

# What Must an Honest Christian Do About Baptism?

by John R. Rice

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*A Christian's joy and fellowship depend largely upon how he follows the Lord, especially in the matter of baptism.*

**Scripture:** Matthew 3:17, Matthew 28:19, John 14:15, Acts 2:38, Acts 5:32

**Topics:** "Baptism", "Obedience To Christ"

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## Description

John R. Rice emphasizes the importance of following the Bible's way of baptism over changing its mode and meaning like Catholics or disregarding it like modernists. He warns against compromising on clear biblical commands and highlights the joy and peace that come from obeying Christ through baptism, as seen in the rejoicing of New Testament Christians after being baptized. Rice stresses that obedience to Jesus, including baptism, leads to the presence of the Holy Spirit and promises of Jesus' companionship, ultimately bringing happiness and fulfillment to believers.

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## Transcript

There are three courses which a man may follow in regard to baptism.

1. FOLLOW CATHOLICS IN CHANGING BAPTISM AS TO MODE AND MEANING.
2. FOLLOW MODERNISTS IN LEAVING OFF BAPTISM.
3. FOLLOW THE BIBLE AND BE BAPTIZED THE BIBLE WAY.

If he believes, as Catholics do, that the church has a right to change what God plainly commanded, that it does not especially matter any way, then he can accept the Catholic's substitute for baptism as many modern denominations have done. It is very likely that he will find himself accepting a lot of Catholic doctrine as well. Certainly he will miss the plain Bible meaning of baptism.

If a man seeks to please people instead of God, he may ignore the repeated commands of the Saviour Himself, and of the Scriptures, ignore the example of New Testament Christians, and do away with baptism as has Dr. Harry Emerson Fosdick and Dr. Shailer Mathews and other modernists and so many so-called "community churches." Such a person will be counted very broad-minded and very liberal, but he will be untrue to the Bible and disobedient to Jesus Christ.

Some people are so disgusted with denominationalism, especially those denominations patterned after Rome (and well they might be!) that they like to do away with every requirement that reminds them of their past bondage. Community churches usually commit the very foolish mistake of trying to please everybody. They sometimes offer to baptize people "any way that suits you best," like the school teacher who proposed to the trustees of a rural school that he would teach the world was flat or round, just as they preferred! In some cases, such churches prefer not to, take a positive stand on any matter of Bible doctrine about which there is controversy.

Sometimes, after compromising on the plain command of the Scripture, they try to defend their disobedience with Scripture. Such subtle modernists may claim that baptism was for Jews only, or that it was only intended for the Apostolic Age, or otherwise pervert the Scripture, either consciously or unconsciously, to condone their sin. But the way to please the Lord Jesus, and spread His gospel, is to do exactly what He said, "teaching ALL NATIONS, baptizing them in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit; teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you." Then, we have His promise, "Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world."

There is only one course left for you, dear Christian, if you seek to please Jesus Christ. You must follow the Saviour down into the watery grave in the likeness of His burial, and then, raised in the likeness of His resurrection, come up out of the water, proclaiming to the world your faith in a risen Saviour and your intention of living a new life for Him.

Can it be hard to decide when His Word is so plain and when He has done so much for you?

#### CHRISTIAN HAPPINESS DEPENDS ON OBEDIENCE

Salvation is settled when one trusts in Christ and the believer has everlasting life, (John 3:16; 3:36; 5:24; 6:47). But a Christian's joy and fellowship depends largely upon how he follows the Lord. This is especially true about baptism. Experience joins with Scripture to teach that baptism brings great joy and peace in the heart. We find many references to rejoicing in Bible cases of conversion, the joy coming AFTER BAPTISM, or in connection with it! In Acts 2:41, we are told:

"Then they that GLADLY received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls."

In verse 46, following, we are told about the same people:

"And they, continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, did eat their meat with GLADNESS and singleness of heart."

New Testament Christians had joy when they were baptized. In Acts 8:38,39 is another case of a baptizing and rejoicing"

"And he commanded the chariot to stand still: and they went down both into the water, both Philip and the eunuch; and he baptized him. And when they were come up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord caught away Philip, that the eunuch saw him no more: and he went on his way REJOICING."

