

Baptism Does Not Save-Does Not Help Save

by John R. Rice

John R. Rice emphasizes that baptism is not essential for salvation, which is solely based on faith in Christ.

Scripture: Luke 23:39, John 3:36, John 5:24, John 6:47, Acts 16:31, Romans 3:28, Galatians 3:27, Ephesians 2:8, Titus 3:5, 1 Peter 3:21

Topics: "Faith Alone", "Baptism Symbolism"

Description

John R. Rice preaches about the importance of salvation through faith in Christ alone, emphasizing that baptism is not a requirement for salvation but a symbolic act of obedience. He clarifies that salvation is a gift of God's mercy, not earned through works or rituals like baptism. Rice highlights various Bible verses that affirm salvation by faith, such as John 3:36, John 5:24, and John 6:47, where Jesus promises everlasting life to those who believe in Him. He also addresses the misconception that baptism is necessary for salvation by explaining that it is a public declaration of one's faith and should follow a genuine heart transformation through faith in Christ.

Transcript

A favorite device of the Devil is to have men look to their works for their salvation instead of looking to Christ. He leads some to trust in their morality, some to depend upon lodge membership, some to depend upon confessions to priests; some he leads to trust in baptism. That is a fatal mistake. The unanimous voice of all the Scriptures is that people are saved by simple faith in Christ, without any act of righteousness, and baptism is never mentioned as a part of the plan of salvation. Baptism is an act of righteousness, for Jesus said in Matthew 3:15, "Thus it becometh us to fulfill all righteousness." Titus 3:5 says that such acts of righteousness do not save us:

"Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost."

Baptism is certainly a good work, but Ephesians 2:8,9 likewise says plainly that salvation is altogether a matter of God's mercy and not of our works :

"For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: NOT OF WORKS, lest any man should boast."

Salvation is a gift of God which is not deserved, is not bought, and cannot be paid for. No church nor preacher nor the individual saved has any right to claim credit when a soul is saved.

In fact, we are told again and again in the Bible that the man who trusts in Christ has everlasting life immediately. John 3:36 says:

"He that believeth on the Son HATH everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him."

"Hath" means has, present tense, in modern English. Likewise, John 5:24 says:

"Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, HATH everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation: but IS PASSED from death unto life."

The same teaching is given in John 6:47:

"Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me HATH everlasting life."

In the Bible, we find it clear that people believed first and then were baptized. According to these statements from God's Word, they were already saved before they were baptized and any other man who trusts in Christ is saved that second, before he could possibly get to the baptismal waters. It does not take baptism to save one.

WHAT DOES "BAPTIZED FOR REMISSION OF SINS" MEAN?

In Acts 2:38, the term "for the remission of sins" is used as follows :

"Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost."

Some people think that this passage contradicts the dozens of other plain statements in the Bible that a man is saved by faith and saved immediately when he believes. But when you use the word for in this passage just as it is used so many times in every-day conversation, you will see what Peter said. A man is arrested for stealing; one is grateful for a favor; one is blamed for carelessness; one is commended for bravery. The word for here does not mean in order to or to secure remission of sins, and it is not rendered that way in any translation of the Bible we know of anywhere. The Greek word eis here translated for is sometimes translated in the Bible against, among, at, unto, upon, etc. It might properly be translated here "baptized upon the remission of your sins" or "baptized referring to, or pointing toward the remission of your sins," or "baptized in the remission of your sins." When one repents, he receives the remission of his sins. Then the obedient heart, following Christ in baptism, is promised the gift of the Holy Ghost, an entirely separate matter from salvation. What Peter said was that people ought to repent and then, after their sins are forgiven, they should be baptized as evidence of that. That is exactly what people ought to be baptized for, that is, to show the remission of their sins. That Scripture, then, does not mean that people ought to be baptized in order to be saved.

"HE THAT BELIEVETH AND IS BAPTIZED"

In Mark 16:16, believing and baptized are used together:

"He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned."

