

Question:

The Bible says in John 3:18, 36 that

“Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life; whoever does not obey the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God remains on him.”

Does this mean that simply believing in Jesus is enough, or is more required for salvation?

Answer:

The Bible teaches that faith in Jesus Christ is the foundation of salvation, but it also presents a more comprehensive picture that includes repentance, baptism, and receiving the Holy Spirit. To understand this more clearly, we need to compare scripture with scripture, as no single verse gives the full picture in isolation.

1. Faith in Jesus Is Essential

John 3:18 (ESV)

“Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only Son of God.”

John 3:36 (ESV)

“Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life; whoever does not obey the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God remains on him.”

These verses affirm that belief in Jesus Christ as the Son of God is the key to eternal life. Faith is the doorway to salvation, and without it, no one can be saved (Hebrews 11:6). However, “believing” in the biblical sense is more than intellectual agreement it involves trust, surrender, and obedience.

2. Baptism Is Not Optional

Mark 16:16 (ESV)

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

Jesus directly connects faith and baptism. This shows that baptism is not just a symbolic gesture, but a response of obedience that accompanies true belief. While the latter part of the verse focuses on disbelief as the basis for condemnation, the first part clearly teaches that both faith and baptism are the path to salvation.

The Apostle Peter reinforces this:

Acts 2:38 (ESV)

“And Peter said to them, ‘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.'”

Here, repentance, baptism, and receiving the Holy Spirit are all part of the salvation experience.

3. Baptism in the Holy Spirit Is Also Necessary

Luke 3:16 (ESV)

“John answered them all, saying, ‘I baptize you with water, but he who is mightier than I is coming... He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire.’”

Jesus promised that believers would be baptized with the Holy Spirit, which is essential for living the Christian life and walking in victory over sin. This spiritual baptism is part of being “born again.”

John 3:5-6 (ESV)

“Jesus answered, ‘Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.’”

Here, Jesus is clear: being born again involves both water (baptism) and Spirit (Holy Spirit). Without both, one cannot enter the Kingdom of God.

4. Faith Must Be Accompanied by Action

James 2:19–20 (ESV)

“You believe that God is one; you do well. Even the demons believe and shudder! Do you want to be shown, you foolish person, that faith apart from works is useless?”

Even demons believe in God, yet they are not saved. True biblical faith is active, not passive. It expresses itself through obedience.

This includes obeying the command to be baptized and walking in the Spirit.

5. Salvation Is a Process, Not Just a Moment

Salvation is initiated by faith, demonstrated through repentance, sealed through baptism, and empowered by the Holy Spirit. These steps are not optional they form the full gospel message preached by Jesus and the apostles.

Titus 3:5 (ESV)

“He saved us, not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to his own mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit.”

While faith in Jesus is the starting point of salvation, the full biblical teaching includes baptism in water and receiving the Holy Spirit. This aligns with Jesus’ words in John 3:5, where He says no one can enter the Kingdom of God unless they are born of water and the Spirit.

Just as planting a seed without watering it would hinder growth, so believing in Christ without obedience through baptism leaves the work of salvation incomplete. Faith must be alive and active, demonstrated through obedience.

May the Lord help us not just to believe in His name, but to follow Him fully in faith, obedience, and the power of the Holy Spirit.

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