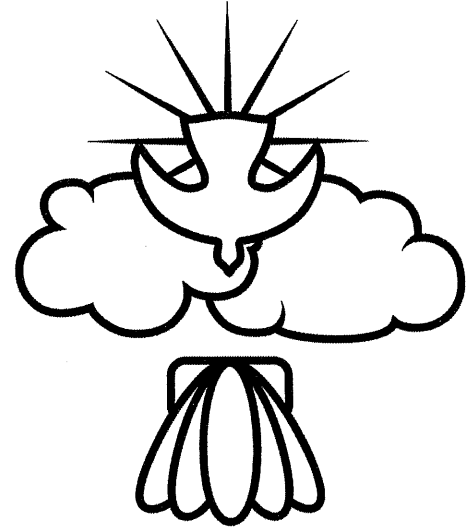


God Saves Us Through Baptism

- Some events in life/Xp: so imp, we obsrv/celbrt ev yr, annl basis. Here SJB, no such thing as Xmas where don't talk re birth/J, or GF (dth cross), or ES (forget mention rose fr dead). We don't just overlook fact: J went hvn prep place when get to Asc; or poured out HS on ch (Pent). These: huge events – things J did during life save us; nvr want miss them. Also don't limit them to once/yr; we talk re J's birth/dth/res all/time, thruout yr, prtctly ev Sun. These things: a big deal to us; fndtn/faith; that J did to save us!
- Same true: J's bap. Ev yr on Ep-1 (early/mid Jan), we obsrv/celbrt Bap/Lord. We remem signfcnc J's bap for him – how: begnng his pub min; J stepped into our wrld/wtr as our sub; J: strngthnd/blssd for mission as Mes at bap. But on this Ep-1, also remem signfcnc our bap – what means for us. And while true that we talk re bap all/time, thruout yr, prtctly ev Sun – today we give it splc attn. Today's service: all re bap – J's & ours. And when we turn to GW in Tit 3, we find msg: so simple/prfnd; that tchs us bynd shadow/doubt: God saves us thru bap.
- Exactly what Tit 3 says. 4x in this rdng we find hear save: **vs. 4-6**. God saves us thru bap. But fr what? Well, listen to vs that comes right before this rdng. Vs 3: **At one time we too: foolish, disobdnt, decv'd & enslvd by all kinds passions/pleasures. We lived in malice & envy, being hated & hating oa.** I bet you can look back on times/life at thngs done ashamed of, regret, bec you know: sinful, dishnrd God. I know I can! We all have lived vs. 3: done foolsh thngs; been disobdnt (prnts/law); allowd passions/plsr control/corrupt lives; harbored hatred; lived in that sin and borne that guilt.
- But Paul here: talking re more than just godless behvr; godless existence! Talking re time in our life before faith in J when unbel. To be unbel means to reject J & grace. And that's how we start our lives – in unbelf. **“Surely I: sinful at birth, fr time mthr concv'd me” (Ps 51:5)**. We need: help; be rescued; be saved, fr our unbelf.
- So, **vs. 4-5a**. God saved us, out of his **“kindnss/love.”** And all/sudden, that kindnss/love just **“apprd;”** just showed up. All/sudden, J appr'd, standing in Jrdn w/JB. Last Sun, saw baby J in Bthlhm w/Magi; now 30 yrs old being baptized. It's like God's kindnss/love just appr'd. But reason is apparent: **vs. 4-5a**. J came into wrld & was baptzd by Jn in Jrdn Rvr: in order to save us. That day in Israel, hvns opend; HS came dwn like dove; Fr's voice boomed, **“You, Son, love; w/you, well plsd” (Lk 3:22)**. At his bap, J officially began his pub min as Sav/wrld. J came to save us.
- And here's how. **Vs. 5c**. God saves us thru bap. This vs: talking re bap, our bap. Here word **“thru”**: very imp, bec shows how bap wrks. Bap: alwys God's doing/actvty. We may bring selves/chldr'n to font; Pr may pour wtr & spk wrds; but God does wrk. Works thru MofG (Gos in W&S); and bap is a sacrmnt or mean thru which God wrks. Remem: bap is God invntn. He's one who came up w/idea using simp wtr in simp cermny that invokes his name to convey his blessings. He's one who gives bap its pwr; & he proms bap creates/strngthns faith, even if can't see it w/eyes. So when God: **vs. 5c**, that's prom we trust/bel!
- And if we bel that prom is true, then also bel promsd blessings/bap are true, as well. Sevrl imp blessings are listed here. 1st is found in phrase **“rebirth & renewal.”** J talked once re rebirth w/Nicdms in Jn 3, remem? **Jn 3:3-5**. Evone: has bday; was born – we're born of sinful prnts into sinful wrld. But in bap we're given rebirth; born again – born of HS into his wrld, kngdm/faith. That's 2nd birth, rebirth. Ponder this for moment: evone who's born once dies twice; but evone born twice dies once. If person is born to sinful prnts but nvr reborn by HS, nvr comes to faith in JC as Sav, that person'll die at end/life, and die eternally in hell – evone born once dies twice. But ev born twice dies once. If smone is given rebirth in Holy Bap where HS works faith in hrt, then when that baptzd belvr draws last brth here on earth, they go immdtly to etrn'l life – only die once, bec bap is the **“washing of rebirth & renewal.”**