Christians are supposed to be baptized as soon as possible after they are saved. In Bible times they were usually baptized the same day, oftentimes the same hour of their conversion, even if it were midnight as in the case of the Philippian jailer in Acts 16:33. In fact, baptism is a public profession of faith. One can see baptism; one cannot see faith in the heart. It is natural to think of baptism following salvation, and Jesus said that those who believed and were baptized should be saved. He did not mean to contradict the rest of the Bible though, as you will see from the following words in the same verse, for He added. "But he that believeth not shall be damned." That makes it clear that the matter which settles it is believing just the same as is taught in John 3:18:

"He that believeth on him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God."

The above verse, John 3:18, settles it that the man who believes in Christ is not condemned, whether or not he has been baptized. It also settles that the reason a man is condemned is "because he hath not believed." Salvation is settled by belief in Christ, and only by that.

BELIEVING DOES NOT INCLUDE BAPTISM

There are so many Scriptures which plainly state again and again that the man who believes in Christ is saved, that those who teach baptism is essential to salvation cannot deny that. They try to get around these many Scriptures, however, by saying that faith includes baptism, that is, if one believes in Christ, he will be baptized, and that faith is not complete until one is baptized. However, in Mark 16:16 Jesus said, "He that believeth and is baptized," showing that believing and being baptized are two different things. If believing includes baptism, then Jesus would not have added the word about baptism. If repenting includes baptism, Peter would not have said in Acts 2:38. "Repent and be baptized." No, they are not the same and are nowhere spoken of as the same in the Bible, nor is it ever stated in the Bible that believing includes baptism, nor that if one trusts Christ, he will be baptized. "He that believeth on the Son bath everlasting life" before he is baptized. Baptism does not save.

"BORN OF WATER" DOES NOT MEAN BAPTISM

"Born of water and of the Spirit" in John 3:5 is often quoted as if it referred to baptism. It most certainly does NOT, however. That passage says nothing about baptism, and in the same conversation with Nicodemus, Jesus repeatedly told just what it took to get this new birth. Read verses 14 to 18 and you will see that it is simply believing in Christ. "Born of water and of the Spirit" in John 3:5, is the same as "the washing of regeneration and the renewing of the Holy Ghost" in Titus 3:5. That verse plainly says that this is "not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us," by this birth of water and the Spirit, or cleansing of regeneration and being made alive by the Holy Spirit.

Ephesians 5:26 tells us how Christ gave Himself for the church "that he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word." But this washing takes place inside. James 1:18 tells us that "of his own will begat he us with the word ... ," and I Peter 1:23 says that we are "born again ... by the word of God." These Scriptures seem to mean that when one is saved, he is inwardly washed, cleansed, led to repentance and faith, by the Word of God, and made alive, spiritually, by the Holy Spirit. That, I believe, is the plain meaning of John 3:5, "born of water and the Spirit."

All of that happens on the inside of every sinner who is born of God. It is not on the outside, and is not baptism.

Notice the words again in John 3:5, "born of water and of the Spirit." The second "of" is in italics, which shows that it was not in the original Greek. Jesus said one must be "born of water and the Spirit," one birth. Jesus was only talking about one new birth, which happens on the inside. He did not say one needed to be born of the Spirit inside and of baptism outside, and did not mean so. John 3:5 does not refer to baptism.

"BAPTISM DOTHS ALSO NOW SAVE US"

I Peter 3:21 is used as an argument that baptism saves people. Speaking of the ark "wherein few, that is, eight souls were saved by water," that passage continues:

"The like figure whereunto even baptism doth also now save us (not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God,) by the resurrection of Jesus Christ."

All difficulty about this passage disappears when you take the first plain statement in the verse that this is a "figure." The ark was a figure and picture of salvation, and the ark was certainly a type of Christ. Baptism is a "like figure" and Roman 6:5 states that it is a "likeness" of the death, and a "likeness" of the resurrection of Christ. Peter then continues that baptism does not put away the filth of the flesh, and says that it is "the answer of a good conscience toward God." Baptism, then, is only a picture, or figure, of salvation, and the man who is baptized should already have a "good conscience." In Hebrews 9:14 we are told how the conscience is to be purged by the blood of Christ. Then, after that conscience is purged "from dead works to serve the living God" and one has a "good conscience," he has a right to be baptized.

