

- **Studying: (testing the Bible by the rules)**
- **Interpret.** “To explain or tell the meaning of: ELUCIDATE.” (Webster’s, 443)
- **Interpretation.**
  - A generic term and may refer to any work of literature.
  - (II Peter 1:20 – 21)
- **Hermeneutics.**
  - Specifically the science of the interpretation of sacred scripture.
- **Exegesis.** The practical application of the principles of hermeneutics.
- **The relation of hermeneutics to exegesis.** “Whereas hermeneutics seeks to establish the ruling principles of biblical interpretation, exegesis seeks to fix the meaning of individual statements and passages.” (*Baker’s Dictionary of Theology. Pp. 204-205*)
- **Do not assume that the unexplained is unexplainable:**
  - Someone presents you with an apparent contradiction in the Bible which you cannot explain: What do you do?
    - Bluff an explanation, trying really hard to sound convincing
    - Suggest that maybe they would be more comfortable at congregation “x” where there are more people, where they do more things and are smarter.
    - Give the Bible the benefit of a doubt.
    - Ask yourself: “Alright, I have no answer, what does this prove?”

- That the person is asking absolutely the stupidest question about the Bible ever to be asked in the history of mankind.
- That the BIBLE is in error.
- That YOU are ignorant.

So, don't give up! Keep studying, knowing that the Bible will prove itself accurate even if at first it seems that it is not. And Remember...

"You have to look under every rock, even if it smells REALLY BAD!"

- **Understand the context of a passage:**
  - Taking the word of the scripture out of context can even cause the Bible to prove there is no God:
    - (Ps.14:1) says: "There is no God."
    - Context? "The fool has said in his heart." So *emphasize* the importance of context. Critics are usually guilty of wrenching verses out of context, resulting in an alleged discrepancy when, in fact, there is none.
  - Always interpret a passage in harmony with the context.
    - Context is the entire section of written thought in which the passage is found.
    - It includes that which precedes and follows and all parts properly connected to it.
    - It may be a paragraph, a chapter, a large section or the entire writing.
    - The continuity of scripture:
      - Continuous, logical flow of thoughts and a passage should never be forcibly pulled out of this order and pushed into the mold of some other thoughts.
      - A knowledge of context will greatly assist in the exegesis (From *ex*, out, and, *egeisthas*, to lead or guide) It is the application of the principles of hermeneutics in bringing out the meaning of any writing which might otherwise be difficult to understand.
      - A knowledge of context will greatly assist in the exegesis of any doubtful passage.
- **Do not assume that a partial report is a false report**
  - (Matthew 16:16 and Luke 9:20) Critics say: See? Error!
  - We say: WHERE??

- **Interpret difficult passages in light of clear ones**
    - Looking at the whole of biblical context for clear understanding, not merely linking a chain of obscure passages lifted from the page.
    - (II Peter 3:15 – 16)
    - Always choose the meaning of an obscure or difficult passage that harmonizes with the plainer or easier passages on the same subject.
    - (I Timothy 5:19)
1. **Every passage has but one meaning.**
    - a. Exceptions to this rule exist but they by no means contradict it.
    - b. Prophecies were given that had immediate as well as remote meanings
  2. **The simplest most obvious meaning of any passage is usually the correct one.**
    - a. One should look for the most natural interpretation of a text unless otherwise indicated.
    - b. (John 3:19 – 22)
    - c. If a passage has more than one interpretation, the simplest one is most apt to be what the Lord intended.
  3. **Always allow an author's own explanation of a passage to stand.**
    - a. A person has the right to explain how he is using an expression.
    - b. The inspired author surely knows what he means better than anyone else does.
  4. **Each passage must be interpreted in harmony with all other passages.**
    - a. This is the normal law of consistency in truth.
    - b. No doctrine can be true if it is opposed to any clear statement of the word of God.
    - c. When there seems to be a contradiction between the meanings of passages, one or more of the interpretations must be incorrect.
  5. **An interpretation of a passage should always conform to the environment of the author.**
    - a. (I Corinthians 14:32)
    - b. The author used the conditions of life as he knew them to frame the revealed message.
    - c. He drew upon:
      - i. The customs of his day.
      - ii. The opinions of his time.
      - iii. The circumstances surrounding his life.

