

Mark 16:16

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“He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved. (Mark 16:16)

In order to understand the passage under consideration it is necessary to consider the passage in its immediate context. *“And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved: but he that believeth not shall be damned.” (Mark 16:15-16)* Jesus gave this commission to the apostles as recorded by Mark just before His ascension into heaven. In His statement, *“He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved,”* He speaks of three things: being saved (salvation); belief (faith) and being baptized (baptism).

Salvation

To be saved (salvation) involves the act or process of being delivered, escaping or being rescued from impending doom. Salvation is defined: “The act of saving; preservation from destruction, danger, or great calamity; the redemption of man from the bondage of sin and liability to eternal death and the conferring on him of everlasting happiness” (The New Webster Encyclopedic Dictionary) This definition suggest two results from being saved: 1) deliverance from everlasting punishment and 2) receiving the eternal reward of everlasting life. This is revealed in the golden text of the Bible, *“For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.” (John 3:16)*

The salvation under consideration in Mark 16:16 is spiritual salvation. The terms *saved or salvation* carries the same meaning as *remission of sins (Acts 2:38)*, and *wash away sins (Acts 22:16)*. For when one’s past sins are remitted (forgiven, washed away) he is delivered from the consequences of the guilt of those sins (spiritual death and everlasting condemnation). However the results of forgiveness is not only deliverance but also brings spiritual blessings, hope, privilege of prayer, the promise of eternal life, etc. (1 John 2:26; Eph 1:3; 1 Pet 3:12; Eph 1:3) This salvation is made possible by the sacrifice of Christ, (2 Cor 5:21; Rom 5:8; 1 Pet 1:18, 19) and can only be found *in Christ*. (2 Tim 2:10; Eph 1:3) Jesus said, *“I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me.”* (John 14:6)

The words of Jesus Christ, *“shall be saved”* refer to present condition of the baptized believer. He is even as he ought to be, right with God, for his sins are all blotted out and his name is written in the lamb’s book of life. As Paul said, *“Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.” (2 Cor 5:17)* He is to add to his faith, virtue, knowledge, temperance, patience, godliness, brotherly kindness and love. (2 Pet 1:5-7) He is to fight the good fight, finish the course and keep the faith. (2 Tim 4:7-8) He is to be faithful unto death to receive the crown of life. (Rev 2:10)

On the other hand the words of Christ, “*shall be damned*” refer to the condition of the unbeliever. He is separated from God and headed for eternal punishment as long as he continues in his unbelief. However, he does not need to remain an unbeliever. That is what Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John is all about. They present all the evidence necessary to convince an unbeliever to become a believer. John closed his gospel with these words: “*And many other signs truly did Jesus in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book: But these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name.*” (John 20:30-31)

Faith

Faith is a firm conviction or belief in the truth of a proposition or person, based upon testimony. The order is Fact, Testimony, FAITH. First a fact must exist, then it must be revealed by testimony sufficiently strong to establish its truth, then confidence in or firm belief of this testimony is faith. Nowhere does the Bible suggest that one make a “blind leap” into belief without sufficient evidence. Whether a particular belief should be treated as known certainty or doubtful opinion depends on the worth of the testimony on which it is based. However, a faith that rests on the testimony of God’s Word is trustworthy because it rests, not on men, but on God who cannot lie. (Titus 1:2)

The words of Mark 16:15-16 declare that it is the gospel that is to be believed. The basic facts of the gospel are the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus Christ. (1 Corinthians 15:1-4) All four of the gospels state that Jesus, on the cross, having cried with a loud voice, he gave up the ghost, that is, he died. (Matt 27:50; Mark 15:37; Luke 23:46; John 19:30) Joseph of Arimathea asked Pilate for and received the body of Jesus. He and Nicodemus wrapped it in a clean linen cloth and placed it in Joseph’s new tomb and rolled a great stone to the door. (Matt 27:58-60; Mark 15:43-46; Luke 23:50-53; John 19:38-42) On the third day, in fulfillment of His prophecy (John 2:19-22), He arose from the dead. There are at least four proofs that Jesus was resurrected: (1) the empty tomb (John 20:4-8); (2) fulfillment of prophecy (Ps 16:10; Acts 2:25-27); (3) the conversion of Saul of Tarsus (Acts 9, 22, 26) and (4) the eye witnesses that saw Him after His resurrection (1 Cor 15:5-8; John 20:18, 29; etc)

Some believe that salvation is by faith only. That is: 1. That faith is the only condition of salvation, that one is saved the moment he believes that Jesus is the Christ the Son of God; 2. Baptism has nothing at all to do with our salvation; 3. One is saved before and without being baptized and 4. One is to be baptized because he is already saved. Each of these four positions is false.

The doctrine that salvation is by *faith only* is false for a number of reasons:

1. Faith is not the only condition of salvation. There are many other passages that teach that some other things are also necessary in order to be saved, Confession is unto salvation. (Rom 10:8-10) Repentance is unto life. (Acts 11:18) Love is essential. (Matt 22:37) Baptism puts one into Christ (Rom 6:3-4) wherein are all spiritual blessing of which

salvation is one.

