

# Baptism: Make Public Your Allegiance to Christ

by John R. Rice

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*Baptism is an important step in publicly claiming Christ, following His example, and living for Him.*

**Scripture:** Matthew 10:32, Matthew 28:18, Acts 2:41, Romans 6:3, 1 Peter 2:21

**Topics:** "Baptism By Immersion", "Public Profession"

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## Description

John R. Rice emphasizes the importance of baptism for new Christians, highlighting that baptism is a public profession of faith in Christ and a way to follow Jesus' example. He explains that baptism is not necessary for salvation but is a commandment for believers to publicly declare their commitment to Christ. Rice stresses that baptism should be by immersion, symbolizing the burial of the old self and rising to a new life in Christ, as shown in Romans 6. He shares personal stories and examples to illustrate the joy and significance of being baptized as a believer.

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## Transcript

I am talking on how to be a good Christian, with the understanding that everybody starts as a baby Christian.

The Scripture says that "as newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby." And Scripture commands us to grow in the knowledge of the Lord Jesus.

When people are saved, they are not necessarily graduates of college or of seminary. They don't know much Bible. And when a baby is born, he is just a baby but precious, and is a member of the family. So when you trusted Jesus, you are saved but certain things ought to follow to make you a happy Christian.

I read in the first message Acts, chapter 2, that after Pentecost, "Then they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls." Everybody who had gotten saved that day got baptized. Those who gladly received His Word were baptized. People ought to be baptized, because the Lord commanded it. In Matthew 28:18-20 Jesus said, "All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore, and teach all nations (or make disciples), baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world."

## Christians Are Commanded to Be Baptized

Now when people went out to preach they were to do what? Make disciples, get people saved. Then what? They were to baptize them. They were to get them marked as Christians. The new Christians were to go on record publicly, "I am a child of God. I am joining in with God's people. I will get baptized." That has a sweet meaning. Then they were taught to go back and get other people saved, and get other people baptized, and get other people to winning souls also. It is part of the Great Commission that everybody who is saved ought to be baptized. While John the Baptist was baptizing in Aenon, near to Salim, Jesus came and asked John to baptize Him. John said, "I'm not fit to baptize Thee, Lord Jesus, you baptize me."

Jesus said, "Thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness. Then he suffered him." Jesus said it becomes us. Jesus was to be baptized because it pictured that He was going to die, would be buried in Joseph's tomb, and would come out of the grave resurrected. Baptism pictured that. But it becomes us also because it pictures that Jesus died so we could be raised from the dead also. That means also that I'm going to bury this old sinner I used to be, count him dead, and count myself raised from the dead to live a new life for Jesus. So Jesus said it "becometh us" - Jesus and us - to be baptized. Yes, Christians ought to be baptized.

## Baptism Not Necessary for Salvation

Is baptism a part of the plan of salvation? No. That is a part of claiming Jesus, confessing Him openly. Jesus said in Matthew 10:32, "Whosoever therefore shall confess me before men, him will I confess also before my Father which is in heaven," by which He meant, "You claim Me and I will claim you." One of the ways we have of publicly claiming Christ is to be baptized.

That isn't all. When the meanest old sinner - any infidel, anybody - sees a young convert baptized, he knows that person says he is a Christian, that person says he is going to Heaven, that person says he is going to live for Jesus. So baptism is a public profession of faith in Christ. Some may argue that it takes that to be saved. But the Bible says so plainly, "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life." One who believes in Christ already has everlasting life.

Oh, but somebody says the Great Commission, as given in Mark, says, "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved," Yes, the Scripture has already said that one who believes is saved and then he is to get baptized right away, the same day, if he can. The Lord is not changing here what He said elsewhere; He is only reminding you of the importance of baptism. One who is saved ought to be baptized, ought to claim the Lord openly, publicly. I'm not talking about some doctrine of my church, about some way one denomination decides to do it. I am talking about what the Bible says. People who are saved ought to be baptized. Jesus was baptized. Others ought to be baptized, too. because we are to follow His steps. We are to do like Jesus. "Thus it becometh us to fulfill all righteousness." So every Christian ought to be baptized.

