

THE MESSIAH'S FINAL COMMISSION TO HIS DISCIPLES MATHEW 28:16–20

Introduction

Mathew began his gospel by proclaiming that the baby Jesus was (the Son of Abraham) the Son of David, the promised King of Israel (Mt. 1:1-2). He now closes his gospel by proclaiming that the Lord Jesus possesses all power and authority in heaven and earth. The Lord Jesus had risen from the dead, and in the power of His resurrection His followers are to go forth proclaiming His glorious kingdom.

In this great passage, Mathew covers the great commission of the resurrected Lord, the King to whom all power and authority belong.

- I. He met the disciples in Galilee (vv. 16-17).
- II. He assured the disciples of His power (v. 18).
- III. He commissioned His disciples (vv. 19-20).
- IV. He promised to be with His disciples (v. 20).

I. *Mathew 28:16–17 The Disciples of Jesus*

The disciples met Jesus in Galilee. Note several background facts.

1. Mathew says the eleven disciples met Christ. The eleven were the prominent ones, but apparently there were over five hundred believers present, all seeing Him at once (1 Cor. 15:6). The reference to “they” and “some doubted” (v. 17) seems to indicate that this was the great appearance to the mass of believers mentioned by Paul. Christ had already appeared to the eleven on several occasions. They already knew the reality of His resurrection. It is unlikely that they were the ones who were questioning at this time (Mk. 16:12-14; Lk. 24:13-48; Jn. 20:19-25; 20:26-31; 21:1-25).
2. The disciples met the Lord in Galilee on a pre-appointed mountain (Mt. 26:32; 28:7, 10). The Lord had apparently instructed the apostles to pass the word along and to gather all His disciples to meet Him in a mass meeting in Galilee. A particular mountain was designated as the meeting place. Note that Galilee was where the Lord had conducted most of His ministry and where most of His disciples lived. It was also some distance from Jerusalem, a place somewhat safe from the immediate enemies of Christ.

Thought 1. There are appointed places where we are to meet the Lord: in prayer, devotions, worship and Bible study. When we meet the Lord as He says, He meets us. We must meet the Lord as He instructs if we are to know the reality of His resurrection.

3. This is significant. They worshipped Him, but some doubted. They just were not sure. Note what Jesus did: He “came to them and said” (v. 18). Apparently, His *coming and speaking to them* erased their doubt and questioning.
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Thought 1. When we meet Christ as He instructs, He meets us. When He meets us, all fear and doubt vanish. The person who truly seeks after Christ, who truly seeks to meet Him, will have his doubts erased. Christ will *come and speak to him*.

II. *Mathew 28:18 Assurance of His Power*

Jesus assured His followers of His power.

1. Jesus' power or authority is a given power. It is given by God, and it is given for one reason: to exalt Christ above and over all.

Phil 2:8-9 *And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient to death - even death on a cross! Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name.*

2. Jesus' power is above and over all that is in heaven and in earth. His authority is over all the universe. His authority includes at least three areas.
 - a. The Lord's authority includes the power to rule and reign...
 - to receive the worship and subjection of all men who willingly surrender to His dominion.

Rom 12:1-2 *Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God – this is your spiritual act of worship. Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is – his good, pleasing and perfect will.*

1 Cor 6:20 *You were bought at a price. Therefore honour God with your body.*

Rom 10:9-10 *That if you confess with your mouth, "Jesus is Lord," and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you confess and are saved.*

Rev 5:12 *In a loud voice they sang: "Worthy is the Lamb, who was slain, to receive power and wealth and wisdom and strength and honour and glory and praise!"*

- to bow the knee of all men and to receive their acknowledgement of His Lordship.

Phil 2:9-11 *Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.*

- b. The Lord's authority includes the power to govern and direct...
 - the affairs of men without violating man's freedom.

Mark 16:19 *After the Lord Jesus had spoken to them, he was taken up into heaven and he sat at the right hand of God.*

Luke 22:69 “But from now on, the Son of Man will be seated at the right hand of the mighty God.”

Rom 13:1 Everyone must submit himself to the governing authorities, for there is no authority except that which God has established. The authorities that exist have been established by God.

1 Pet 3:22 Who has gone into heaven and is at God's right hand — with angels, authorities and powers in submission to him.

