

GOD'S USE OF WATER

God is sovereign and can choose to use anything He desires to accomplish His purposes. We see this happening throughout the Bible story. The same is also true today as it relates to salvation. In particular, God has required people to be baptized in water to have the forgiveness of sins (Acts 2:37-41; 22:16; Romans 6:3-4). Although many claim water has no effect on a person's salvation, we should recognize that God has chosen to use water on many occasions in the Scriptures – and should not be surprised to see Him use it for His purposes today!

GENESIS 6:17-22

As wickedness prevailed throughout the earth, God regretted making mankind and determined to wipe all people out through the flood (vv. 5-7). Only Noah and his family were saved. In fact, the Scriptures show that the water of the great flood accomplished two purposes. First, it destroyed the wicked people. Second, it saved Noah and his family from the wickedness. 1 Peter 3:20 specifically says that eight people were saved through water. Before the water, they lived in a world full of sin. After the water, they lived in a world that had been purged of that sin. So, do you see that God used water in the case of Noah and the flood? Just as water was used to save Noah and his family, God says that baptism now saves you from sin today (1 Peter 3:21)!

EXODUS 14:21-31

After God led the Israelites out of Egypt, the Egyptian army pursued them and was about to overtake them at the Red Sea. The people were terrified and cried out for help (vv. 10-12). However, they were about to witness the salvation of God (vv. 13-18)! God caused the Red Sea to part like walls of water on each side and instructed the Israelites to go through the sea on dry ground. Then, after they had crossed and the Egyptians

attempted to cross, the water was released so that the Egyptian army drowned. The apostle Paul referred to this event as the Israelites being baptized into Moses (1 Corinthians 10:1-4, under the cloud and through the sea). This water separated them from slavery in Egypt. So, do you see that God used water in the case of Israel's exodus from Egypt? As this baptism of Moses stood between the Israelites and freedom, baptism now stands between the one who is enslaved to sin and the freedom from sin in Jesus (Romans 6:1-4, 17-18)!

EXODUS 30:17-21

As God had Moses set up all aspects of service and worship at the tabernacle, passages like this one demonstrate God wanted the priests who would serve Him to be washed from any filth before approaching Him (compare with Exodus 29:4; Leviticus 16:4). In this, God shows the seriousness of purity in His presence as a holy God! So, do you see that God used water in the case of the priests before they served God? As these Old Testament figures were copies and shadows of what would be established under Christ (Hebrews 8:1-6), the New Testament presents baptism *not* as the washing away of filth from the flesh, but as an appeal to God for a good conscience (1 Peter 3:21) and the washing away of sin (Acts 22:16; Hebrews 10:22)!

2 KINGS 5:10-14

Naaman was the commander of the Aramean (Syrian) army who had developed a skin disease (commonly translated as leprosy). Help was sought for him from Israel and Elisha (the prophet). Elisha instructed Naaman to wash in the Jordan River seven times, promising that his skin would be restored if he did. Although there was no special power in the Jordan River for curing skin diseases, this required him to humbly trust God would cleanse him by his faith-filled obedience. So, when he obeyed in faith, his skin became like a child's! So, do you see that God used water in the case of Naaman being cleansed? Just as water restored Naaman's skin to a child-like state, baptism is

involved in being spiritually reborn to be pure like a newborn child (John 3:3-7)!

JOHN 9:1-7

Jesus encountered this man who had been blind from birth and gave Him the opportunity to have sight. Although Jesus would often heal people instantly, this healing required the man to wash in the pool of Siloam. Like with Naaman, this man needed to trust Jesus enough to obey what He commanded to be washed with this water. If he did not believe, he would not go to the pool and wash. If he did believe, he would go. Of course, the passage demonstrates the man's faith and obedience and the result of his eyesight being restored! So, do you see that God used water in the case of this blind man being healed? Just as this man had his eyesight restored through washing, so baptism is involved today in being spiritually renewed (Titus 3:3-7)!

LUKE 3:3-6

Before Jesus began His earthly ministry, God used John to prepare the way for Jesus. John did this by proclaiming a message of repentance and practicing a baptism throughout the region of the Jordan River. During John's ministry, many people came to be baptized by him (Mark 1:4-5). Notice that God was requiring this baptism for people to have the forgiveness of their sins. So, do you see that God used water in preparing people for the Messiah's ministry? Although this baptism was critical to the people during this time, it would be replaced with baptism into Jesus's name (Acts 19:4-5), which would also be for the forgiveness of sins (Acts 2:38)!

CONCLUSION

God has often used water to carry out His purposes. These examples should help us not be surprised to see God continuing to use water in baptism for salvation today (Mark 16:15-16; Acts 2:37-41). Today, God requires people to have enough faith in Him to obey what He requires in baptism – just as God required faith in Him regarding His uses of water in these examples!

DISCIPLESHIP QUESTIONS

Which elements can God use to carry out His purposes?

How did God use water in the case of the flood – and how does it connect with baptism?

How did God use water in the case of Israel departing Egypt – and how does it connect with baptism?

How did God use water in the case of the priests – and how does it connect with baptism?

How did God use water in the case of Naaman – and how does it connect with baptism?

How did God use water in the case of the blind man – and how does it connect with baptism?

How did God use water in the case of preparing people for Jesus – and how does it connect with baptism?

What should you conclude about baptism from seeing these examples?

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