- iv. The nature of his own personality.
- 6. One passage will often explain another passage.**
- a. Another passage may shed light on an obscure passage and bring understanding.
  - b. A caution however: can be overdone by forcing comparisons that are not relative.
- 7. A passage must be interpreted in harmony with any idioms it contains.**
- a. An idiom is “*Any usage or construction peculiar to a particular language, especially a form or a phrase adopted by the usage of a language with signification other than its grammatical or logical use.*” (Clinton Lockhart, *Principles of Interpretation*, p.126) for example:
    - i. Repetition was used in the Hebrew language for emphasis (Genesis 22:17; Luke 22:14-15)
    - ii. “*Love...hate...*” denotes a comparison of one being loved more than another. (Malachi 1:2,3; Luke 14:26; Romans 9:13)
    - iii. “*Not...but*” was an expression of comparison of importance (I Peter 3:3-4; Hebrews 10:25)
- 8. All passages on any given subject must be studied.**
- a. No one should ever draw a general conclusion on any Bible subject until all passages concerning it have been collected, considered and compared.
  - b. Only the sum total of passages on a given subject will give complete understanding.
- 9. Observe the proper balance of scriptural truth.**
- a. Some passages have been exaggerated or overemphasized while others have been slighted.
  - b. One must balance the truth as God wills it.

**Questions for review and discussion:**

- 1. If it is true that every passage has but one meaning, how do you explain prophecies which had immediate and remote (or ultimate) meanings?

2. Why should the author's explanation of a passage always be accepted?
3. What is context? What bearing does it have on interpretation of Scripture?
4. What things must one take into consideration about the author of a passage? How does this bear on the meaning of his writing?
5. What is the "Law of consistency" in truth? How does it apply to the interpretation of scripture?
6. What is an idiom? Cite some examples of idioms found in scripture.
7. Why must all passages on a given subject be considered before one can have a complete understanding of the subject contained in a single passage?
8. What is meant by the term, "Balance of Scripture?"

**"FIVE VIEWS OF MARK 16:16"**

## **How Some People Just Will Not Accept the Obvious.**

### **INTRODUCTION**

1. There is a statement of Jesus that is so plain, and yet so controversial...
  - a. That you rarely hear it referred to by denominational preachers, whether it be in their churches or on TV or the radio
  - b. That when they do, they feel it necessary to give an explanation that goes against the clear statement of Jesus
2. I have reference to the words of Jesus as found in **Mark 16:16**...

**"He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned."**

3. To illustrate what I said earlier, let's 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...

[The first view is one held by those who do not profess to be Christians, but for the purpose of our lesson should be considered.

In essence, they would say...]

### **I. HE WHO BELIEVES AND IS BAPTIZED "WILL NOT" BE SAVED**

#### **A. TWO SEPARATE GROUPS HOLD THIS VIEW...**

1. ATHEISTS - who do not believe in God, heaven or hell, or salvation of any kind
2. JEWS, MUSLIMS, HINDUS, etc.
  - a. Who believe in God (or gods)
  - b. But who do not believe that salvation is to be found in Jesus
  - c. And that to believe and/or be baptized is contrary to the will of God

#### **B. BUT 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 views of atheists) - **1 Ti 2:3-4**
2. Salvation DOES come only through Jesus (contrary to the Jews, Muslims, Hindus, etc.) - **1 Ti 2:5-6; Jn 14:6; Acts 4:12**

[Though I doubt any present actually hold to this view, there are some who do, and it only begins to illustrate how some are willing to deny the plain statement of Jesus.

Consider a second view...]

## **II. HE WHO "DOES NOT BELIEVE" AND "IS NOT BAPTIZED" WILL BE SAVED**

### **A. THIS VIEW IS HELD BY "UNIVERSALISTS"...**

1. Who believe that God will save everyone eventually.
2. To support their view, they will isolate some verses like **1 Ti 2:6**

### **B. BUT THOSE WHO KNOW THE TEACHINGS OF CHRIST AND PAUL LIKEWISE**

#### **REJECT SUCH A VIEW...**

1. Jesus Himself told that there would be few who would be saved - **Mt 7:13-14**
2. Paul warned of those who would not be saved, but would face the wrath of God - **Ep 5:5-6**

[Most "Bible-believing, professing Christians" would never treat **Mark 16:16** the way the first two views do. But as we consider two more views, we may start hitting closer to "home".

But please understand...that we do so, desiring to "speak the truth in love"; and we pray that your love for the truth is such that you are willing to seriously consider what follows (cf. **Ac 17:11**).

The third "view" then...]

