

Is Baptism Essential For Salvation? (No. 5)

By Casey Head

Since the beginning of March, I have been addressing the most common objections to baptism that denominational people often raise. Hopefully, we can now begin to examine what the Bible actually says about the necessity of baptism without being blinded by these objections. Let's begin by examining Mark 16:16...

Jesus says in Mark 16:16, "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned." This verse clearly teaches that baptism is essential for salvation. After all, Jesus says that in order to be saved, one must believe and be baptized. Jesus did not say, "He that believeth is saved and should be baptized later," nor did He say, "He that is baptized is saved and should believe later." He said that faith and baptism combined yield salvation.

If Jesus had said, "He that believeth and is baptized shall receive a million dollars," would anyone argue against the necessity of baptism then? No! But when it comes to the issue of salvation, people want to deny the plain meaning of this verse because after all, if they just accept what it says, their doctrine of "faith only" falls and they have to make some serious changes.

Sometimes the question is raised, "If baptism is essential, then why didn't Jesus say in the second part of the verse, 'but he that believeth not and is baptized not shall be damned?" This argument is made in an attempt to show that faith is what "really matters." First of all, the second clause of the verse is not going to deny the first clause. Jesus still says, "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved." That is clear! Second, baptism is not mentioned in the second clause because faith precedes baptism. In other words, if a person doesn't believe, they are not going to be baptized, and even if they are, it's not going to do them any good. Again, let's use money to illustrate the point... "He that comes forward and shakes my hand shall receive a million dollars, but he that stays in his seat won't get a dime." Obviously, if you don't come forward you won't be able to shake my hand! One action precedes the other, but both are just as essential! It is the same in Mark 16:16. In order for a person to be saved, they must believe and be baptized. Both actions precede salvation.

As I close this article, let me ask you this question: what would the Bible have to say in order for you to believe that baptism is essential for salvation? Or, have you already decided that you're going to reject the necessity of baptism no matter what the Bible says?

If you have any questions, or if you would like to meet for a private or public Bible study, please contact me. I want to hear from you. My phone number is (828)467-1463. My email address is NCBibleQuestions@yahoo.com, and my mailing address is P.O. Box 401, Spruce Pine, NC 28777.