Baptism in John 9

Zanesville, OH | December 1, 2019 | John Pollard | Sermon Notes

**Foundational Scripture:** Jn. 9:1-41

**Intro**:

* The story of the man born blind who comes in contact with Jesus after which he subsequently receives sight is a well-known story told in John 9. The chapter is a gold mine for sermons and thematic studies that demonstrate the power of God and the best and worst of humanity. But there’s a particular subject that is implicitly connected throughout this entire chapter that relates to the larger explicit themes of light and darkness, sight and blindness, salvation and condemnation. And that is Baptism. This morning, I would like to trace the idea of baptism throughout this chapter and make some observations as to how it relates to themes of John 9 and the miracle itself that points us to the overarching theme of the bible.

1. **How is baptism connected to John 9?**
   1. Baptism connected to (Light🡪Sight🡪Life) and (Darkness🡪Blindness🡪Death)
      1. John 9 begins with Jesus meeting a man who was born blind. The disciples immediately equate his state with sin and evil to which Jesus responds by stating He is the Light of the World and this man’s situation serves as an opportunity to reveal the power of God.
      2. Jesus’ declaration that He is the Light of the World is a purposeful play on the man’s blindness but also the major theme of the chapter itself and the book as a whole. Light is intimately connected with eternal life (Jn. 1:4-5, 9) and as a result John is preparing us for something positive and spiritual.
      3. After Jesus instructs the man to wash his eyes of the clay, he is able to see for the first time in his life. One could make the argument that although he has been alive for a considerable number of years, his receiving sight added a whole new dimension to his life. He was a changed man, a new man.
      4. But the truth is, as ecstatic and thankful as the blind man would have been to able to physically see everything for the first time, that wasn’t the most important thing and the greatest thing that would happen to him in this story.
      5. The miracle that Jesus performed on him didn’t just open his physical eyes, it also opened the spiritual eyes of his heart. Notice the spiritual progression of the man in this story:
         1. He first states that the man Jesus healed him (Jn. 9:11)
         2. He then calls refers to him as a prophet (Jn. 9:17)
         3. He says that Jesus is clearly from God (Jn. 9:33)
         4. Finally, he believes and worships Jesus as the Son of God (Jn. 9:35-38)
      6. This man although changed, although transformed by the ability to see everything for the first time, was not satisfied with just being able to physically see. His greatest desire was to know Jesus and to believe in Him (Jn. 9:35-38).
      7. So Jesus as the Light of the World did not just bring physical light to this man’s retinas but He gave Him salvation and spiritual safety. He uses his physical eyesight (light) to find Jesus the true light who is able to give Him eternal life.
      8. How is baptism connected to this? 1 Jn. 1:7 tells us that we must walk in the light to have fellowship with God. Fellowship is in intimate relationship shared between two or more individuals with fundamental similarities.
      9. In order to get into this relationship with God, to walk in the light as Jesus is in the light, we need to be baptized. The key word here is “into.” The word “into” suggests a relationship or connection between two things and this is exactly what baptism does (Rom. 6:3; Gal. 3:27).
      10. When we are baptized into Christ, we come in contact with His light, His grace and His forgiveness that will lead us to eternal life. Baptism opens the eyes of our hearts to a spiritual relationship with Christ that will lead us to Heaven (cf. Jn. 3:3).
      11. But if one is not baptized and they refuse to be baptized they are like the Pharisees in this story. They deny Jesus as God (Jn. 9:16) spending their time on pointless arguments that are of no value to themselves or anyone else (Jn. 9:17-34).
      12. They are extremely prideful and believe they know everything about everything (Jn. 9:24, 28). But although they have been able to physically see their entire lives, they are spiritually blind and lackluster and for that reason they will remain in darkness; in their sin that leads to death (Jn. 9:40-41).
      13. It isn’t the act of baptism itself that saves us but it is what is behind baptism: **The power of God.** And when we refuse baptism we are refusing God’s power that can give us light, sight and life. Rejecting His power through baptism will leave us in darkness, sin and eventually death.