One who is baptized professes to have a good conscience toward God, with his sins forgiven. If that is not true, he has no right to be baptized and baptism is a lie and an empty pretense. Baptism is only for saved people, the answer of a conscience cleansed and forgiven.

"BAPTIZED INTO CHRIST"

Some people have been troubled by the phrase "baptized into Christ" in Galatians 3:27, which reads:

"For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ."

However, that is very clear if you read the verse before it and the rest of the context. Verse 26 says plainly, "For ye are all the children of God BY FAITH in Christ Jesus." The whole book of Galatians is written to prove that people are saved not by works, but by faith.

"Baptized into Christ" should read "baptized unto Christ" and is often so translated. The same Greek word, eis, translated in our King James Version into in this particular verse, is translated in verses 23 and 24 of the same chapter, unto. It is translated unto in scores of cases, to in many others, and for in many cases.

Compare "baptized into Christ" in Galatians 3:27 and "baptized into Jesus Christ" in Romans 6:3 with a phrase just like them in I Corinthians 10:2 - "baptized unto Moses." The word unto is a translation of the same Greek word eis as into in the other passages. If the covering of Israel in the cloud and Red Sea did not put Israel into Moses, then baptism does not, of course, put one into Christ. Rather baptism points "unto" Christ, of course.

What the Lord says here is that as many as have been baptized for Christ, or pointing toward Christ, or picturing Christ, have publicly claimed Him before the world as their Saviour. I Peter 3:21 plainly states

that baptism is a figure or picture. Romans 6:5 says twice that baptism is a "likeness" of the death and resurrection of Christ and also pictures the new life which the Christians plan to live. Colossians 2:12 tells us the same thing. A person then should be baptized unto Christ, that is, for Christ and to picture the change of heart which he already has by faith in Christ. This Scripture simply bears out the many, many plain statements of the Scripture that one is saved by faith, and puts on in figure and likeness, before the world, what already God has put in the heart. God puts the light in us, we should let it shine. God works in us our salvation, and we are commanded to work it out. (Phil. 2:12,13).

"ARISE AND BE BAPTIZED AND WASH AWAY THY SINS"

Our friends who claim that baptism saves, or that one cannot be saved without baptism, sometimes quote Acts 22:16 as evidence that baptism saves :

"And now why tarriest thou? arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord."

Compare this with the Lord's account of what happened, as given in Acts 9:17. Ananias said:

"Brother Saul, the Lord, even Jesus, that appeared unto thee in the way as thou camest, hath sent me, that thou mightest receive thy sight, and be filled with the Holy Ghost."

Remember that baptism is a figure, or picture, according to I Peter 3:21 and Romans 6:5. When Paul quoted, "Wash away thy sins," he certainly meant to use figurative language. Baptism is a figure as the Lord has told us. Compare this language with Matthew 26:26,28 where Jesus said, "This is my body" ... and "This is my blood." Jesus certainly meant, "This represents my body and my blood." "Be baptized, and wash away thy sins," certainly means, be baptized to picture the washing away of your sins. That is what baptism always does picture. Paul did not mean in Acts 22:16 to teach a different plan of salvation from that one he gave the jailer in Acts 16:31, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." Nor did he mean Acts 22:16 to contradict Acts 13:39 where he told the people at Antioch, "And by him all that BELIEVE are justified from all things." (Already saved without baptism!)

The man who depends on baptism to save him will go down in the water a dry sinner and will come up a wet sinner, but he need expect no change of heart in that water. Baptism is to picture a change of heart which happens when one trusts in Christ.

OLD TESTAMENT SAINTS SAVED BY FAITH, WITHOUT BAPTISM

We have the record of many people in the Bible who were saved without baptism. I remind you that God has never had but one plan of salvation. In the Old Testament it was "not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins" (Hebrews 10:4). In fact, the eleventh chapter of Hebrews tells us of case after case of people in the Old Testament times who were saved by faith. Acts 10:43 makes clear that the only plan of salvation taught in the Old Testament was by faith in Christ, just as it was preached in the New Testament. There, Peter said:

"To him give all the prophets witness, that through his name whosoever believeth in him shall receive remission of sins."