## **III. HE WHO "DOES NOT BELIEVE" AND "IS BAPTIZED" WILL BE SAVED**

## **A. THIS VIEW IS HELD BY MOST WHO PRACTICE "INFANT BAPTISM"...**

1. By "baptizing" (actually sprinkling, not immersing) infants incapable of faith...
  - a. They (esp. Catholics) indicate that faith is not essential to salvation
  - b. Some (esp. 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 (the reason "BAPTIZED" above is in quotes)

## **B. BUT SPEAKING THE TRUTH IN LOVE, WE MUST POINT OUT...**

1. That faith is a necessary prerequisite...
  - a. For baptism - **Ac 8:35-37**
    - c. For salvation - **Ro 10:9-10**
2. That sprinkling or pouring is NOT Bible baptism...
  - a. The Greek word used in the Bible is "**baptizo**", and it means "to immerse"
  - b. This is why baptism is described in the Bible as a "burial"  
- cf. **Ro 6:3-4; Co 2:12**
  - c. Sprinkling or pouring was substituted in the place of baptism (immersion) hundreds of years after Christ and His apostles
  - d. By keeping the "tradition of men" by sprinkling or pouring, we fail to keep the "command of God" concerning baptism - cf. Jesus' condemnation of displacing God's commands by traditions of men, **Mt 15:3-9**
3. That baptizing infants is without scriptural precedent
  - a. There are no commands or examples of infant baptism
  - b. Since the prerequisites of faith (**Mk 16:16; Ac 8:37**) and repentance (**Ac 2:38; 17:30**) are beyond the infant's

capability, they are not suitable candidates for baptism

[I am confident that those who hold to the view of sprinkling infants are honest and sincere. But despite their honest sincerity, they are just as guilty of twisting the words of Jesus as are the atheists, unbelieving Jews (and Muslims, Hindus, etc.) and the universalists.

But there is another view sincerely held by many, and that is...]

#### **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. That one is saved BEFORE baptism
  2. That baptism is not essential to salvation
- This view is held for all practical purposes by most members of various denominations

##### **C. BUT JESUS AND HIS APOSTLES CLEARLY TAUGHT DIFFERENTLY...**

1. That faith "alone" cannot save
  - a. As declared by Jesus - cf. **Mt 7:21; Lk 6:46**
  - b. As taught by His apostles - cf. **Ro 6:17-18; He 5:9; Ja 2:14,17,20,24,26; 1 Pe 1:22; 1 Jn 2:3-5**
2. That baptism IS essential to salvation
  - a. According to Jesus - **Jn 3:5; Mk 16:16; Mt 28:18-20**
  - b. According to His apostles - **Ac 2:38; 22:16; Ga 3:26-27; Co 2:12-13; Ti 3:5; 1 Pe 3:21**

*"He that believeth"* necessarily means to believe what is preached which is the Gospel of salvation in Jesus Christ: the good news of the death and resurrection of Christ for the sins of mankind.

That believing must be followed by being *baptized*. From the Greek: *Baptizo* which means "to overwhelm with water – to fully submerge – Immerse."

“Saved” is from *sozo* “To rescue from danger or destruction.

Hence, it does not cover all that may happen in a person’s life. A might be rescued from drowning, and later fall into some water again and perish.

**If a man does not believe the Gospel, he will be condemned regardless of whether he is baptized or not, so it is not necessary to mention baptism on the negative side.**

**This is an example of failing to follow the rules of interpretation above:**

[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 (cf. **Ro 10:1-3**).

This leads us to the fifth and final view, one that I believe we are compelled to accept...]

## **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" - cf. **Ac 8:36-37**
2. That one must be "baptized" to enjoy the forgiveness of sins  
- cf. **Ac 2:38; 22:16**

## **CONCLUSION**

1. Which of the five views of **Mark 16:16** do you hold to?
  - a. He who believes and is baptized "will not" be saved?
  - b. He who "does not believe" and "is not baptized" will be saved?
  - c. He who "does not believe" and "is baptized" will be saved?

d. He who believes and "is not baptized" will be saved?

**e. He who believes and is baptized will be saved?**

-- 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!

2. But perhaps more importantly, with which of these views is your life consistent?

a. One may hold intellectually to the FIFTH view...

1) But act as though they believed the SECOND view

2) How? By never confessing faith in Christ and being baptized!

b. One may hold intellectually to the FIFTH view...

1) But act as though they believed the THIRD view

2) How? For though they may have been "baptized", they are not living the life of faith required of one in Jesus!

c. One may hold intellectually to the FIFTH view...

1) But act as though they believed the FOURTH view

2) How? 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. The words of the Bible are clear... - **Ac 2:38; 22:16**

**"Then Peter said to them, 'Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.'"**

**"And now why are you waiting? Arise and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on the name of the Lord."**

