

The Simple Truth of Mark 16:16

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When it comes to the question of whether baptism is prerequisite for salvation, [Mark 16:15, 16](#) stands out as a clear beacon in contrast to the fog of the doctrines and teachings of men today. The words of Jesus as recorded by inspiration of the Holy Spirit in this passage ring clear and true among the cacophony of sounds heard within the religious world today. Jesus says, “He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned.”NKJV

From an honest inspection of this passage, one will come to the conclusion that Jesus expected his disciples to preach that those lost in sin could not be saved until after they were baptized. Two prerequisites are mentioned in this text: believing, and baptism. They are joined together by the conjunction “and” indicating that both are required to lead to the predicate of the sentence, “will be saved.” The language is simple and clear. When used with any other statement of English, the meaning is plain. If I were to advertise in the paper, “He who memorizes and sings the Star Spangled Banner will receive \$1,000,000.00,” there would be people waiting by my front door the next morning expecting to be paid. If you were to cash a check at the bank, the clerk would tell you to “write out the check and sign it and you will receive your cash.” No one misunderstands that. In each sentence, two things are required to receive the desired results. In the first, it [is 1](#)) memorization, and 2) singing. In the second, it [is 1](#)) writing the check, and 2) signing it. So also is it with Jesus statement. He who would be saved must 1) believe, and 2) be baptized. There is just no other way around it.

This simply phrasing of words so clearly exposes many who teach otherwise today. Notice how the order of these words changes under a different teaching of salvation. Those who believe that one is saved before baptism but after faith (i.e. faith only) would have Jesus say, “He who believes will be saved, and then may be baptized.” But this is clearly not what Jesus says. Those who believe that infants are saved through baptism would have Jesus say, “He who is baptized will be saved, and then may believe.” Again, this is not what Jesus plainly said. And then those who hold that all will be saved regardless of either would have Jesus say, “He who is saved, may believe and be baptized.” In each of these cases, the order of Jesus original statement has been modified to support a particular view of salvation. There is only one view that fits the passage. That is that the person who believes, and then based upon that faith, is baptized, will after the point of baptism, be saved. There is just no getting around the truth of this passage.

Perhaps the most common objection to such clear and simple language is the next statement that Jesus makes: “but he who does not believe will be condemned.” Many say, “But Jesus didn’t say that if you were not baptized you would be condemned.” And yes, strictly speaking, Jesus did not say those particular words. But let’s look at the validity of this argument. Using the same examples above, let’s suppose a person comes to my house with a piece of paper with the lyrics of the Star Spangled Banner written out and sings the song from those lyrics. Would he receive the \$1,000,000.00? Of course he

wouldn't. He did not memorize the song and that was one of the requirements. Must one fail in both requirements to fail in the whole? No. One needs only to fail in one requirement to miss out on the whole. Supposing I go to the bank and make out the check, but fail to sign it, will the cashier give me my cash? She will say, "Please sign the check." But in protest I say, "But the check is made out. The amount is there." Such would be to no avail, because it must both be made out and signed to get the cash. Why would Jesus need to deny both? He only needs to deny one to show that someone will be condemned. Why, do you suppose, did Jesus say that the person who does not believe would be condemned? For this simple reason, if a person doesn't believe, they certainly are not going to be baptized. In fact, the Bible teaches exactly this, that one who refuses to be baptized is really one who refuses to believe. [Luke 7:29, 30](#) says the following about those who refused John's baptism. "And when all the people heard him, even the tax collectors justified God, having been baptized with the baptism of John. But the Pharisees and lawyers rejected the counsel of God for themselves, not having been baptized by him." Refusing John's baptism is equated to refusing the counsel of God. Why should we not understand that refusing Jesus baptism would be considered by Jesus to be of similar consequence?

There are also those who try to suggest that [Mark 16:9-20](#) was not part of the Bible. Many newer versions have placed a footnote or marginal reading that says that these verses are not found in the some oldest manuscripts of the New Testament. And such is true. Two of the oldest manuscripts do not have these verses. However, in one of these manuscripts is a blank space large enough to fit these verses. Also within that same one, the book of Revelation is missing. Would we deny that the book of Revelation is of God? The same reasoning would have us do so. There are, however, many ancient manuscripts that do include this text and many ancient translations as well. However, the bottom line is that when all is said and done, those verses are still selected by the translators to be part of the text of their version. Yes, they make a footnote, but when it comes to placing the words in the text, they are there. Why is that? It is because the translators recognize the authority of those verses. There may be a question as to whether they were written by the penman Mark, but as to their authority and inspiration, there is no doubt; the verses are in the Bible and so they appear in your Bible as well.

Sadly, there will be many people on the day of judgment who stand before Christ having confessed him as Lord ([Matthew 7:21-23](#)), but having failed to do the will of the Father in understanding and respecting this very simple verse, [Mark 16:16](#). Will you be one of those people? If your heart is tender toward the will of God within the gospel of Christ, you will come to the plain and simple understanding of this verse. Jesus could not have made it any plainer than this. Won't you believe and be baptized to receive salvation today?