## Baptism Is Burial in Water

Now, how should we be baptized? Turn to Romans, chapter 6, "Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection."

What is baptism? It is a burial. In baptism we are "buried with him," that is, Jesus is going to die on the cross and be buried in Joseph's tomb and come out alive. Baptism means I believe that. But it also means that my body will rise from the grave and I will see my loved ones again in the resurrection. It means also that I count this old sinner I was dead, and I am raised up now to live a new life in Christ. So baptism ought to be a burial.

The Bible says about John the Baptist, "And John also was baptizing in Aenon near to Salim, because there was much water there." Much water? Yes, if you are going to have a burial in water, you need enough for a burial. And the Scripture says in the 8th chapter of Acts that Philip was told, "Go down on the road from Jerusalem to Gaza. There is a man I want you to talk to." So Philip went down there and found an Ethiopian eunuch in a big chariot, the treasurer of Candace, queen of Ethiopia, reading the Bible. He has a manuscript of Isaiah. He is reading from Isaiah 53 that on Him all our sins were laid and with His stripes we are healed, etc.

Philip ran near and said, "Do you understand what you are reading?"

The eunuch said, "No, how can I unless somebody shows me, somebody guides me." He said, "Is Isaiah talking about himself?"

Oh, Philip took the same Scripture and preached unto him Jesus. And he must have told him about baptism, too. For the eunuch said, "Stop the chariot! Wait a minute."

"Why?"

"Here is some water; what about me being baptized?"

Philip said, "Well, if you believe with all your heart, you may."

So he took him and baptized him.

Now the Scripture says, "They went down both into the water, both Philip and the eunuch; and he baptized him." Now you could go down into the water to sprinkle a little water on the head but there is no reason to get your clothes wet unless it means a burial. It does mean a burial. So baptism should be by immersion.

You know, it is sad that the world went wrong on baptism. The reason why was that people began thinking you have to get baptized to be saved. The Roman church said, "What about all these babies? We don't want them to go to Hell. Well, we will change baptism and put a little water on the head and count that buried." So they did.

All the old Catholic churches up until the thirteenth century had big baptismal pools for immersion. One was in the old church at Galilee in Nazareth. We saw one in the Church of St. John at Ephesus. They went wrong on the doctrine, then went wrong on the way to baptize.

So new converts are buried with Him in baptism. You may say that is not convenient. Oh, yes, it is. If it means as much to you as it ought to, you should be glad to take a public stand publicly burying the old sinner you used to be; publicly thanking God that Jesus arose from the dead and that He is your Saviour and He will raise your mortal body.

So everybody ought to be baptized. And baptism should be by immersion.

Now, what is the meaning? First, it is good to commit yourself. It is good for everybody to know when a person has been saved! There is wonderful, refreshing joy in following Christ in baptism.

### Baptism Is a Happy Profession of Faith

At twelve years of age I was baptized out in West Texas. I had been saved two or three years but I had not been baptized. But when I was baptized on a cold November day, down at the railroad tank or pond, a big artificial lake, I remember I waded out into the water. The preacher came out and one by one we were baptized. Then in dripping clothes we stood at the edge of that water and people sang,

O happy day that fixed my choice

On Thee, my saviour and my God!

Well may this glowing heart rejoice,

And tell its raptures all abroad.

Happy day, happy day,

When Jesus washed my sins away!

He taught me how to watch and pray,

And live rejoicing ev'ry day;

Happy day, happy day,

When Jesus washed my sins away!

Now that wasn't the day I got saved, but that was the day I got happiness about it. My heart was so happy and glad! It is wonderful to be baptized and to know you have done what Jesus said do, telling the world you belong to Jesus, that you believe in Him; He has risen from the dead and He is your Saviour. Baptism is a happy thing.

