

Answering Questions About Salvation (Part 1)

“And you shall know the truth, and
the truth shall make you free.”

– John 8:32

A Word of Caution

Of all the religious questions one might face, few cut to the very core of a person's beliefs and identity than those dealing with salvation.

- Rarely does one have the opportunity to cause more offense with poorly chosen words, wrong attitudes
- The servant of God must be ready to answer:
 - With truth, not opinion (II Tim 3:16-4:2)
 - With compassion for the lost (Matt 9:35ff; Col 1:28-29)
 - With gentleness and humility (II Tim 2:24ff; II Cor 5:20)

➤ **May we never move the lost away from the gospel because of our manner and approach!**

A Word of Caution

A word on answering with humility (II Tim 2:25, etc.):

- Bible answers are given with God's knowledge and wisdom, not your own (Jam 3:17-18; I Cor 2:1-5)
- Answers of hope are aimed to compassionately save soul, not to win an argument (i.e. quarrel)
- No one has all the answers: each one of us has been wrong, and may even now need correction (II Tim 3:16-17)
- **When it comes to salvation, every soul is ultimately in the hands of God:**
 - We are given the responsibility to teach and to obey
 - In the end, Christ will judge and “reward each according to his works” (Matt 16:27)

What Must I Do To Be Saved?

Christians need to be careful not to answer this question in the form of a code or creed:

- Some denominations would give answers that are not Scriptural
 - e.g. “Believe in Jesus and accept Him into your heart as your personal Savior by asking Him, in prayer, to save you”... **This is a creed of men:**
 - There is not a single verse in the New Testament that would instruct an alien sinner to pray in order to gain salvation!
- But sometimes faithful Christians answer in the form of a code or creed, too!
 - Ever heard of the “Five Steps To Salvation”?

What Must I Do To Be Saved?

Note:

“As an evangelist, [Walter Scott’s] approach (c. 1829, DWB) was simple. He used five fingers on one hand to illustrate “the plan of salvation” – faith, repentance, baptism, forgiveness of sins, and the gift of the Holy Spirit. With slight changes, this formula became the basis of five-step, “first-principle” sermons among conservative Disciples and churches of Christ.”

– Dr. Robert Hooper, *A Distinct People* (pg. 5)

What Must I Do To Be Saved?

The common tract answer usually goes like this:

1. Hear (Rom 10:17)
 2. Believe (John 3:16)
 3. Repent (Mark 1:15)
 4. Confess (Rom 10:9)
 5. Be Baptized (Acts 2:38)
- Sometimes Bible verses are not even listed!
 - Does this list really even provide a complete explanation of each “step”
 - Each one of these “steps” is Scriptural...but is this really a complete list of what an unbeliever needs to learn to be saved?

What Must I Do To Be Saved?

- **The gospel is not a code of five steps!**
- Man can ask no greater question than, “What must I do to be saved?”
- **The simple answer from the Bible is this:**
 - *Believe in Jesus Christ, the resurrected Son of God!*
 - John 1:12, 3:16-18
 - *Obey whatever He instructs you through His word!*
 - Mark 16:15-16; Matt 28:18-20; Heb 5:9
- **We must be able to show, by our own obedience and by the way that we use the Scriptures, that to be saved a person one must search God’s word, not the creeds of men, and obey all things Christ has commanded!**

To Be Saved: Different Answers?

1. As we read through Acts, it sometimes appears that the apostles (etc.) told different people to do different things to be saved.
 2. Some New Testament verses appear on the surface to indicate different methods of being saved in Christ.
- **Does the New Testament really give different answers to the most important question: “What must I do to be saved?”**

To Be Saved: Different Answers?

1. Examples in the book of Acts

- Acts 2:38 – “Repent and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins”
- Acts 3:19 – “Repent therefore and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out”
- Acts 8:12 – “But when they believed Philip as he preached the things concerning the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, both men and women were baptized”
- Acts 8:22 – “Repent therefore of this your wickedness, and pray God if perhaps the thought of your heart may be forgiven you”
- Acts 13 – at first, nothing...then, “And as many as had been appointed to eternal life believed.”

To Be Saved: Different Answers?

1. Examples in the book of Acts

- Acts 16:15 – “And when she and her household were baptized”
- Acts 16:31-33 – “‘Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved, you and your household.’ ... And immediately he and all his family were baptized”
- Acts 18:8 – “And many of the Corinthians, hearing, believed and were baptized.”
- Acts 19:5 – “When they heard this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus”
- Acts 22:16 – “And now why are you waiting? Arise and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on the name of the Lord.”

