

HE THAT BELIEVETH NOT

Jesus, in His Great Commission, states, “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). Belief has always been a prerequisite for salvation, for “without faith it is impossible to please Him: for he that cometh to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him” (Heb. 11:6). However, faith alone has never saved anyone. “Faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone...by works (*of obedience*, see context, B.G.) a man is justified, and ***not by faith only***” (Jam. 2:17, 24, emphasis B.G.). The New Testament clearly teaches that a dead faith will not save, but a faith that leads to acts of obedience, [i.e. repenting of past sins (Luke 13:3), confessing that Jesus is the Son of God (Rom. 10:9-10), being baptized in order to have one’s sins washed away (Acts 2:38; 22:16), and faithful living until death (Rev. 2:10; 1 John 1:6-9)], is the faith that will save. Thus, as Jesus teaches, “he that believeth and is baptized shall be saved.”

However, Jesus also teaches, “he that believeth not shall be damned.” Some, in the religious world, have claimed that all one must do to be saved is believe and that Mark 16:16 does not teach, “he that is not baptized shall be damned.” Let us examine the verse further, taking care to harmonize any conclusion with the entirety of New Testament teaching.

1. “He that believeth not shall be damned,” because Jesus says, “if ye believe not that I am He, ye shall die in your sins” (John 8:24). Faith is a requirement and condition of salvation.
2. “He that believeth not shall be damned,” because he will not repent of his past sins. One who does not believe in God nor God’s Word will not use the Bible as a standard of how one is to live and act. Therefore, he will not see the need to turn away from anything that he practices. He will most likely determine for himself what he believes to be right and wrong irrespective of the truth of God’s Word. Without repentance, one will die in his sins (Luke 13:3; John 8:24).
3. “He that believeth not shall be damned,” because he will not confess that Jesus is the Son of God. If an individual does not believe the teachings of the Bible, then he will not believe that Jesus is God’s Son and therefore will not confess His name before men. Without making the confession that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the Living God, one cannot be saved (Mat. 10:32-33; Rom. 10:10).
4. “He that believeth not shall be damned,” because he will not be baptized. One who does not believe will not accept the truth that baptism saves and therefore will not be immersed in water to have his sins washed away. If one does not accept the truth that baptism saves, he will not waste the time to do so. The New Testament teaches that baptism saves.
 - a. “He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved” (Mark 16:16).

- b. “Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins” (Acts 2:38).
- c. “Arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins” (Acts 22:16).
- d. “Baptism doth also now save us” (1 Pet. 3:21).

Baptism alone will not save, just as faith alone will not save. But, the New Testament teaches that a living faith, which comes by hearing the Word of God (Rom. 10:17), will lead men to obey God’s commands to repent, confess, be baptized, and remain faithful in service to God until the end. One who does not believe in God nor His Word will not be baptized and will, as a consequence, not be saved.

Mark 16:16 is very clear, “he that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned.” If one wants to be saved, he will believe and allow that faith to lead him towards the culminating act of God’s plan to save – baptism. One cannot be in Christ, unless he is “baptized into Christ” (Gal. 3:27). One cannot be added, by God, to the church of His Son, Jesus Christ, without being baptized into that One Body (Acts 2:38, 47; Eph. 1:22-23). After being taught God’s plan to save man, the Ethiopian eunuch inquired, “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. And he commanded the chariot to stand still: and they went down both into the water, both Philip and the eunuch; and he baptized him. And when they were come up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord caught away Philip, that the eunuch saw him no more: and he went on his way rejoicing” (Acts 8:36-39). You, too, can rejoice, if you choose to believe and obey.

- *Brad Green*