

Five Views Of Mark 16:16

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How Some People Just Will Not Accept The Obvious

There is a statement of Jesus that is so plain, and yet so controversial, that you rarely hear it referred to by denominational preachers, whether it is in their churches or on TV or the radio. That when they do, they feel it necessary to give an explanation that goes against the clear statement of Jesus.

I have reference to the words of Jesus as found in: Mark 16:16, *“He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned.”*

To illustrate what I said, let’s take a look at four different views of this verse as taught by men, and then contrast those views with the one plainly stated by Jesus and supported by His apostles in their teaching and preaching.

The first view is one held by those who do not profess to be Christians, but for the purpose of our lesson should be considered.

In essence, they would say...

He who believes and is baptized “will not” be saved.

Two separate groups hold this view:

- ATHEISTS - who do not believe in God, heaven or hell, or salvation of any kind.
- JEWS, MUSLIMS, HINDUS, etc., who believe in God (or gods), but who do not believe that salvation is to be found in Jesus, and that to believe and/or be baptized is contrary to the will of God. But those who accept Jesus and the authority of His apostles reject such a view.

There **is** a God who offers salvation (contrary to the views of atheists). 1 Tim. 2:3-4, *“For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour; Who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth.”*

Salvation DOES come only through Jesus (contrary to the Jews, Muslims, Hindus, etc.).

- 1 Tim. 2:5-6, *“For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus; Who gave himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time.”*
- John 14:6, *“Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me.”*

There are some in the world who do believe this, and it only begins to illustrate how some are willing to deny the plain statement of Jesus. Of course, those who hold to this view will very rarely ever read the New Testament.

Consider a second view...

He who “does not believe” and “is not baptized” will be saved.

This view is held by “Universalists” who believe that God will save everyone eventually.

To support their view, they will isolate some verses like 1 Tim. 2:6, *“Who gave himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time.”*

But those who know the teachings of Christ reject such a view. Jesus Himself told that there would be few who would be saved.

Matt. 7:13-14, *“Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat: Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it.”*

Paul warned of those who would not be saved, but would face the wrath of God. Eph. 5:5-6, *“For this ye know, that no whoremonger, nor unclean person, nor covetous man, who is an idolater, hath any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God. Let no man deceive you with vain words: for because of these things cometh the wrath of God upon the children of disobedience.”*

Most “Bible-believing, professing Christians” would never treat Mark 16:16 the way the first two views do. But as we consider two more views, we may start hitting closer to “home”.

But please understand, that we do so, desiring to “speak the truth in Love”; and we pray that your love for the truth is such that you are willing to seriously consider what follows:

Acts 17:11, “*These were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so.*”

The third “view” then...

He who “does not believe” and “is baptized” will be saved.

This view is held by those who practice “infant baptism”.

By “baptizing” (actually sprinkling, not immersing) infants incapable of faith, they (esp. Catholics) indicate that faith is not essential to salvation.

Some (esp. Lutherans) try to get around this by saying that God imparts saving faith to the infant so baptism can still save.

By sprinkling or pouring instead of immersion, they also indicate Jesus did not mean what He said (the reason “BAPTIZED” above is in quotes).

But speaking the truth in love, we must point out...

That faith is a necessary prerequisite.

For baptism — Acts 8:35-37, “*Then Philip opened his mouth, and began at the same scripture, and preached unto him Jesus. And as they went on their way, they came unto a certain water: and the eunuch said, See, here is water; what doth hinder me to be baptized? And Philip said, If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest. And he answered and said, I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God.*”

For salvation — Rom. 10:9-10, “*That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.*”

It is baptism that puts one **INTO** Christ.

We must also point out that sprinkling or pouring is NOT Bible baptism.

The Greek word used in the Bible is “baptizmo”, and it means “to immerse”.

This is why baptism is described in the Bible as a “burial”.

- Rom. 6:3-4, “*Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death? 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.*”
- Col. 2:12, “*Buried with him in baptism, wherein also ye are risen with him through the faith of the operation of God, who hath raised him from the dead.*”

Do funeral homes ever just sprinkle a little dirt over a dead body?

Sprinkling or pouring was substituted in the place of baptism (immersion) hundreds of years after Christ and His apostles. This then became a tradition in the religious world.

By keeping the “*tradition of men*” by sprinkling or pouring, we fail to keep the “*command of God*” concerning baptism. Jesus condemned the displacing of God’s commands by traditions of men.

Matt. 15:3-9, “*But he answered and said unto them, Why do ye also transgress the commandment of God by your tradition? For God commanded, saying, Honour thy father and mother: and, He that curseth father or mother, let him die the death. But ye say, Whosoever shall say to his father or his mother, It is a gift, by whatsoever thou mightest be profited by me; And honour not his father or his mother, he shall be free. Thus have ye made the commandment of God of none effect by your tradition. Ye hypocrites, well did Esaias prophesy of you, saying, This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth, and honoureth me with their lips; but their heart is far from me. But in vain they do worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men.*”

We must also point out that baptizing infants is without scriptural precedent. There are no commands or examples of infant baptism in the Bible.