- the affairs of nature and the world without violating the laws of nature.

Mat 8:27 The men were amazed and asked, “What kind of man is this? Even the winds and the waves obey him!”

Eph 1:22 And God placed all things under his feet and appointed him to be head over everything for the church.

- c. The Lord's authority includes the power to forgive sins, to judge, receive and reject men, and to save and deliver men through life and death. (Rom. 8:28-39.)

Mat 9:6 “But so that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins.” Then he said to the paralytic, “Get up, take your mat and go home.”

Luke 5:20-21 When Jesus saw their faith, he said, “Friend, your sins are forgiven.” The Pharisees and the teachers of the law began thinking to themselves, “Who is this fellow who speaks blasphemy? Who can forgive sins but God alone?”

John 5:22 “Moreover, the Father judges no one, but has entrusted all judgment to the Son.”

John 5:27 “And he has given him authority to judge because he is the Son of Man.”

3. Jesus' power assures the believer of deliverance. Note *when* Jesus came to them and spoke about His power: immediately upon the heels of some doubting and immediately before charging His disciples to go into a hostile world. He proclaimed His power in order to erase doubt and to strengthen His disciples in going forth. His power was the disciples' assurance of victory.

Now, in dealing with the supreme power and authority of Jesus Christ, there are two points that must always be remembered.

- 1) The Lord's supreme reign is not yet fully seen. God has not yet revealed His Son's supremacy in an absolute sense. However, there is *a striking reason* for God's delaying the visible enthronement of His Son. God wants His Son to still be seen as the Saviour of the world. He wants more and more persons to be saved before He ends the world and begins the sovereign reign of His Son upon earth.

2 Pet 3:3-4, 8-9 *First of all, you must understand that in the last days scoffers will come, scoffing and following their own evil desires. They will say, "Where is this 'coming' he promised? Ever since our fathers died, everything goes on as it has since the beginning of creation." But do not forget this one thing, dear friends: With the Lord a day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years are like a day. The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. He is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance.*

2) The Lord's supreme reign over all the universe is assured.

2 Pet 3:10-13 *But the day of the Lord will come like a thief. The heavens will disappear with a roar; the elements will be destroyed by fire, and the earth and everything in it will be laid bare. Since everything will be destroyed in this way, what kind of people ought you to be? You ought to live holy and godly lives as you look forward to the day of God and speed its coming. That day will bring about the destruction of the heavens by fire, and the elements will melt in the heat. But in keeping with his promise we are looking forward to a new heaven and a new earth, the home of righteousness.*

Heb 2:8-10 *And put everything under his feet. In putting everything under him, God left nothing that is not subject to him. Yet at present we do not see everything subject to him. But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels, now crowned with glory and honour because he suffered death, so that by the grace of God he might taste death for everyone. In bringing many sons to glory, it was fitting that God, for whom and through whom everything exists, should make the author of their salvation perfect through suffering.*

1 Cor 15:24-28 *Then the end will come, when he hands over the kingdom to God the Father after he has destroyed all dominion, authority and power. For he must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet. The last enemy to be destroyed is death. For he "has put everything under his feet." Now when it says that "everything" has been put under him, it is clear that this does not include God himself, who put everything under Christ. When he has done this, then the Son himself will be made subject to him who put everything under him, so that God may be all in all.*

III. Mathew 28:19–20 Great Commission to the Disciples

Jesus commissioned His followers. He commissioned not only the eleven apostles, but all who were present, more than five hundred disciples. However, note something of crucial importance: it was impossible for that generation to reach the whole world in its lifetime. Therefore, the commission given to the first generation of believers extends beyond to all generations of believers. The very same charge given to them is given to us. Our Lord charges us with the very same words, "Therefore go and make disciples of all nations...."

The Lord's commission was threefold.

1. He commissions us to "go...and make disciples of all nations." This is one of the crucial verses in the Bible. No verse is more important for genuine believers.

