, like in Noah’s day and at the Red Sea, God uses water to separate those of faith who will obey and be baptized and saved from those who disbelieve and will not.
 2. Despite the long biblical history of God’s use of water to cleanse, it is argued that the **waters of baptism cannot cleanse one of their sins**.
 - a. This is argued because baptism is *ceremonial* because *water has no properties to take away sins*. For only Jesus’s blood can take away sins.
 - i. But people forget is that:
 - 1) The priests’ washings were “ceremonial,” but were required for their life!
 - 2) Water does not have the properties to wash away leprosy either, but **God used it** and Naaman still had to have enough **faith to obey and wash in the Jordan to be cleansed**.
 - 3) And, Paul said baptism **brings one into Christ and his death** where the **blood** that brings life can be found (Rom. 6:3-4 – “Or do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus have been baptized into His death? ⁴ Therefore we have been buried with Him through baptism into death, so that as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life.”).

- ii. So, again, the deciding factor as to whether the waters of baptism can cleanse one of sin comes down to whether one has faith enough to obey!
- b. This is argued because we are **saved by grace, not by works like water baptism**.
 - i. People forget is that the blind man was **healed by God's grace**, but still had to **obey Jesus** by *going* and *washing* in the pool of Siloam before he "came back seeing!"
 - ii. And, if you want to be saved by Christ's grace, you are going to have to obey Him as well, which includes baptism (Heb. 5:8-9 – "Although he was a son, he learned obedience through what he suffered. ⁹ And being made perfect, he became the source of eternal salvation **to all who obey him**"; 2 Thess. 1:6-8).

CONCLUSION:

1. So, throughout time water has been used in His will for mankind and used as a test to separate those who will have faith and obey and are saved and made clean, or those who disbelieve and do not and are condemned and remain in their uncleanness.
2. With the history of God's use of water to save, cleanse, and heal, knowledge of the importance of water today in God's command to be baptized should not escape us.
3. You have to make that decision today, whether you will believe God's word about water and obey Him in baptism. So, will you B-R-C-Bp?