Since the prerequisites of faith (Mark 16:16; Acts 8:37) and repentance (Acts 2:38; 17:30) are beyond the infant’s capability, they, then, are not suitable candidates for baptism.

- Mark 16:16, “*He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned.*”
- Acts 8:37, “*And Philip said, If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest. And he answered and said, I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God.*”

- Acts 2:38, “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.”
- Acts 17:30, “And the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men every where to repent.”

I am confident that those who hold to the view of sprinkling infants are honest and sincere. But despite their sincerity, they are just as guilty of twisting the words of Jesus as are the atheists, unbelieving Jews (and Muslims, Hindus, etc.) and the Universalists.

But there is another view sincerely held by many, and that is...

He who believes and “is not” baptized will be saved.

This view is held by those who believe in salvation by faith “only”; that one is saved BEFORE baptism; that baptism is not essential to salvation.

This view is held for all practical purposes by most members of various denominations. But Jesus and His apostles clearly taught differently.

That faith “alone” cannot save.

As declared by Jesus.

- Matt. 7:21, “*Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven.*”
- Luke 6:46, “*And why call ye me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?*”

As taught by His apostles.

- Rom. 6:17-18, “*But God be thanked, that ye were the servants of sin, but ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you. Being then made free from sin, ye became the servants of righteousness.*” Some religious people today say that is being legalistic.
- Heb. 5:9, “*And being made perfect, he became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him,”*

- James 2:14, “*What doth it profit, my brethren, though a man say he hath faith, and have not works? can faith save him?*”
- James 2:17, “*Even so faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone.*”
- James 2:20, “*But wilt thou know, O vain man, that faith without works is dead?*”
- James 2:24, “*Ye see then how that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only.*” The words “unfaithful” and “disobedient” were translated from the same Greek word. Obedience to God is the same as Faithfulness.
- James 2:26, “*For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also.*”
- 1 John 2:3-5, “*And hereby we do know that we know him, if we keep his commandments. He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him. But whoso keepeth his word, in him verily is the love of God perfected: hereby know we that we are in him.*”

The scriptures teach that baptism **is** essential to salvation.

According to Jesus.

- John 3:5, “*Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.*”
- Mark 16:16, “*He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned.*”
- Matt. 28:18-20, “*And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, 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. Amen.*”

According to His apostles.

- Acts 2:38, “*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.*”

- Ananias told Paul in Acts 22:16, “*And now why tarriest thou? arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord.*”
- Gal. 3:26-27, “*For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ.*”
- Col. 2:12-13, “*Buried with him in baptism, wherein also ye are risen with him through the faith of the operation of God, who hath raised him from the dead. And you, being dead in your sins and the uncircumcision of your flesh, hath he quickened together with him, having forgiven you all trespasses;” Is baptism a work of man or of God? Quickened — made alive.*
- Tit. 3:5, “*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;*”
- 1 Pet. 3:21, “*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.”*

Again, I believe that those who hold this view (including personal relatives) are sincere, and are not knowingly twisting the words of Jesus. Yet, I cannot help but think of such people as Paul thought of his brethren in the flesh.

Rom. 10:1-3, “*Brethren, my heart’s desire and prayer to God for Israel is, that they might be saved. For I bear them record that they have a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge. For they being ignorant of God’s righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God.*”

This leads us to the fifth and final view, one that I believe we are compelled to accept.

He who believes and is baptized will be saved.

This view takes the words of Jesus at face value. No explanations are necessary. Jesus says what He means, and means what He says.

We have already seen previously that the Bible teaches...

That one must “believe”.

Acts 8:36-37, *“And as they went on their way, they came unto a certain water: and the eunuch said, See, here is water; what doth hinder me to be baptized? And Philip said, If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest. And he answered and said, I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God.”*

That one must be “baptized” to enjoy the forgiveness of sins.

Acts 2:38, *“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.”*

Conclusion.

Which of the five views of Mark 16:16 do you hold to?

- He who believes and is baptized “will not” be saved?
- He who “does not believe” and “is not baptized” will be saved?
- He who “does not believe” and “is baptized” will be saved?
- He who believes and “is not baptized” will be saved?
- He who believes and is baptized will be saved?

It should be clear that there is only one view which is in harmony with Jesus’ words, as there is only one which does not involve “tampering” with the clear statement of Jesus!

But perhaps more importantly, with which of these views is your life consistent?

One may hold intellectually to the FIFTH view, but act as though they believed the SECOND view.

How? By never confessing faith in Christ and being baptized!

One may hold intellectually to the FIFTH view, but act as though they believed the THIRD view.

How? For though they may have been “baptized”, they are not living the life of faith required of one in Jesus!

One may hold intellectually to the FIFTH view, but act as though they believed the FOURTH view.

How? For while believing in Jesus, they have never submitted to being baptized!

Only those who have come to Jesus in faith and ACTED in harmony with His teachings can have the assurance of salvation. The words of the Bible are clear.

- Acts 2:38, *“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.”*
- Acts 22:16, *“And now why tarriest thou? arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord.”*