Teaching and baptizing are not enough to reach the world for Christ. Both are important, and Christ commissions both; but He says something else must precede both: discipleship. "Therefore go and 'matheteuo' all nations" (Mt. 28:19). "Matheteuo" means to make disciples. Thus the verse accurately reads, "Therefore go and 'make disciples' of all nations...." Most messages that are preached on this passage stress the objective of our Lord, the reaching of all nations, as though this is what our Lord had in mind. There is no question, the great commission is what Christ had in mind. He has instructed us to go to all nations and evangelize them. But there is the strong conviction that He had more than that objective in mind, more than just an overriding purpose — much more.

Our Lord was not only telling us "to go and evangelize," He was telling us *how* to go and *how* to evangelize. He was not only giving His ultimate *objective* and overriding purpose, He was giving *the method* to use in evangelizing the world.

Think about the word *matheteuo* (make disciples). What does our Lord mean by "make disciples"? Does it not mean that we are to do what He did: make disciples and do things with them as He did. Is He not telling us to do exactly as He did?

What *did* He do? Christ "came to seek and save what was lost" (Lk. 19:10). He sought the lost, those who were willing to commit their lives to Him. And when He found such a person, He saved that person. When Christ found a person who was willing to commit his life, Christ attached Himself to that person. Christ began to mould and make that person into His image. The word *attach* is the key word.

It is probably the word that best describes discipleship. Christ made disciples of men by attaching Himself to them; and through that personal attachment, they were able to observe His life and conversation; and in seeing and hearing, they began to absorb and assimilate His very character and behaviour. They began to follow Him and to serve Him more closely. In simple terms, this is what our Lord did. This is the way He made disciples. This was His mission and His method, His obsession: to attach Himself to willing believers.

There is another way to describe what Christ did. Christ envisioned something beyond Himself and beyond His day and time. He envisioned an *extension* of Himself, an *extension* of His very being, and an *extension* of His mission and method. The way He chose to extend Himself was discipleship, attaching Himself to committed persons; and through attachment, the persons absorbed and assimilated the Lord's very character and mission. They in turn attached themselves to others and discipled them. They, too, expected their disciples to make disciples of others who were willing to

commit their lives to Christ. Thus was the glorious message of Christ to march down through the centuries (2 Tim. 2:2).

There is no question what our Lord's commission is: we are to go; but more than that, we are to make disciples, to attach ourselves to those persons who will follow our Lord until they in turn can make disciples (2 Tim. 2:2).

Mat 10:7 *"As you go, preach this message: 'The kingdom of heaven is near.'"*

Mat 28:19-20 *"Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."*

Mark 16:15 *He said to them, "Go into all the world and preach the good news to all creation."*

John 20:31 *But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.*

Acts 1:8 *"But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth."*

Acts 5:20 *"Go, stand in the temple courts," he said, "and tell the people the full message of this new life."*

2 Tim 4:2 *Preach the Word; be prepared in season and out of season; correct, rebuke and encourage – with great patience and careful instruction.*

1 Pet 3:15 *But in your hearts set apart Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect.*

2. He commissioned us to baptize all nations (See *Baptism and Belief*, Mk. 16:16; See *Baptism*, Acts 2:38). Two things need to be noted here.
 - a. Baptism is of crucial importance. Christ says that it is as essential as teaching, despite the fact that it is a one-time act. It is as much a part of the commission of Christ as discipling and teaching. Christ is definitely teaching that baptism is to be the immediate sign and the identifying sign that a person is now stepping out of the heathen (unbelieving) ranks and taking his stand with Christ.
 - b. Baptism "in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit" means more than just saying a formula as one is baptized, much more. It means...
 - a statement of faith: of belief in God as the true Father of Jesus Christ; of belief in Christ as the true Son of God, the Saviour of the world; of belief in the Holy Spirit as the Comforter of the believer.

- a commitment to follow God: to follow Him as revealed in the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit (cp. Christ's constant references to God as His Father, to Himself as the Son, and to the Holy Spirit throughout the Gospel of John. Also see Mt. 11:27; 24:36; Jn. 14:15-26; 16:7-15; Rom. 8:1-17.)

Mark 16:16 *“Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned.”*

Acts 2:38 *Peter replied, “Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.”*

Acts 10:48 *So he ordered that they be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ. Then they asked Peter to stay with them for a few days.*

Acts 22:16 *‘And now what are you waiting for? Get up, be baptized and wash your sins away, calling on his name.’*

3. He commissioned us to teach all that Christ had commanded. Teaching is just as essential as making disciples and baptizing. One is not to be emphasized over the other. All are part of the commission of our Lord. Note what is to be taught: “everything I have commanded you.”