2. The Bible clearly states that salvation is not by faith only. *“Ye see then how that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only.”* (James 2:24)

3. The Bible gives examples of those who believed, but were not saved. *“Nevertheless among the chief rulers also many believed on him; but because of the Pharisees they did not confess him, lest they should be put out of the synagogue: For they loved the praise of men more than the praise of God.”* (John 12:42-42 see also Matt 10:32) They believed on him. These are the strongest words for belief in/on a person. They believed but were not saved. Other examples can be found in John 8:30-44 and Acts 26:26-28.

4. The New Testament teaches that salvation is in Christ. (2 Tim 2:10) The believer does not enter into Christ until he is baptized. (Rom 6:3-4; Gal 3:26-27) Salvation is not received at the point of faith.

Baptism

“He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved.” (Mark 16:16) This passage teaches that baptism is necessary in order to be saved.

1. Grammatically baptism is essential. Christ’s statement, *“He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned,”* is a compound sentence comprised of two parts separated by the adversive “but.” In the first part “He” is the subject, “shall be” is the verb and “saved” is the direct object. Simply, the sentence reads, “He shall be saved.” However the subject “He” is modified by “believeth and baptized.” Thus of the “He” that believes and obeys in baptism, it is clearly affirmed that he *“shall be saved.”* In the second part “He” is the subject, “shall be” is the verb and “damned” is the direct object. So the sentence reads, “He shall be damned.” The “He” is modified by “believeth not.” Likewise of the “He” that does not believe the gospel, it is clearly affirmed that he *“shall be damned.”* This statement clearly teaches that those who believe and are baptized will be saved and that those who will not believe the gospel will be lost.

2. As simple and two and two. The word “and,” as used here, means “plus.” Two and two means two plus two. Two plus two equals four. Belief “and” means belief “plus.” Belief “plus” baptism equals salvation. Two minus two equals zero or nothing. Belief minus baptism likewise equals nothing.

3. Which do you believe?

Men say, “He that is baptized shall be saved and will be taught to believe later.” This is the doctrine of infant baptism.

Men say, “He that believeth shall be saved and should be baptized because he is already saved.” This is the doctrine of “faith only.”

Jesus said, “He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved.” This is the doctrine that baptism is necessary to salvation.

Which of these statements do you believe? Do you believe Jesus Christ or men? Is the doctrine that baptism is necessary to salvation from heaven or from men?

4. The copulative conjunction “and.” The copulative conjunction “and” joins Believeth and baptism. It is like the coupling pin that joins two railroad boxcars together. When joined they both move in the same direction. Move one to the South the other moves to the South. Faith and baptism are joined, since faith is necessary to salvation so also is baptism. For, like the boxcars they must move in the same direction because they are coupled together. What Jesus has joined together, let not man put asunder.

5. Help in Understanding. Sometimes what is not understood in the spiritual realm is made clear when we find a parallel in the material realm. For example: Suppose that instead of *shall be saved*, Jesus had said, “**He that believeth and is baptized shall receive one hundred thousand dollars.**” Consider: What would it require to receive the \$100,000.00. Would you take a chance on “faith only” or “baptism only” or would you believe you should fulfill both condition, belief and baptism? \$100,000.00 is a lot of money, but salvation is eminently more valuable for it is for it has to do with one’s life now and with eternity to come. Do you want to take the chance?

An Objection Answered

Some have sought to take the necessity of baptism out of Mark 16:16 by saying that Jesus said, “*He that believeth not shall be damned.*” And commenting that He did not say, “He that believeth not and is not baptized shall be damned.” Then concluding that baptism is not necessary in order to be saved.

They err in their reasoning. A simple illustration will reveal the error. Compare this statement with Mark 16:16. “He that eateth and digesteth his food shall live: but he that eateth not shall die.” Note: there are two conditions (eating and digesting) to life. In Mark 16:16 there are two conditions (belief and baptism) to salvation. There is only one condition to death (not eating), likewise in Mark 16:16 there is only one condition to damnation (unbelief).

One does not need to say, “He that eateth not *and digesteth not* his food shall die” for everyone knows that if he does not eat he will die. And, too, if one does not eat he has no food to digest.

Christ points out in Mark 16:16 that one must both believe and be baptized in order to be saved, but the mere lack of faith is sufficient to cause one to be lost. Then, too, if one does not believe the gospel he cannot be scripturally baptized.

The Place of Baptism

The man of God, Elisha, told Naaman who was captain of the Syrian army, to dip seven times in the river Jordan in order to be healed of his leprosy. (2 Kings 5) There is no power in the water of the river Jordan to heal leprosy. The power to cleans Naaman of leprosy was with God. However, God did not exercise that power until Naaman’s faith led him to dip those seven times in the water of the river Jordan. It was God who cleansed Naaman of leprosy. Likewise, there is no power in the water in which one is baptized to cleanse a sinner from his sins. Only the blood

of Christ has the power to wash away sins. (Heb 9:22; 10:4; Rom 4:9; Eph 1:7) Even faith does not have that power. Paul tells us in Romans 6:3-4 that we are baptized into the death of Christ. That is when he shed His blood. (John 19:34) What saves us? The blood of Christ. When are we saved? When we receive the benefits of the blood in baptism. Thus baptism stands squarely between the sinner and salvation by the blood of Christ.