

## **“What Must I Do To Be Saved?” The Baptist Answer vs The Bible Answer**

The most important question any person can ask is “What must I do to be saved?”. Within the question we see the purpose of Jesus’ coming “to seek and save that which was lost” (Luke 19:10), the very essence of His name “Jesus, for He shall save His people from their sins” (Matthew 1:21), and even the fulfillment of His prayer to the Father that man can be “one” in Him (John 17:20). Why then do we hear so many differing answers to this important plea? Clearly it must be because man inserts his answer to the question rather than God’s, for “God is not the author of confusion” (1 Corinthians 14:33).

Let’s examine the answer one would get from one of the largest and most influential denominations, the Baptist Church, and examine this answer in light of the Scriptures so we can see a bit of the problems which face honest seekers and also that we may see God’s answer to this eternally important question. We do not do this to ridicule or attack those within the Baptist denomination, but out of concern for their souls. As the Apostle Paul asked, “Am I therefore become your enemy because I tell you the truth?” (Galatians 4:16). Examine the things I say in this tract in light of God’s Word (Acts 17:11). If they be true, humble yourself in obedience to them. If you do not believe they are the truth, have the love for my soul to correct me.

One Baptist writer, Earl Kelly, proclaims

boldly in his book Southern Baptist Distinctives (copyright 1989 by Convention Press) “Belief, and only belief, is the door to salvation” (Kelly, 16). Another writer is likewise firm in his answers to salvation when he says “Regeneration is the experience of being born again or from above (John 3:3; Titus 3:5). It is an instantaneous work of God’s grace wrought by the Holy Spirit through faith in Jesus Christ” (Hershel H. Hobbs, The Baptist Faith and Message, copyright 1971 by Convention Press [1989 edition], 59-60). From these two statements, and the forwardness of them, one would think the Bible is replete with passages to support this affirmation of “Belief, and only belief”. But there are two basic problems to their answers.

First, the Bible doesn’t so teach. When Jesus left this earth He gave our “marching orders” in Matthew 28:18-20. Included in this was the command to teach all nations to observe “all things I have commanded you.” In the statements above you do not find what Christ has commanded but what the Baptist Church has commanded. Only one time in the Scriptures do we find reference to such a thing as “belief, and only belief” and that is in James 2:24. There we find God proclaiming through the inspired writer, “Ye see then how that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only” (emphasis mine - jhw). Quite a bit different than the Baptist position that man IS justified by faith only.

Secondly, both writers quoted do not believe what they have taught on the subject of faith only. On the same page as the quote above Kelly goes on to say, “Saving belief demands positive obedience”

(Kelly, 16). NOW he agrees with the inspired word, but for some reason he will not continue to teach what God says, but tries to reconcile “positive obedience” with “only belief.” Hobbs does no better, even in the same paragraph as his quote above, he continues on to say “Regeneration is the result of conviction of sin, repentance from sin, faith in Jesus Christ, and the confession of that faith” (Hobbs, 59-60). A far cry from “an instantaneous work of God’s grace wrought by the Holy Spirit through faith in Jesus Christ”!

One cannot help but ask, “Why would men such as they (respected as scholarly teachers in their denomination) contradict themselves and the Word of God?” While I cannot look in their hearts, I can look to their writings and find some answers. Both go to great lengths to explain away God’s teachings concerning baptism. In fact, though they proclaim salvation by faith only, they both would agree to the necessity of faith coupled with repentance and confession. But both come to a screeching halt at baptism being essential to one’s salvation (a strange position for a church that incorporates the very name into it’s identity!). Notice what each of these respected Baptist writers says about baptism: “Baptism is not necessary for being in the kingdom of God or the church general” (Hobbs, 88); “There is no indication in the New Testament that baptism either saves or adds to salvation.” (Kelly, 30). Again we take great exception to these statements, and again for the same reasons.

First, the Bible doesn’t so teach. The Bible clearly teaches that baptism is “for remission of sins” (Acts 2:38); to be

“saved” (Mark 16:16; 1 Peter 3:21); to have ones sins “washed away” (Acts 22:16). How then could anyone make the statement that “there is no indication in the New Testament that baptism either saves or add to salvation”?! As to the idea that baptism “is not necessary for being in the kingdom of God or the church general” one is at a loss how this could be said in light of the passages which teach we are baptized “into Jesus Christ” (Romans 6:3; Galatians 3:27)? On the day of Pentecost after our Lord's death we find that “the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved” (Acts 2:47). Who was He adding? “They that gladly received his word” and “were baptized” (Acts 2:41).

Secondly (again), both writers quoted do not believe what they have taught on the subject. Kelly goes on to say in regard to baptism, “Baptism is not an option to be exercised; it is a command to be obeyed . . .” (Kelly, 31) (emphasis mine - jhw). Hobbs says that baptism is a command of Jesus and “should be observed by every believer. Failure to do so is to be disobedient to the Lord's will” (Hobbs, 91) (emphasis mine - jhw). Baptism is a command to be obeyed or be disobedient to the Lord – but it has nothing to do with salvation! The inspired Word affirms that the commands of the Lord MUST be obeyed if we are to be saved (Matthew 7:21; Hebrews 5:9). These writers cannot have it both ways and be either consistent or in accord with God. It is sad that by their teaching on baptism both writers actually affirm the old statement that, “It is harder to get into the Baptist Church than it is to get into heaven.” Both would affirm that baptism is not essential to reach heaven, but is essential to be a member of the

Baptist Church. In fact Hobbs states that while baptism (which he says is not essential to salvation) “is necessary for fellowship in the local church . . . it is a prerequisite to the privileges of church membership and to the Lord's Supper” (Hobbs, 88). How sad to read such contradictions. But contradiction is what must come when one determines to deny the Lord's teachings.

It is sad that the Baptist Church does not give a Bible answer to the question, “What Must I Do To Be Saved?”. It is this writer's prayer that all men will leave the doctrines of man, and instead love God and keep His commandments (John 14:15). Why not simply let our Lord answer the question and be satisfied to teach that which He has commanded. If so the answer is plain. If I am to be saved God says I must:

- Hear His faith producing word (Romans 10:17)
- Believe (Hebrews 11:6)
- Repent of my sins (Luke 13:3)
- Confess Him before others (Acts 8:36-37)
- Be baptized for the remission of sins (Acts 2:38)
- It is then that the Lord will save us and add us to His church (Acts 2:47).

“What must I do to be saved?” As for me, I will take the Bible answer, not the Baptist answer. Please, be noble and search the Scriptures whether these things are so (Acts 17:11). ◼

▶ FREE BIBLE STUDY  
▶ Additional copies of this tract  
▶ A list of available tracts  
**contact the**  
**39th Street Church of Christ**  
**15331 East 39th Street**  
**Independence, MO 64055-4240 USA**  
**[www.kc-cofc.org/39th.htm](http://www.kc-cofc.org/39th.htm)**

# What Must I Do To Be Saved?

## The Baptist Answer vs The Bible Answer

by  
Jack H. Williams

© 2004



International Bible Studies  
Tract Series