Remember, there never was any plan of salvation but by faith. Every Old Testament sacrifice and ceremony was a picture and shadow and type of the Lord Jesus Christ, "the Lamb of God which taketh

away the sin of the world!"

Now, all of these Old Testament saints were saved without baptism, for there is not a word in the Old Testament about baptism and no record of a single person's ever being baptized before John the Baptist began it. Baptism, then, is not a part of God's plan of salvation.

PEOPLE SAVED WITHOUT BAPTISM IN NEW TESTAMENT

Since the same plan of salvation was preached in the Old Testament and in the New Testament, and people were saved in the Old Testament without baptism, you would expect them to be saved in the New Testament without baptism, and they were. In Luke 7:37-50 is the story of a woman, a notorious sinner. Verses 47 to 50 in that seventh chapter of Luke tell us plainly that her sins were forgiven her and that her faith had saved her. Read carefully these Scriptures :

Wherefore I say unto thee, Her sins, which are many, ARE FORGIVEN; for she loved much: but to whom little is forgiven, the same loveth little.

"And he said unto her, THY SINS ARE FORGIVEN"

"And he said to the woman, THY FAITH HATH SAVED THEE; go in peace."

Jesus plainly stated that the woman was already forgiven and was already saved by faith. She knelt at the feet of Jesus, trusted Him, and went away a saved woman. She was saved without baptism.

In Luke 18:35-43 we are told about the healing and conversion of a blind man. Verse 42 tells plainly, in the words of Jesus Himself, just how he was saved :

"And Jesus said unto him, Receive thy sight: THY FAITH HATH SAVED THEE."

Notice that salvation was received right there before he was baptized.

That is the same plan of salvation given throughout the book of John; in John 1:12, John 3:14-18, John 3:36, John 5:24, John 6:37, and many other places. It is the same plan taught by Peter after Pentecost (Acts 10:43). It was the same plan taught by Paul, the apostle to the Gentiles, (Acts 13:38,39; Acts 16:30,31; Ephesians 2:8,9; Romans 3:28 and Romans 4:5-8). People were saved in the Old Testament by faith without baptism, were saved during the life of Jesus by faith without baptism, and were saved after Pentecost by faith without baptism.

That publican, about whom the Saviour has told us in Luke 18:13,14 was saved without baptism. Standing there in the temple, he prayed, saying. "God be merciful to me a sinner." Jesus tells us about him then, that, "I tell you, this man went down to his house justified"! He was saved, then, without baptism.

THIEF ON THE CROSS SAVED WITHOUT BAPTISM

The most remarkable case of this kind is the thief converted on the cross as told in Luke 23:39-43. When that poor man turned to the Lord Jesus and asked to be in His kingdom, the Lord Jesus replied, "Verily I say unto thee, to day shalt thou be with me in paradise"! He died that day on the cross as we are told in the Scriptures and so could not have been baptized. But that day, according to the express statement of the Saviour, he went with Jesus to paradise. And some happy day, all who trust in Christ will see him there.

No, baptism is not essential to salvation.

TRUST JESUS FOR SALVATION

God has just one plan of salvation. It is not a process. It is not a series of steps. People are saved by faith in Christ, that way and no other way. Everything else that God asks of a sinner in order to be saved: repentance, prayer, coming to Christ, etc., is summed up and settled when one depends upon Christ for the forgiveness of his sins. One could not turn his mind or heart toward God (repentance), without faith in Christ. You cannot come to Christ without believing on Him. "How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard ?," (Rom. 10:14). Confession by the mouth simply proves faith in the heart which has already secured salvation. God has no other plan of salvation except that promised in John 3:16,18,36; John 5:24; John 6:47; Acts 16:30-31. "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved." Baptism follows, should follow immediately, but is not a part of God's plan of salvation. When you are baptized, be sure that fact is made clear to those who look on. If you have this salvation, this change of heart by faith in Jesus Christ, then I beg you, follow Jesus in baptism as soon as possible

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