

SAVED BY JESUS OR BAPTISM?

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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. (Mar 16:15-16 KJV)

If I approached you in distress and exclaimed, “I just saved your child!”; you would probably reply, “Saved him from what?”. You may think to yourself, “Was he drowning in our swimming pool?” “Was he almost hit by a car?” “Was he about to be abducted?” When we read the word “save” in the Bible, we ought to ask ourselves the same question, “Saved from what?”. I have observed that some people almost always associate the word “save” with the acquisition of eternal salvation. This predisposition is usually the result of having been taught that eternal salvation is contingent upon our works. If our home in heaven is dependent on our works, other biblical applications of “save” would seem insignificant. Once our minds have been programmed to think this way, it may be difficult to change our perspective. It reminds me of the difficulty I have changing the melody of a hymn once I have associated the lyrics of a hymn with a particular melody. My mind has merged the lyrics with the melody, and it is difficult to disassociate the two. Such is the case for some when they have been taught to always associate “save” with salvation from hell.

The words “save”, “saved”, and “salvation”; collectively, are used over 500 times in the

King James Translation of the Bible. In the Gospel of Mark, “save” and “saved” are used fourteen times and “salvation” is never used. Ten times it means “deliver” (3:4; 8:35; 10:26; 13:13,20; 15:30-31; 16:16) and four times it means “except” (5:37; 6:5, 8; 9:8). The passage we referenced (*Mark 16:15-16*) does not specifically identify what we will be saved from through belief and baptism. Therefore, we must consider the context carefully to get a correct interpretation.

*“Now when Jesus was risen early the first day of the week, he appeared first to Mary Magdalene, out of whom he had cast seven devils. And she went and told them that had been with him, as they mourned and wept. And they, when they had heard that he was alive, and had been seen of her, **believed not**. After that he appeared in another form unto two of them, as they walked, and went into the country. And they went and told it unto the residue: **neither believed** they them. Afterward he appeared unto the eleven as they sat at meat, and upbraided them with their **unbelief** and hardness of heart, because they **believed not** them which had seen him after he was risen. 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.” (Mar 16:9-16 KJV)*

Notice the terminology used by Luke: “*And their words seemed to them as idle tales, and they **believed them not**.” (Luke 24:11 KJV) “*O fools, and **slow of heart to believe** all that the prophets have spoken:” (Luke 24:25 KJV)**

The theme of this portion of scripture is unbelief, as illustrated by the words I have emboldened. The unbelievers under consideration are described as “*them that had been with him*”, “*the residue*” (those that remained), and “*the eleven*”. Ironically, the unbelievers were those that had been followers of Jesus, including the apostles! He told them he would rise from the dead (*Mark*

8:31, 10:34), yet they did not believe the reports of his resurrection. Did the apostles need to be saved from their sins? The apostles, as well as all of God's children, are saved from their sins by the resurrection of Jesus Christ, not by believing the report of his resurrection. This assertion is supported by multiple scriptures.*

Believing the report of the resurrection saves us from sorrow (*Mark 16:10, 1 Cor. 15:17-19*), brings comfort (*Isa. 40:1-2, Luke 2:25-32*), and restores our hope (*1 Pet. 1:3*). Believing that Jesus rose from the dead saves us from bondage (*Acts 15:10-11, Rom. 10:34*). Knowing that "*Christ hath made us free*" (*Gal. 5:1*) enables us to feel free from sin and experience joy in the Holy Ghost (*1 Thes. 1:5-6*). Paul writes, "*For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek. For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, the just shall live by faith.*" (*Rom 1:16-17 KJV*). The gospel reveals the righteousness of God.

What a great deliverance (salvation) is experienced by the mourning child of God when he learns that Jesus is his righteousness. He can now live life in peace as he places his confidence in Christ alone for salvation. He can now rest, "*in hope of eternal life, which God, that cannot lie, promised before the world began;*" (*Tit 1:2 KJV*). The Bible describes this kind salvation as "*...the gift of the Holy Ghost...*" (*Acts 2:38, 10:45, 11:17; Rom. 1:11*), "*...the answer of a good conscience toward God...*" (*1 Pet. 3:21*), "*the joy of thy salvation*" (*Psa. 51:12*), etc.

