

Five Views Of Mark 16:16

Introduction. In 2 Peter 3:14-16, Peter mentioned that some content in Paul's letters was difficult to understand. Those difficulties were subject to wresting or distorting by the untaught and unstable. The word "wrest" means "to twist, torture, or dislocate" and it speaks singularly of the perversion of the scriptures.

There is a statement of Jesus that is so plain, and yet so controversial, and it painfully demonstrates how some people just will not accept the obvious statements made in the Bible and how they will wrest and distort those statements. This controversial statement is one that you rarely hear referred to by denominational preachers, whether it be in their churches or on television or the radio. Even when they do, they feel it necessary to give an explanation that goes against the clear statement of Jesus.

The words of Jesus of which we speak are those found in Mark 16:16. In order to illustrate what was said earlier, we will 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.

I. ***"He Who Believes And Is Baptized Will Not Be Saved"***

- A. Two separate groups hold this view.
 - 1. Atheists.
 - a) Atheists do not believe in the existence of God.
 - b) Subsequently, they do not believe in heaven or hell, or the necessity of salvation of any kind.
 - 2. Jews, Muslims, Hindus, etc.
 - a) These groups believe in God or gods.
 - b) They do not believe that salvation is found in Jesus.
 - c) Believing and/or being baptized is contrary to the will of God because one would be worshipping a "false" Christ.
- B. Those who accept Jesus and the authority of His apostles reject such a view.
 - 1. There is a God who offers salvation contrary to the atheists (1 Timothy 2:3-4).
 - 2. Salvation does come only through Jesus contrary to the Jews, Muslims, Hindus and others (1 Timothy 2:5-6; John 14:6).

II. ***"He Who Does Not Believe And Is Not Baptized Will Be Saved"***

- A. This view is held by "Universalists."
 - 1. They believe that God will save everyone eventually. No God of love, the Universalists declare, could eternally condemn anyone.

2. To support their view, they will isolate some verses like 1 Timothy 2:6.
- B. Those who know the teachings of Christ and Paul likewise reject such a view.
 1. Jesus Himself said there would be few who would be saved (Matthew 7:13-14).
 2. Paul warned of those who would not be saved, but would face the wrath of God (Ephesians 5:5-6).

III. **"He Who Does Not Believe And Is Baptized Will Be Saved"**

- A. This view is held by most who practice "infant baptism."
 1. This involves sprinkling an infant who is incapable of faith.
 - a) In doing so, Catholics indicate that faith is not essential to salvation.
 - b) Lutherans try to get around this by saying that God imparts saving faith to the infant so baptism can still save.
 2. By sprinkling or pouring instead of immersion, they also indicate Jesus did not mean what He said.
- B. However, several points need to be explained.
 1. Faith is a necessary prerequisite.
 - a) It is necessary for baptism (Acts 8:35-37).
 - b) It is necessary for salvation (Romans 10:9-10).
 - c) Baptism is for someone who knows what they are doing. Baptism is not for children.
 2. Sprinkling or pouring is not Bible baptism.
 - a) The Greek word used in the Bible is *baptizo* which means "to immerse."
 - b) This is why baptism is described in the Bible as a "burial" (Romans 6:3-4; Colossians 2:12).
 - c) Sprinkling or pouring was substituted in the place of immersion hundreds of years after Christ and His apostles.
 - d) By keeping the "traditions of men" by sprinkling or pouring, we fail to keep the "commandment of God" concerning baptism (Matthew 15:3-9).
 3. Baptizing infants is without scriptural precedent.
 - a) There are no commands or examples of infant baptism.
 - b) Since the prerequisites of faith (Mark 16:16; Acts 8:37) and repentance (Acts 2:38; 17:30) are beyond an infant's capability, they are not suitable candidates for baptism.
 - c) I am confident that those who hold to the view of sprinkling infants are honest and sincere. Yet despite their honest sincerity, they are just as guilty of twisting the words of Jesus as are the

Atheists, unbelieving Jews, Muslims, Hindus and the Universalists.

IV. **"He Who Believes And Is Not Baptized Will Be Saved"**

- A. This view is held by those who believe in salvation by "faith only."
 - 1. This would mean that one is saved before baptism.
 - 2. It also means that baptism is not required for salvation. This view is held for all practical purposes by most members of various denominations.
- B. Jesus and His apostles clearly taught differently.
 - 1. They taught that faith "alone" cannot save.
 - a) It was declared by Jesus (Matthew 7:21; Luke 6:46).
 - b) It was taught by His apostles (Romans 6:17-18; Hebrews 5:9; James 2:14-26; 1 Peter 1:22; 1 John 2:3-5).
 - 2. They taught that baptism is required for salvation.
 - a) It was declared by Jesus (John 3:5; Mark 16:16; Matthew 28:18-20).
 - b) It was taught by His apostles (Acts 2:38; 22:16; Romans 6:3-4; 1 Corinthians 12:13; Galatians 3:26-27; Colossians 2:12-13; Titus 3:5; 1 Peter 3:21).
 - 3. 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 (Romans 10:1-3).

V. **"He Who Believes And Is Baptized Will Be Saved"**

- A. This view takes the words of Jesus at face value.
 - 1. No explanations are necessary.
 - 2. Jesus says what He means, and means what He says.
- B. We have already seen previously that the Bible teaches.
 - 1. That one must "believe" (Acts 8:36-37).
 - 2. That one must be "baptized" to enjoy the forgiveness of sins (Acts 2:38; 22:16).

Conclusion. To which of the five views of Mark 16:16 do you hold? It should be clear that there is only view which is in harmony with Jesus' words, as there is only one which does not involve "tampering" with the clear statement of Jesus.

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 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, 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, 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 (Acts 2:38; 22:16). Pilate told the chief priests and Pharisees, "Make it as sure as ye can." Regarding salvation, we must do the same.

I am deeply indebted to David Riggs for the use of his material.