

What Did Jesus Say?

Advising those seeking God, several publishing houses recommend purchasing their "Study Bible." By including many articles to explain the text, they claim to help the reader's understanding of scripture. While there are often maps, charts, and helpful items, we must be alert and recognize when those aids contract God's Word. Many of the footnotes are similar to the following examples.

For Mark 16:16, footnotes emphasize that unbelievers will be lost but fail to admit that both belief and baptism are necessary for the removal of sins. The reference states, "He who does not believe will be condemned. Those who believe in Christ will be saved." *Nelson, Thomas. NKJV Study Bible, Full-Color, eBook. Thomas Nelson. Kindle Edition.*

Their contradiction of Acts 2:38 states the publisher's position and false teaching on baptism. "Believers are baptized in view of God's work of forgiveness, not in order to receive that forgiveness. God's forgiveness in Christ gives baptism its significance. Baptism is a public declaration that a person's sins have been forgiven because of the finished work of Christ on the Cross." *Nelson, Thomas. NKJV Study Bible, Full-Color, eBook. Thomas Nelson. Kindle Edition.*

Their objective is to teach that salvation is by faith only, and that baptism is a work to demonstrate that their redemption occurred when they believed and accepted Jesus as their savior. However, Jesus' statement includes both "*belief and baptism*" (Mark 16:16), which makes both necessary in any language. This "and" declaration is like saying electricity connected to the building and the light switch in the on position will cause the light bulb to illuminate. Both conditions must be present for the result to happen. Also, just as the lights require other equipment, junction box, circuit breaker, etc. to illuminate, so other requirements are necessary for the forgiveness of sins.

Hear the Truth. Before anyone can believe, teaching must take place. Jesus told the Jews, "*He who hears My word, and believes Him who sent Me, has eternal life*" (John 5:24). Jesus continued to encourage people to believe His words. His prayer before His arrest included a request that His followers be separated from the lost by the Word of God, which is the only truth (John 17:17).

Believe the Truth. Jesus said that there is a requirement to believe who and what He is. "*Unless you believe that I am He, you will die in your sins*" (John 8:24). Jesus called this belief a "work" in John 6:29 "*This is the work of God, that you believe in Him whom He has sent.*"

Repent of sin. Prophecies foretold that "*repentance for forgiveness of sins would be proclaimed in His name to all the nations*" (Luke 24:47). In the first sermon made in response to the question of "*what shall we do*" Peter said, "*Repent, and each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins*" (Acts 2:37-38).

Tell of the belief. Jesus also said, "*everyone who confesses Me before men, the Son of Man will confess him*" (Luke 12:8). Continuing that teaching, Paul wrote, "*if you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved*" (Romans 10:9).

Baptism Saves. Some of the first lessons in the gospels are about baptism. John the Baptist preached repentance and baptism (Matthew 3:5-7). He said, "*As for me, I baptize you with water for repentance, but He who is coming after me is mightier than I, and I am not fit to remove His sandals; He*

will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire” (Matthew 3:11).” Jesus, speaking of the new birth into spiritual life, told Nicodemus, “unless one is born of water and the Spirit he cannot enter into the kingdom of God” (John 3:5). As the church expanded, Paul wrote to the Romans, “Therefore we have been buried with Him through baptism into death, so that as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life” (Romans 6:4). And in his first letter, Peter refers to the salvation by the Ark built by Noah when he says, “a few, that is, eight persons, were brought safely through the water. Corresponding to that, baptism now saves you” (1 Peter 3:20-21).

In addition to these requirements, the Bible tells us of the necessity to stay away from evil (Ephesians 4:22; Colossians 3:8). There is also the final caution to *“Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life” (Revelation 2:10).*

Study Bibles, like all study aids, can be of value to learn the truths contained in scripture. When they contradict a clear statement in the Bible, they must be ignored. The context, remote context, and extended context of scripture will lead to a correct interpretation of difficult passages. Jesus told His disciples, *“To you it has been granted to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven” (Matthew 13:11).* And Paul had this to say about his letters. *“When you read you can understand my insight into the mystery of Christ” (Ephesians 3:4).*