Mat 28:19-20 *“Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.”*

John 6:45 *“It is written in the Prophets: ‘They will all be taught by God.’ Everyone who listens to the Father and learns from him comes to me.”*

Col 3:16 *Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom, and as you sing psalms, hymns and spiritual songs with gratitude in your hearts to God.*

1 Tim 4:6 *If you point these things out to the brothers, you will be a good minister of Christ Jesus, brought up in the truths of the faith and of the good teaching that you have followed.*

1 Tim 4:11 *Command and teach these things.*

2 Tim 2:24 *And the Lord's servant must not quarrel; instead, he must be kind to everyone, able to teach, not resentful.*

Deu 6:6-7 *These commandments that I give you today are to be upon your hearts. Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up.*

Ezek 44:23 *They are to teach my people the difference between the holy and the common and show them how to distinguish between the unclean and the clean.*

Thought 1. What Christ taught and commanded must be studied and studied, to the point of learning and knowing and practicing. The commandments of Christ will be the first things taught. They should be the rule of society.

Thought 2. Society deteriorates and crumbles when it neglects the teaching and commandments of Christ.

MARK 16:16
BAPTISM, BELIEF, SALVATION AND OBEDIENCE

“Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned.” Mark 16:16

Two things are said to be essential for salvation — belief and baptism. There are two basic positions on baptism: first, one must be baptized to be saved, and, second, baptism is a symbol or sign that one believes and has been saved. Note four things.

1. Perhaps what is often overlooked by both positions is this: *belief* is an *act of obedience* to God's demand if a person wishes to be saved, and *baptism* is an *act of obedience* to God's demand if a person believes.

Baptism is an act of obedience to God's demand just as belief is an act of obedience to God's demand. Very simply, if a man wishes to be saved, God says (demands that he) *believe*; and if a man believes, God says (demands that he) *be baptized*.

A legitimate and straightforward question needs to be asked: “How can a person honestly be saved if he immediately rebels against being baptized? How can a person really believe, be genuine in his confession, if he rebels at obeying His Lord about baptism?”

Facing the reality of the situation, Scripture is strong: a person who truly believes in the Lord will not refuse to follow His Lord *in baptism* or in anything else (Lk. 9:23). To believe and to obey are the same thing. The two, belief and obedience, are one and the same.

Heb 5:9 *And, once made perfect, he became the source of eternal salvation for all who obey him.*

Another way to say the same thing is this. There is no such thing as faith alone, not without works or fruit. Faith without obedience is not what the Scripture means by faith.

In the Scripture, faith is the movement of the heart which embraces the Lord, the Lord who is the fulfilment of the law (Mt. 5:17-18.)

Faith is that which “comes to God must believe that He exists, and...*earnestly seek Him*” (Heb. 11:6). Faith, Biblical faith, earnestly seeks to obey the Lord. Therefore, the man who truly believes will follow the Lord in baptism and in everything else.

This does not mean the person will be perfect and never fail. Far from it. He will fail, but he will *not continue in sin*. He will get up out of his sin, ask God to forgive him, and begin to follow the Lord even more earnestly. His faith works and bears fruit, for He knows that God exists and that He rewards those who earnestly seek Him.

James 2:14 *What good is it, my brothers, if a man claims to have faith but has no deeds? Can such faith save him?*

James 2:17-18 *In the same way, faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead. But someone will say, “You have faith; I have deeds.” Show me your faith without deeds, and I will show you my faith by what I do.*

James 2:20-24 *You foolish man, do you want evidence that faith without deeds is useless? Was not our ancestor Abraham considered righteous for what he did when he offered his son Isaac on the altar? You see that his faith and his actions were working together, and his faith was made complete by what he did. And the scripture was fulfilled that says, “Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness,” and he was called God’s friend. You see that a person is justified by what he does and not by faith alone.*

Thought 1. There is no such thing as cheap salvation, not the kind that is too often preached and stressed. Following Jesus or being saved costs. It costs all that a person *is and has*. A man is not saved without following Jesus (Lk. 9:23), and following Jesus means being baptized and diligently seeking Him (living righteously).