In Sherman, Texas, we had an open-air revival campaign on the courthouse lawn. We organized a church, put up a tent for dressing, and built a baptistery. The firemen filled the baptistery with water. Soon we baptized twenty-eight people. When a seventy-two-year-old man was baptized, he came up out of the water, lifted up his hand and said, "Glory to God!" He put the other arm around my neck and kissed me on the cheek, then he went sobbing down to the tent to dress.

That night it had a wonderful effect. There was an old drunkard there, J. D. Welch. He had lived at Houston and had drunk and drunk and drunk. He turned to his wife that night and said, "If I had my clothes, I would go get baptized right now!

His wife said, "Well, if you will get the rest of it fixed in your heart, we will get your clothes here tomorrow night." He said, "I've got it fixed." So the next night he came and made a public profession and was baptized. He lived only six months, but he went back to the bars in Houston, Texas, and went from one to another telling what God had done for a poor old drunkard like himself. Baptism is a good testimony.

In Decatur Texas, we had ten weeks of revival and organized a new church with hundreds of converts. We organized with more than three hundred members, bought a piece of ground, built a tabernacle and called a full-time pastor before I left town.

One night as I was baptizing converts one dear woman came down into the baptistery in the new tabernacle we had built whispering to herself. She was trying her best to be nice. She was saying, "Oh, praise the Lord! Oh, praise the Lord!" I said, "Lady, if you want to, just say it out loud." She said, "Praise the Lord! I have been wanting to do this for nineteen years!" She was baptized. Back in the dressing room I could hear her saying, "Oh, praise the Lord!"

You know, it is a happy thing to do what Jesus said about baptism. People ought to be baptized. Jesus was our example in baptism.

It is a happy thing to follow Christ in baptism. That is a good way of letting everybody know you plan to live for God. That is making a break with the past. That is putting yourself on record. So when one is saved, he ought to be baptized. How often I have found people through the years who had not been baptized or maybe had a little water on their heads and they were never satisfied. They meant well. Mother thought that was the way to do it, so they thought it was all right. Or a godly preacher they knew thought pedobaptism was all right. He may have, but you had better do it the Lord's way, which is the happy way.

#### The Episcopal Church Taught Immersion

I love to read the Journal of John Wesley who founded the Methodist church. He came first to America as a missionary to the Indians. He was in Georgia as a missionary. He preached to the colonies in Georgia. There came up a case, and charges were brought against him. Do you know what the charges were? Parker had a baby he wanted baptized and Mr. Wesley said, "Is he sick?"

"No, he is not sick."

"Well, then, we will immerse him because according to the rule book of the Episcopal church that is the Bible way." Wesley was wrong to baptize a baby, but he said, "We will have to immerse him."

"No," Parker said, "we are not going to immerse him."

Wesley said, "Unless you signify that he is sick, I could not baptize him except by immersion."

They brought that charge against him. Finally Wesley went back to England and got converted. But even then, he knew baptism ought to be by immersion.

Well, why does it matter?

Anything Jesus said matters. Whatever He wants is what I want. That is what you ought to want. Baptism by immersion is His way, and that is the way to happiness, and that is the way to a good testimony. Follow Jesus in baptism. He was baptized. Is Jesus our example? Yes. "Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps" (I Pet, 2:21). So we ought to follow the steps of Jesus in everything we can. And one of the examples He gave was to be baptized openly, publicly.

I wonder how many today can say, "Brother Rice, I have been saved. Not only that; I have shown it to the world. I have thus proclaimed my faith by being baptized, showing I am going to count dead and buried this old sinner I used to be. I am raised up now to live a new life for Jesus. I know Jesus died and came

out of the grave and He lives to be my Intercessor, always to take my part, to keep me saved. Now I am following Him in this matter of baptism"? Well, that is what a Christian ought to do. That brings real happiness for a Christian. Those people at Pentecost "that gladly received his word were baptized." Why? They found it is in the Bible, and were glad to do it.

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