      14. Darkness is not a thing in and of itself but it is a way of describing the absence of light. Rejecting the power of God in baptism leaves us absent of light, sight and eternal life. It leaves us stranded on an island alone, absent of Jesus.
   2. Baptism connected to Cleansing and Water
      1. Another way baptism is connected in John 9 is through the themes of water and cleansing. The blind man is told to go wash (in water). John tells us that after he does this, he comes back seeing (Jn. 9:6-7, 11, 15).
      2. Although the man wasn’t actually baptized, the concept is implicit given the wording John uses and the previous connections already stated (light, sight and life). Numerous passages speak of baptism as a washing because of what it does: **it removes our sins** (Acts 22:16; 1 Cor. 6:11; Tit. 3:5).
      3. But washing cannot be mentioned without what it is actually doing: **cleansing.** Cleansing suggests the existence of dirt, scum, germs, bacteria and all matter that is disgusting. And that’s exactly what sin is. It is disgusting. Baptism cleanses us of this (Eph. 5:26; 1 Pet. 1:22; 2 Pet. 1:9).
      4. But washing and cleansing also reminds us of leprosy. Leprosy is considered to be such a disgusting disease that slowly eats away at the body. Being healed of this disease was always equated to cleansing and washing (2 Kings 5:1-14; Mk. 1:40-42; Lk. 17:11-19).
      5. The reason the healing of leprosy was described this way is because of what it pointed to. Leprosy is a microcosm of what sin is. If someone had leprosy, it excommunicated them from humanity and society as they lived in dark caves, absent of light.
      6. Sin, the spiritual counterpart of leprosy, excommunicates us from God and His kingdom. As long as we have it, we live in darkness absent of light and absent of Jesus. But baptism can wash us and make us clean.
      7. We can be restored to life. We can be restored to light. We don’t have to let sin eat away at us. We can be restored to God by coming in contact with the blood of the Lamb that cleanses us from our sin (1 Jn. 1:7).
   3. Baptism connected to New Creation
      1. The final connection between baptism and John 9 is the idea of a new creation. For all intents and purposes, the blind man is considered to be changed and transformed as he receives sight for the first time.
      2. However, it is what happens at the end of the chapter that really changes him, transforms him and renews him. He meets Jesus and falls down to worship Him recognizing that He is God and the one who has done great wonders for him.
      3. Notice at the beginning of the chapter what Jesus does as he gives the blind man sight. Jesus makes clay of His spittle and applies it to his eyes. At first glance this might come across as a meaningless detail but it’s far more than that.
      4. The idea of this clay connects what happens to this man to the attribute of God as Creator. Isaiah describes our creation as humans as God (the potter) forming us from clay. We are the work of His hands (Isa. 64:8).
      5. And so by the end of this chapter the clay, in conjunction with the washing and the new sight leads this man to become a new creature in God as he comes to the light to gain spiritual sight that leads to everlasting life.
      6. Baptism does exactly that for us. When we are baptized, we are new creatures (clay) when we come up out of the water (Rom. 6:4; 2 Cor. 5:17; Eph. 4:22-24). As transformed individuals we gain spiritual sight that will lead us to the light which guides us to everlasting life.
      7. We no longer belong to the world, but we belong to Christ. And in so doing we must do as the blind man did. We must humble ourselves, seek out Jesus at all costs and when we find Him we need to honor and worship Him by submitting to Him in baptism and living lives reflective of being new people, changed people.

**Conclusion:** Jesus as the Creator is stressed throughout John’s gospel (Jn. 1:1-3) and as the Creator He is considerably invested in the well being of those He created. As the Creator, He is capable of re-creating us in His holy image. Our current state is never our final one. That is true for the unbeliever and the believer. The unbeliever can be re-created to become a new creation that lives for God. The believer already re-created waits for the day when they will be transformed once more and see Him as He is, face to face. As long as there is life, there is hope. As long as we are willing, Jesus will save. This is what John 9 shows. Jesus wants to re-create us in His image and He wants us to do the works of God. And that is the way it was intended to be from the beginning. God and Man together in harmony in a state where everything is “very good.” Baptism and living faithfully will accomplish this.