2. The person who is condemned is said to be the person who disbelieves, not the person who is not baptized. This is a matter for close attention. The word “baptized” is omitted from *does not believe*. Not being baptized is not mentioned as a reason for being condemned. This does point toward *disbelief’s* being the reason for condemnation, and conversely, toward beliefs being the reason for salvation. However, as discussed above, it is very difficult to explain how a person can be genuinely saved and not be baptized if he is physically able to be baptized. Believing is commitment, doing what God says, and commitment is believing. Therefore, a man is saved by doing what God says: believing, being baptized, living righteously. A man is not saved if he does not believe, that is, refuses to do what God says. To truly be saved, a person must be committed to Jesus Christ, committed to being baptized and to living righteously.
3. Something that should be looked at is the nature of belief and baptism. Belief and baptism are two different substances, of two different natures, of two different

dimensions. In dealing with belief, the same things can be said about belief that is said about salvation. Both are of the spirit, not of the body nor of the physical world of man. Belief is a spiritual thing or substance. Its nature is spiritual; it is of the spiritual dimension of being; it is an act of the spirit of man.

However, baptism is of a different nature. It is man's physical body being placed into water (a material thing or substance). Baptism is of the physical or material dimension of being; it is an act of the body of man.

4. Very practically, in a world of billions of people, some are born mentally alert and responsible; yet they are tragically deformed or injured, or diseased. Some are so deformed and physically affected they could never be immersed in the waters of baptism. Some of these do come to believe in Christ and do live righteously, obeying God in so far as their heart and body allows them.

In conclusion, the thrust of Scripture seems to be that a person who genuinely believes *is* baptized and will not fail to be baptized unless it is physically impossible, nor will he fail to live righteously. Yet the moment of salvation is not at baptism nor at any other act or work of doing righteousness. It is at the moment of believing in the Lord Jesus Christ. When a man really believes and really *entrusts* his life into the hands of Christ, *God knows that moment*, the very second of trust. Therefore, at that very moment God quickens or gives life to his spirit, causing him to be *born again*, and making him alive spiritually (not physically. It is not a physical thing or substance.) Then the man arises from confession on his knees, is baptized, and begins to follow the Lord in righteousness. □

IV. *Mathew 28:20 The Promise of Jesus Christ*

Jesus promised to be with His followers – always.

1. Note the word “Surely,” or behold. Christ used this striking word to get the attention of His followers, to startle them to wake up and listen. He was about to encourage them in the great task He had charged to their care.
2. Note the great promise: “I am with you.” He gave emphatic assurance: not “I will be with you,” but “I am with you.” Christ is with the believer as the believer goes forth to make disciples of all nations. Christ is with us...
 - every step
 - every day
 - when poor
 - when sick
 - every decision
 - every hour
 - when abused
 - when facing death
 - every trial
 - every sorrow
 - when having nothing
 - when having plenty
 - every joy
 - when without

3. Note the boundless promise: “always, to the very end of the age.” There is not a moment when Christ is not with the believer to help him in his witness, even if his witness means abuse, persecution, and martyrdom.

Mat 18:20 *“For where two or three come together in my name, there am I with them.”*

Mat 28:20 *“And teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.”*

Heb 13:5-6 *Keep your lives free from the love of money and be content with what you have, because God has said, “Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you.” So we say with confidence, “The Lord is my helper; I will not be afraid. What can man do to me?”*

Gen. 28:15 *“I am with you and will watch over you wherever you go, and I will bring you back to this land. I will not leave you until I have done what I have promised you.”*

Isa 41:10 *So do not fear, for I am with you; do not be dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you; I will uphold you with my righteous right hand.*

Isa 43:2 *When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and when you pass through the rivers, they will not sweep over you. When you walk through the fire, you will not be burned; the flames will not set you ablaze. ■*

ACTS 02:38 BAPTISM

Peter replied, “Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.” Acts 02:38

Baptism is the outward sign, the immediate sign of repentance. It is the physical sign that a person is identifying with Christ. It is the immediate sign that a person is to show before the world that he is really repenting and is now going to obey and live for God. Baptism and repentance are both...