The rejoicing followed the baptizing. Likewise, in the conversion of the jailer and his household in Acts 16:29-34, rejoicing followed baptism:

"Then he called for a light, and sprang in, and came trembling, and fell down before Paul and Silas, And brought them out, and said, Sirs, what must I do to be saved? And they said, Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house. And they spake unto him the word of the Lord, and to all that were in his house. And he took them the same hour of the night, and washed their stripes; and was baptized, he and all his, straightway. And when he had brought them into his house, he set meat before them, and REJOICED, believing in God with all his house."

## HOLY SPIRIT BRINGS JOY AT BAPTISM

There is very clear teaching in the Scripture that Christians, after they obey Christ in baptism, claim Him before the world, may expect to be filled with the Holy Spirit. When Jesus was baptized, the Holy Spirit came on Him in visible form, as an example to those who looked on, and the voice of the Father from Heaven said, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased" (Matthew 3:17). In Acts 2:38. the gift of the Holy Spirit is promised to those who repent and then are baptized for, (referring to, or pointing toward) the remission of their sins. There the Apostle Peter said:

"... 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."

Notice in the following verse 39 that baptism, and the same promise of the Holy Spirit which goes with it, is for all of us, "even as many as the Lord our God shall call."

There are many other Scriptures which promise the Holy Spirit to those who obey the Lord, or keep His commandments. Jesus said to His disciples in John 14:15-17:

"If ye love me, keep my commandments. And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever: even the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him: but ye know him; for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you."

Peter, preaching on the resurrection of Christ in Acts 5:32, said:

"And we are his witnesses of these things; and so is also the Holy Ghost, whom God hath given to them that obey him."

When Jesus gave the Great Commission to His disciples in Matthew 28:19,20, including baptism, He followed it with a promise that when we do these three things, making disciples, baptizing them and teaching them to obey His commands, "Lo, I am with you alway even unto the end of the world." Part of the happiness, then, and presence of Jesus through the Holy Spirit is promised to them who baptize as well as to those who are baptized.

How many times have I heard shouts of rejoicing at a baptizing! Many, many times I have seen God's power manifested when new converts followed the Saviour's command about baptism. I remember in 1931 in the great revival on the court house square in Sherman, Texas, when some 2,000 people gathered around that brilliantly lighted scene and 28 converts, the first fruits of that revival (for we baptized many times), followed Jesus into the watery grave and followed Him in the likeness of His resurrection. A Mr. Welsh, fifty-eight years old, a hard sinner, a gambler, a profane, drinking man, turned with deep emotion and said to his wife, "If I had extra clothes, I would have this whole thing settled tonight!" "Well," she said, "we can have your clothes tomorrow night." And they did and I baptized him. On Christmas Eve,

he died, after winning many other souls to Christ. The Holy Spirit came upon the people and blessed the testimony of the converts as the Lord had promised, so that a soul was saved.

In this same meeting, an old man about sixty arose from the water and shouted, "Hallelujah!" seized me about the neck, kissed me on the cheek, and then weeping for joy he went to the tent nearby which was used as a dressing room.

In Decatur, Texas, in a marvelous revival which God gave us, a woman came down into the baptistery of the tabernacle, whispering to herself. "Oh! Praise the Lord! Praise the Lord!"

"Sister, say it aloud. if you like," I said.

"Praise the Lord!" she cried, "I have been wanting to do this for nineteen years!" When she was baptized, I heard her down in the dressing room saying over and over softly, "Oh, Praise the Lord!"

God meant for Christians to be happy, and you will be, dear friend, if you obey the Lord so He can fill you with the Holy Spirit. When I was baptized, a twelve-or thirteen-year-old boy, in that railroad reservoir at Dundee, Texas, the Holy Spirit came upon me with sweet assurance and joy. He was not in form like a dove so others could see, but there was no doubt in my heart that He came. The Father spoke from Heaven to me, saying, in some manner as He did to Christ at His baptism, "This is my beloved son in whom I am well pleased." The people did not hear that voice, but I did, for it was a still small voice that spoke in my heart. Rejoicing goes with baptism when we do it God's way! If you want to be happy, dear Christian, then follow the Lord Jesus who said. "Thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness." (Matt. 3:15).

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