What about baptism? Mark writes, "*He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved...*". Baptism ought to be the first act of obedience

for the one who believes Jesus died for his sins and rose again for his justification (*Acts 2:36-39*). If we believe but don't obey, we will not experience the fullness of this salvation because baptism is "*...the answer of a good conscience toward God...*" (*1Pe 3:21 KJV*). Since we believe the resurrection of Jesus is a reality, we are now ready to be "*...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.*" (*Rom 6:4 KJV*). We need to "*...put on Christ.*" (*Gal. 3:27*). The Bible presents baptism as the logical response for one who believes the gospel (*Acts 8:26-39*). Baptism portrays the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus. The representative does not save us from our sins. Jesus is our salvation (*Mat. 1:21*) and baptism is the depiction of our salvation.

What about damnation? Mark writes, "*...he that believeth not shall be damned.*". The word "*damnation*" appears eleven times in the King James Translation of the Bible. It is used to condemn the Pharisees (*Mat 23:14, Mark 12:40, Luke 20:47*), those who misrepresent the implications of God's grace (*Rom. 3:8*), those who resist civil authority (*Rom. 13:2*), those who participate in the communion service "*unworthily*" (*1 Cor. 11:29*), those who "*...cast off their first faith.*" (*1 Tim. 5:11-12*) and "*false teachers*" (*2 Pet. 2:1-3*). It is also used with reference to the "*damnation of hell*" (*Mat. 23:33*), "*eternal damnation*" (*Mark 3:29*), and the "*resurrection of damnation*" (*John 5:29*).

The word "*damned*" appears three times in the King James Translation of the Bible: "*He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned.*" (*Mar 16:16 KJV*)

*“And he that doubteth is **damned** if he eat, because he eateth not of faith: for whatsoever is not of faith is sin.” (Rom 14:23 KJV)*

*“And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie: That they all might be **damned** who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness.” (2 Thes. 2:11)*

The Greek word, “*katakrino*”, is used nineteen times in the New Testament. It is translated “*damned*” in *Mark 16:16* and *Romans 14:23*. It is translated, “*condemn*”, “*condemned*”, “*condemneth*”. In all the other verses.** A study of these passages will reveal that “*katakrino*” is not used to refer to eternal damnation in hell. Therefore, is it reasonable to conclude that “*katakrino*” has a different meaning in *Mark 16:16*?

If Jesus is speaking of eternal damnation in *Mark 16:16*, then he did not save anyone. Only those who believe and are baptized will go to heaven. All unbaptized persons will go to hell, including unbaptized believers. This interpretation contradicts multiple verses.*

Primitive Baptists believe that eternal salvation is by grace alone. When Mary was found with child of the Holy Ghost, the angel of the Lord said to Joseph, “...*she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name JESUS: for he shall save his people from their sins.*” (*Mat 1:20-21 KJV*). The Apostle Paul writes in his second letter to Timothy that God, “...*hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace,*

which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began,” (*2 Tim. 1:9 KJV*). How do we reconcile these verses with our text in Mark’s gospel which sets forth believing and baptism as conditions for salvation? Did Jesus save us or does belief and baptism save us? Unless we are “...*rightly dividing the word of truth.*” (*2 Tim. 2:15*), i.e., dissecting the scriptures correctly; the Bible will appear to contain multiple contradictions concerning salvation, as well as other subjects.

In his epistle to the Romans, the Apostle Paul explains that Jesus, “...*was raised again for our justification.*” and that “...*being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him.*” (*Rom. 4:25 & 5:9*). “Justify” means, “to render (i.e., show or regard as) righteous”. When a jury renders the verdict, “not guilty”, they are declaring that, based on the evidence, the person on trial is innocent regarding the charges against him. Regarding our sins, we have been declared “not guilty” because God, “... *hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.*” (*2 Cor. 5:21 KJV*).

**Job 19:25-27; Isa. 40:1-2; 53:3-6 (1 Pet. 2:24-25); Mat. 1:18-21; Luke 1:68, 19:1-10; John 1:29, 6:37-40*, 10:25-30; Acts 20:28; Rom. 3:23-24, 5:6-21, 8:28-39; 1 Cor. 15:20-24; 2 Cor. 5:17-21; Gal. 3:13-14, 4:4-5, 5:1; Eph. 1:3-12; Col. 1:13-14; 1 Thes. 5:9-11; 2 Tim. 1:8-11; Heb. 1:1-4, 9:23-28, & 10:5-18; 1 Pet. 1:18-21; Jude 1:1-2; Rev. 5:8-10)*

*** (Mat. 12:41-42, 20:18, 27:3, Mark 10:33, 14:64, Luke 11:31-32, John 8:10-11, Rom. 2:1, 8:3, 8:34, 1 Cor. 11:32, Heb. 11:7, James 5:9, and 2 Pet. 2:6)*

