

What Must I Do to Be Saved

This is the most momentous question ever raised by an accountable human being. Where I shall spend eternity; either I shall be immeasurably blessed, for all eternity, in heaven with the good and the pure and the holy of all the ages; or, whether I shall suffer the tortures of the damned, in company with the impure, the wicked and the unholy, in hell, in endless misery, depends on knowing the correct answer to this question and in bringing my will into submission thereto. All of us, when in our regenerate states, are lost (John 3:18), without God and without hope in the world (Ephesians 2:12), dead in trespasses and sins (Ephesians 2:1). But God “being rich in mercy” (Ephesians 2:4) and because of “his great love wherewith he loved us,” sent His Son into the world to make possible our redemption and eventual salvation in heaven.

Following His triumphant resurrection from the grave, and shortly before His glorious ascension into heaven, our Lord delivered to His disciples the “Great Commission.” It is called the *great* commission, to distinguish it from an earlier “limited” commission applicable only to the Jews (Matthew 10:5-10); and, to denote its scope, being world-wide and age-lasting in purpose. The last great commission of our Lord has often been styled “the marching orders” of the Lord to His disciples since under it they were commissioned to carry

the gospel to all the nations in a grand effort to disciple those capable of, and willing to, receive it, and to induce those thus disciplined to submit their wills in belief, in repentance, in confession and in baptism, in order to their salvation.

There are three specific reports of this commission, one by Matthew (28:18-20), another by Mark (16:15-16), and still another by Luke (24:46-47). Mark’s report, especially significant because of its simplicity and clarity, reads:

And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to the whole creation. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that disbelieveth shall be condemned (Mark 16:15-16).

The passage has in it an **obligation**: “Go ye into all the world.” What that obligation *involves* is clearly evidenced in the words, “preach the gospel.” The objects constituting the end and aim of the obligation is “the whole creation.” Thus, here is made crystal clear the universality of the gospel message, and the inclusion of all accountable beings in God’s plan to save. Those who make themselves amenable to the message thus to be delivered are to believe and to be baptized; the promise to those who so do is salvation; the alternative is damnation: “He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that disbelieveth shall be condemned.”

(1) “He that believeth,” indicates both the extent and the **limitations** of the promised blessing. These words eliminate infants, imbeciles, and all other irresponsible persons not capable of believing. Those in this category are eliminated on the basis of need;

such not being lost, because not accountable are therefore not in need of the salvation which the passage promises.

(2) “And is baptized shall be saved,” denotes the purpose of the response required, and makes clear the **design** of the baptism mentioned. The passage presents two conditions essential to salvation: “He that believeth” (item number 1), “and is baptized” (item number 2), “shall be saved” (item number 3). *Belief* and *baptism* are joined by the coordinating conjunctions “and” thus showing each to be equally related to the dependent blessing, salvation. It is not “He that believeth shall be saved”; nor, “He that is baptized shall be saved”; it is: “He that **believeth and is baptized shall be saved.**” The conjunction *and* has here the force of the plus sign; to say, “He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved,” is the equivalent of saying that belief plus baptism equals salvation. The significance of this may be seen from the following parallel:

Mark 16:16, “He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved,” is a complex, declarative sentence, the principal statement of which is, “He...shall be saved.” Were this the whole of the Lord’s statement, the salvation of all would be here affirmed; “he,” though masculine in form, is common in significance, embracing all men (and women) to whom the gospel, earlier mentioned in the passage, is preached. The “he” of the passage, however, is modified by a limiting, restrictive clause indicating particularly what he is contemplated: “that believeth and is baptized.” “He...shall be saved.” What he? The “he” that believes and does no more? No. The “he” that *does*

not believe *but* is baptized? No. Who, then, is the “he” of whom salvation is affirmed? “He [that believeth **and** is baptized] shall be saved.”

Our Lord, in this statement, joins belief and baptism, making them equally necessary to the end promised, salvation. What the Lord has joined together, let not man put asunder! Those who would attempt to divorce them are engaged in truly evil activity. It is crystal clear that our Lord, in this affirmation, makes salvation dependent on two conditions—faith and baptism—not merely, or solely faith or faith alone. It must be obvious to all thoughtful people that when our Lord has designated any condition as essential to salvation, this condition must always be implied, though not mentioned, in all subsequent statements regarding salvation. Inasmuch as baptism, in water, is made one of the conditions of salvation in Mark 16:16, it is idle to expect forgiveness based on of any “plan” excluding baptism. In Luke’s report of the Great Commission, **repentance** is declared to be essential, a fact repeatedly taught in the sacred writings (Luke 24:46-47; Acts 12:30; 2 Peter 3:9).

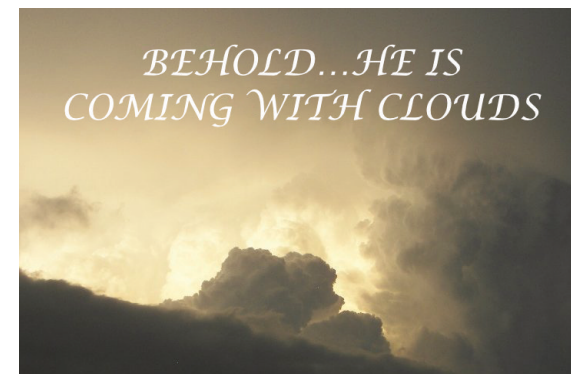
Equally essential is a **confession** of the Lord, **made with the mouth**, and in the presence of others (Acts 8:35ff; Romans 10:9-10). The *order* of the confession is obvious: inasmuch as forgiveness follows baptism in water, the confession could not be made after baptism; but, since one could not acknowledge Christ as Lord *while in unbelief*, and would not want to before repentance, the confession must come after belief and repentance, but be-

fore baptism! This confession is “unto” salvation. The preposition “unto,” signifies that which is “in respect of an unreached end.” The confession is, therefore, a condition prior to salvation.

It is truly tragic that men will cavil over these conditions; and, in the case of water baptism, to regard it as non-essential and unnecessary. It was our Lord who declared, “he that believeth and is baptized shall be saved,” and it is the solemn duty of all men to accept it because he said it. When men make an effort to eliminate baptism, as a condition of salvation, they are, in effect, impeaching the judgment and wisdom of the Lord himself. Men ought to want to do what the Lord said, and for the reason that he said it!

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*BEHOLD...HE IS
COMING WITH CLOUDS*

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Guy N. Woods

