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THE SURE WORD By Jonnie Hutchison

“THAT’S JUST YOUR INTERPRETATION”

The title of this article is a common response when studying the Bible with someone with whom there is disagreement. For example, Jesus said in Mark 16:16, “He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned.” When it is pointed out that Jesus taught that both belief and baptism are necessary to salvation, those who do not believe one must be baptized to be saved will respond, “That’s just your interpretation.”

Interpretation is defined by a standard dictionary as “the action of explaining the meaning of something.” The word is used only three times in the New Testament. In 1 Corinthians 12:10 and 14:26 it is used in reference to the miraculous ability to interpret human languages (tongues). It is also found in 2 Peter 1:20 but has an entirely different meaning. Peter wrote, “knowing this first, that no prophecy of Scripture is of any **private interpretation**” and then explains in verse 21, “for prophecy never came by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit.” The meaning is that those who prophesied did not originate their prophecies but received them by inspiration of the Holy Spirit. 2 Timothy 3:16 tells us that “All scripture is given by the inspiration of God....” The scripture itself is the interpretation or explanation of God’s will for man.

There are many passages in scripture that are so plain that no interpretation or explanation is needed. The challenge is to accept what they plainly teach. Mark 16:16 is such a passage. Did Jesus say that one who both believes and is baptized shall be saved, or not? If not, what did Jesus say? Which of the two – belief or baptism – are you willing to omit from the words of Jesus?

Jesus said, “He who rejects Me, and **does not receive My words**, has that which judges him — **the word that I have spoken** will judge him in the last day” (John 12:48). It is obviously a serious matter to reject what Jesus has said. Dear reader, are you willing to receive the words Jesus spoke? Are you willing to let Jesus explain what is necessary to salvation? Jesus also spoke of repentance and confessing faith in Him as necessary to salvation (Luke 13:3; Matthew 10:32). That’s not “my interpretation” but the interpretation of Jesus as to what is necessary for salvation. May God help each of us to submit to the words of Jesus in loving obedience to all that He has commanded for our salvation. Questions? Submit them to greenplaincoc@gmail.com. Visit our website greenplainchurchofchrist.org and gbntv.org.