

THE REALLY GOOD LIFE

(Life of Christ Series)

Studies in Luke's Gospel

Baby Inauguration

Sometime between the delivery room and the first birthday will probably be a 'baby dedication'. This formal inauguration of a little one into his or her family and church as a gift from God is an appropriate beginning to life's pilgrimage. Dedication of our children has biblical foundation with the presentation of Jesus as a baby at the temple (*Luke 2:21*). The Lord Jesus personalized the dedication and blessing of children as part of His public ministry (*Matthew 19:13-14, Mark 10:13-16, Luke 18:15-17*). Biblical dedications of babies and small children never involved water baptism of any sort, nor was it ever implied that salvation was imparted by dedication. The complete absence of any reference to child baptism or 'baptismal regeneration' in the rest of the New Testament proves that 'baby baptism' is a religious concoction, not a scriptural ordinance. The inaugural 'bawl' of baby dedication acknowledges and praises God for the baby entrusted to parents for them to raise for Him. Dedication is also a public commitment of the parents and church family to pray for, teach and model the life of Jesus before the child so he or she will gladly come to faith in Christ early in life. Dedication of the baby and the parents to the Lord is not the 'birth' of the baby (proving the fallacy of saving a baby's soul through a religious ceremony); obviously the birth precedes the dedication! Nor is dedication a guarantee of the baby's future or eternal destiny (which will depend upon the child's choices as he or she grows up in life). Like the inauguration of a president – inauguration neither elects him nor assures how his tenure will go – it is a celebration of intention that good things in the future will follow the victory of November.

Like a wedding ring of a man and woman God has brought together – the ring doesn't cause them to fall in love, nor does it guarantee a happy life – it is a symbol of the love they have and their intention to work hard at maintaining it. And like a new Christian who obeys in being baptized - baptism can't impart faith to him or her, and it cannot assure happy days and heaven ahead – as a spiritual inauguration it praises God publicly for the gift of eternal life and expresses earnest intention to separate from the world, the flesh, and the devil to follow the One Who saved them. Dedications were never intended to replace repentance and faith but they are important to publicly express those two essentials before God, other disciples of Jesus, the angels, and those who are not yet saved living on the wrong side of the cross.

When Jesus was baptized it didn't make Him the Son of God (that He always was, is and will be); it was His public inauguration and dedication of Who He was and what He came to do. Like all the other above metaphors, temptation, rejection, spiritual warfare, challenges and blessings follow the ceremony. But if you want to be usable in God's service, your public 'coming out' ceremony of dedication is a good, biblical beginning. As someone once said, "Well begun; half done!"

UNASHAMED

(Coming Out of the Closet About Christ)

The Baptism of Jesus

Luke 3:21-22

'Openness' about Your Love for HIM

"When all the people were baptized, it came to pass that Jesus also was baptized..." 3:21a
(compare *Matthew 3:13-17; Mark 1:9-11 and John 1:29-34*)

John's baptism: 1) for repentance, 2) for remission of sin, 3) to ready the way for redemption
(No wonder John objected to baptizing Jesus – Jesus didn't need any of the above!)

Jesus' baptism: 1) identification with sinners, 2) identification as Messiah, 3) identification as God

Believers' baptism: 1) proclamation of faith, 2) purpose to obey Christ, 3) placement in God's family
(Acts 2:38-40, 8:12, 8:38, 9:18, 10:48, 16:14-15, 16:31-33, 18:8, 19:1-5*)

*This passage shows that baptism should be repeated if done previously to one's conversion to Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord. Baptism for the wrong reasons as a child or an adult necessitates that one is to be baptized again following one's genuine repentance and faith in the Lord Jesus as personal Savior.

Proof Positive that Baptism Doesn't 'Save'

"I thank God that I baptized none of you except Crispus and Gaius...for Christ did not send me to baptize, but to preach the gospel...lest the cross of Christ should be made of no effect."

1 Corinthians 1:14-17

Although this passage is primarily about Paul's relief that he didn't baptize any of the professing believers in Corinth whose sinful lifestyles canceled out their profession of faith, it also reveals that baptism isn't salvation. If the ordinance of baptism saves a person, it would be insane to not want to do it to as many as possible! It would be very cruel to be thankful to God some weren't! But obviously, though many Corinthians had been baptized, it didn't change their lives, thus they're still unconverted. Too much emphasis on symbolic ordinances obscures the cross rather than enhance it. Another example that baptism does not save is Simon of Samaria – **Acts 8:12-23**.

'Openness' in Your Relationship with HIM

"...and while He prayed, the heaven was opened. And the Holy Spirit descended in bodily form like a dove upon Him, and a Voice came from heaven which said, "You are My beloved Son; in You I am well pleased."

3:21b-22

Being open about Jesus as Lord escalates your prayer-talks with God

Being open about Jesus as Lord empowers you with the Holy Spirit

Being open about Jesus as Lord enhances your hearing of His Word

Being open about Jesus as Lord elevates your assurance of His pleasure

Note: The baptism of Jesus manifests all three Persons of the God-head together in one place at the same time which proves: **1) that Persons of the Godhead are distinct** and unique to each other while remaining 'one'; **2) that 'modalism' is wrong** (teaching that God's three-ness is Him showing Himself in three different ways – sometimes Father, sometimes Son, sometimes as Spirit to man); and **3) that the Son of God embodies full deity** as Jesus Christ the Lord.

Note: Believer's baptism will not evoke the same visible and audible manifestations as Jesus' did, but the same spiritual assets do follow the obedient Christian: **1) an invigorated prayer life**, **2) a Spirit-filled empowerment for ministry**, **3) a deeper, clearer understanding of God's Word** and **4) a growing sense of assurance of salvation and God's pleasure with your life**.

Note: The Lord Jesus' humble, voluntary, submission to baptism preceded His personal victories and public ministries in the following chapter (victory over temptation and the devil, protection against all efforts to harm Him, authority over evil and spiritual warfare, power to minister blessing to others in need and success when using His awesome spiritual gifts of presenting the gospel).