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Questions to Consider:

14 Mark 16:16

As 1+1=2, does Jesus say belief + baptism = salvation? Y N
What figure of speech means "part represents the whole?"

Is it right to use one verse of scripture against another verse? Y N

When we consider all that God says on any subject in the Bible, are there any contradictions? Y N

Titus 3:5 Is the Spirit also involved with our conversion? Y N

Does obedience to God in baptism merit (earn) our salvation? Y N

Should we neglect obeying God if we desire salvation from our sins? Y N

James 4:17 If we know what we should do and we do not do it, do we sin? Y N

John 14:15 If we love Jesus, will we keep His commandments? Y N

James 4:15-16 Is there a danger if we delay obedience? Y N

Acts 2:41; 8:36-38; 16:33 [i.e. middle of the night]
How quickly did each of these obey God to die with Christ in baptism so Christ could take their sins away? _____

Acts 22:16 Should you also arise and die with Christ to be buried (immersed) with Him to have your sins washed away? Y N

If yes, then do not delay call now to make those arrangements. Heaven is too wonderful; hell is too hot, and eternity is too long to risk where we will spend it.

You can call us now if you desire to complete the steps necessary to die with Christ and be immersed into Christ.

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The Belief and Practice of the Early Church

TESTIMONY OF THE EARLY CHURCH.

The early church *universally* believed, taught, and practiced that baptism was *when* our sins are removed. Many of the first century writers took their training directly at the feet of the apostles. For example, Barnabas wrote in 70 AD, "Blessed are they who, placing their trust in the cross, have gone down in the water... We indeed descend into the water full of sins and defilement. However, we come up, bearing fruit in our heart, having the fear of God and the trust of Jesus in our spirit."



Barnabas in 70 AD reflected a common understanding that baptism was that point where their faith cleansed them from sin. This type of quotation can be replicated over and over from the writings of the early church leaders. Who could better understand the gospel taught by the apostles, those that studied and worked with them or theologians thousands of years later?

How important are the actual words and actual commands of our

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What Jesus Commanded

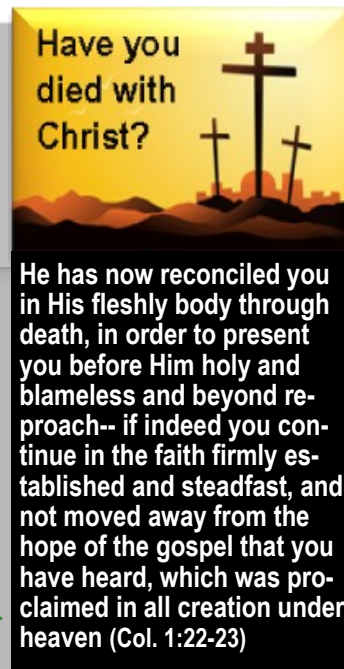
Lord? Let us now revisit Jesus' command in the great commission: "Go into all the world and preach the *gospel* to every creature. He that *believes AND is baptized* will be saved, he that does not believe will be condemned" (Mark 16:15-16, also Matt. 28:19). Understanding God's plan of redemption, we can see why Christ commanded baptism for those that believed the gospel and why belief in the gospel is a prerequisite to baptism and salvation. Also notice that it was the power of the spoken gospel message that generated faith (Romans 10:17; 1:16) People were to hear the good news about Jesus and respond by being baptized, but only if they believed the message. Such is faith—obedience from the heart.



BELIEF ALONE? What about passages such as **John 3:16** that seemingly indicate that Jesus was teaching that everyone who believes (mental assent only) will be saved. “Believe” in this and other passages is using a figure of speech *-synecdoche* – where a part represents the whole, e.g. “head” for cow. In these passages, *belief* is used as synecdoche, where the part (belief) is used to represent *all* that is involved in salvation, e.g. confession, repentance, baptism. For example, in **1 Pet. 3:21** Peter flatly states “*baptism now saves you.*” If similarly taken out of context then 1 Pet. 3:21 would teach that a person doesn’t even need to believe! This is also synecdoche where baptism represents *all* that a person does to accept God’s gift of salvation – believe, repent, and confess. Belief is often used in the NT as synecdoche, to represent the entire process of acceptance of the gift of salvation, just like baptism in 1 Pet. 3:21.

WATER AND SPIRIT. Jesus further commanded in **John 3:5**, “...*unless one is born of water and the Spirit he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.*” This is one of the strongest baptismal commands in the NT. In a parallel passage in **Titus 3:5** this is referred to as, “*He saved us...according to His mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewing by the Holy Spirit.*” Here we see the role of the Holy Spirit in the actual removal of our sins, elsewhere referred to as “*the sanctifying work of the Spirit*” (**1 Pet. 1:2; 2 Thes. 2:13**). This occurs *when* we are baptized by *our faith* in the working of God (**Col. 2:1-12**). The early Christians used **John 3:3-5** as their baptismal proof text.

NOT BY WORKS. When we are baptized into Christ and into His death we are merely accepting the gift of God’s mercy by faith, not performing a righteous work. We *accept* God’s gift of grace and mercy when we respond by faith to what Christ did for us



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(**Rom 6:23, Tit. 3:5**). Baptism is not a righteous work that earns anything! It is merely *the* act of faith where we accept the work of Christ and God’s promise to remove our sins and restore our relationship to Him (**1 Pet. 3:21, Rom. 6:23, Titus 3:5-7**). We could never have our sins removed on the basis of something we performed or accomplished! (**Eph. 2:8-9**)

SUMMARY. In baptism we accept, by faith, the promise of salvation by our Holy God, our sins are removed, *we* are made holy, and He adds us to His kingdom, His church. In His kingdom we accept the headship of Christ and commit to a life of loving faithfulness to His authority and commands (**Mt. 28:19; Jn. 14:15**) as delivered by His apostles once for all (**Jude 1:3**).

The OT taught us about God’s grace and mercy, demonstrated by animal sacrifice paying the judicial price for sin. Jesus came to earth to be “the lamb of God” in order to pay the judicial price of death to take away the sins of all that believe in His work and are willing to accept His offer of salvation by dying with Him. This is the theme of the Bible, the one gospel, and that is...**The Big Picture of the Bible.**

OUR RESPONSIBILITY: **HEAR** the gospel, Mk. 16:15; **BELIEVE** the gospel, Rom. 1:16; **CONFESS** your belief, Mt. 10:32-33; **REPENT** of your sins, Acts 2:38, 2 Pet. 3:9; Be **BAPTIZED** for the remission of your sins, Acts 2:38, Rom. 6:3-11; **LIVE FAITHFULLY** until death, Rev. 2:10, 2 Pet. 3:17