- outward signs
- signs that have to do with behaviour
- signs that show the world that a person is turning his life over to God

Repentance is a command to change one's life. Baptism is a command, the very first command to follow Christ. Baptism is the first command given to those who are repenting. The person who is really repenting must be baptized. He must give testimony to the world and confess to the world that he is repenting by being baptized in the name of Jesus Christ (see Mt. 28:19-20). Baptism is not an option. It is as much a command as repentance.

Mat 28:19 “Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.”

Mark 16:16 “Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned.”

Acts 2:38 Peter replied, “Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.”

Acts 10:48 So he ordered that they be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ. Then they asked Peter to stay with them for a few days.

Acts 22:16 ‘And now what are you waiting for? Get up, be baptized and wash your sins away, calling on his name.’

Now, note a critical point that is often overlooked and neglected. Just because a person changes his life (repents) and is baptized does not mean he is saved. A person can change his life by the power of his own will, by discipline and self-control, by his own effort and works. And he can very simply request to be baptized. Many people have and will continue to do this. Many live what society calls a good, upright, and moral life and they have been baptized. But there is more to being saved than merely changing one's life and being baptized. What is it? It is the very basis, the very essential to true salvation, to being truly forgiven and receiving the Holy Spirit:

=> It is the essential of faith, of believing “in the name of Jesus Christ.”

A person who truly believes and really trusts Jesus does repent and is baptized. But just because a person lives a disciplined and controlled life (repents) and has been baptized does not mean he is truthfully trusting Jesus as his Saviour. True faith — the inward work within the heart, the inward work of really believing *in the name of the Lord Jesus* — is the one absolute essential for being saved.

Now note another critical point that is also overlooked and neglected.

=> Just because a person says he believes in Jesus does not mean he is saved. A person can say and claim anything, and that person can be baptized. But profession and baptism do not save a person any more than a changed life and baptism save a person.

There is more to being saved than professing faith and being baptized. What is it? Again, it is the very basis, the very essential to true salvation, to being truly forgiven and receiving the Holy Spirit.

=> It is the basis, the essential of *repenting* and of doing the very first act of repentance, being baptized.

There is no faith *without true repentance* and there is no forgiveness by God *without trusting or committing* one's life to God's dear Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. And the very first act of following Jesus is that of repenting and being baptized. A person who honestly believes in Jesus Christ will do what He said, repent and be baptized.

This is what Peter was saying in this passage. He did not mention faith, but he was not omitting faith nor eliminating belief in the Lord Jesus as essential to salvation. The rest of Scripture cannot be ignored in looking at this verse just as this verse and others like it cannot be ignored by the passages that stress faith alone. Common sense tells us that a person who truly believes something acts upon that thing. *Behaviour follows true belief*. But similarly, common sense tells us that behaviour can be changed by raw effort and discipline. A person can change because he thinks he should change and not because someone else demands change.

Paul stressed the same point in that classic passage of his (Rom. 6:3-4), and the point is very significant. A believer (true believer) is said to be "*baptized*" [immersed] into the death of Christ.

Rom 6:3-4 *Or don't you know that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life.*

Now note what Paul has just said: when a person is baptized, he is "baptized into His [Jesus'] death" in the same way he is immersed (identified) into the resurrection of Christ. Baptism is an act by which one identifies with Christ. He counts himself as having died *in* Christ's death and as having risen *in* Christ's resurrection; as living and moving and having his being *in* Christ even as Christ lived and moved and had His being in God. Christ's death and resurrection and life becomes the believer's death and resurrection and life. The believer treats and judges himself as having been "crucified with Christ, nevertheless living; yet not himself, but Christ living in him" (Gal. 2:20).

In conclusion, history has shown that this point needs to be stressed and re-stressed.

=> A person can repent, change his own life and be baptized (by his own effort and works) without ever trusting Christ, without really believing in Christ.

=> But a person cannot trust, cannot really believe in Christ without repenting and following Christ in the very first act of repentance, that of being baptized. True faith and honest belief always mean that a person repents and is baptized. To believe is to follow (obey) Christ and to be baptized.

John 3:36 *"Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life, but whoever rejects the Son will not see life, for God's wrath remains on him."* □