- A 2nd blessing bap gives is gift/forgvns. **“Having been justified by his grace.”** Being justfd, or having justfctn, means all your sins are forgvn. In God’s courtroom, you stand before Judge & know guilty. But God looks at you and says, “I’ve already sentenced J in your place, on cross, where he died for you. So you I declare innocent, forgiven, not guilty.” That’s justification; that’s what it means to be **“justfd by his grace.”** Grace = undsrvd love. Obvsly we don’t desrv, and cannot earn, God’s love/forgvns. That’s why rdng: **vs. 5ab.** In his mercy & grace, God forgives us in bap.
- And 3rd blessing/bap: inhertnc/hvn. **Vs. 7.** Paul says exctly same thng re bap in Gal 4: **“Since you are his child, God has made you also an heir” (4:7).** Heir: smone who receives inhrtnc from smone else who has died. Well, who died & left us an inhrtnc? J did! But best part: J didn’t stay dead; came back to life – which means: J can give us inhertnc/hvn that he died/rose to win for us, and we can enjoy that inhertnc w/J forever! Bap writes you into God’s will; makes you heir; gives inhertnc, so that we: **vs. 7b!**
- All of these blessings, God gives us in bap. But unftrntly many ppl, many Xian chs, misndrstd Bible’s tchng on bap. Sm chs tch: bap is smthng you do for God, an act of your love for God, instd of a gracious means by which God shows his love to you & blesses you. Sm chs tch: blessings/bap are only symblic; bap dsn’t actly do anything; just remndr of God’s grace. And sm chs tch: not evone needs be baptzd bec bap doesn’t really save anyone. But Titus 3 says very clearly: **vs. 5b-6.** God saves us thru bap! That’s what he wants us know & bel!
- And that’s what wants us tch. **Vs. 8.** So, as Luths, we stress bap as smthng excllnt/proftbl fr God for us. We treasure our bap; we strive to live as baptzd; and we help others become baptzd. We prch re bap in sermons; tch bap in school & classes; sing hymns re bap; and when our ch services begin w/wrds “In name...” we immdtly think of our bap. And just so happens that in next few wks we have sevr baps scheduled here at SJ. We do **“stress these things”** bec they are **“excllnt & proftbl for evone.”** And not just on Ep-1. Today as we see J baptzd by JB in Jrdn Rvr, we are reminded of our own bap, and of God’s incrdbl grace in bap – simp wtr in simp ceremony, invoking name of our loving God to receive the gifts he lovingly wants to give. Here’s the truth, today & forever: God saves us thru bap!

Titus 3:4-8

⁴But when the kindness and love of God our Savior appeared, ⁵he saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy. He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit, ⁶whom he poured out on us generously through Jesus Christ our Savior, ⁷so that, having been justified by his grace, we might become heirs having the hope of eternal life. ⁸This is a trustworthy saying. And I want you to stress these things, so that those who have trusted in God may be careful to devote themselves to doing what is good. These things are excellent and profitable for everyone.

John 3:3-5

³Jesus replied, “Very truly I tell you, no one can see the kingdom of God unless they are born again.”
⁴“How can someone be born when they are old?” Nicodemus asked. “Surely they cannot enter a second time into their mother’s womb to be born!” ⁵Jesus answered, “Very truly I tell you, no one can enter the kingdom of God unless they are born of water and the Spirit.”