To Be Saved: Different Answers?

Side Note: Some people claim that the **book of Acts**, being an historical narrative, should not be used for doctrine (i.e. teaching what Christians should believe and practice)

- **This viewpoint is false for several reasons:**
 - Jesus Christ frequently used historical narratives in His own teaching – e.g. Matt 12:1-8,38-42, 19:1-10
 - The apostles also taught from these same Old Testament books of historical narrative – e.g. I Cor 10:1-13; I Pet 3:18-22
 - Historical narrative or not, all Scripture is given by inspiration of God that man may know His will – II Tim 3:16-17, etc.
 - The majority of the information we know about Christ and His doctrine comes from the four gospels, all historical narratives!
- **The book of Acts is full of patterns left by the Christians who followed first hand the apostles' doctrine (Acts 2:42) – patterns that all Christians are commanded to follow (Phil 3:17)!**

To Be Saved: Different Answers?

1. Examples in the book of Acts

- **What do we learn from these examples of conversion?**
 - There are multiple stages that a person must pass through to be saved by God in Christ
 - i.e. a person must hear the gospel before believing, and must believe in Jesus Christ before being baptized for the remission of sins, etc.
 - First ask, “What had those converted *already* done?”
 - Then ask, “What were they told to do next to come to salvation in Christ.” **For example:**
- Acts 2:38 – These people already heard the gospel and believed it (vs. 37): they were commanded to next repent and be baptized for the remission of sins

To Be Saved: Different Answers?

1. Examples in the book of Acts

- Acts 16:31-33 – The Philippian jailer needed to hear the gospel and believe it **before** he could be saved:
 - What good would it have done, at that first moment, to command him to be baptized?
 - What would baptism have even meant without belief in Christ's resurrection? See Rom 6:1-4; Col 2:11-12; Mark 16:15-16
 - Clearly, the gospel Paul preached included the **urgent need** for the Philippian and his household to be baptized (see also Acts 8:35-38 and Acts 2:38)
 - Could Luke say that the Philippian jailer had truly “believed in God” if he refused to be baptized? See Mark 16:15-16, etc.

Conversions in Acts : Different Answers?

The Pentecost Jews

Acts 2:1-42

- Witnessed the miraculous authority of the apostles (vs. 1-13)
- Heard the gospel preached (vs. 22-36)
- Witnessed the miracles and signs of Jesus (vs. 22)
- Knew the Old Testament Scriptures concerning Christ (vs. 25-28, etc.)
- Believed the gospel (vs. 37)
- **Needed to repent and be baptized for the remission of sins (vs. 38)!**

The Philippian Jailer

Acts 16:25-34

- Witness the devotion and authority of Paul and Silas (vs. 25-30)
- Had NOT heard the gospel
- Had NOT witnessed Jesus
- Knew NOTHING of the Old Testament Scriptures
- **This man was starting from square one!**
- **Needed to hear the gospel and believe it (vs. 31-32)!**
- **Repentance and obedience would then follow (vs. 33-34)!**

To Be Saved: Different Answers?

1. Examples in the book of Acts

- Acts 8:22 – Why was Simon told to pray for the forgiveness of sins?
 - He had already believed the gospel and been baptized to become a Christian (vs. 13)!
 - Never in the entirety of the New Testament is an unbeliever told to pray in order to be saved!
- Acts 8:12, 18:8 – Repentance is not specifically mentioned: did these people not need to repent in order to be saved? See Matt 9:13, etc.
- Acts 22:16 – Saul had heard (even seen), believed, repented, even fasted and prayed for three days: he was **still** commanded to be baptized to “wash away [his] sins”

To Be Saved: Different Answers?

1. Examples in the book of Acts

- The message of the gospel never changed! Only the particular circumstances of those who wanted to be saved in Christ.
 - Did the apostles have more than one gospel to preach to the whole world? See Matt 28:18-20; Mark 16:15-16
 - Would Paul have preached a different message to different people? See Acts 20:27, I Cor 4:17
 - Would Paul have expected others to be saved through a process different than he went through himself?
 - See Rom 6:4; Eph 2:5, 4:1-6; 1 Cor 12:13 (note the pronouns “we” and “us”)

To Be Saved: Different Answers?

1. Examples in the book of Acts

- **Examples of conversion complement, not contradict!**
- Same principle used in interpreting the four gospels:
 - Carefully examine all accounts in order to comprehend the full story and truth!
 - e.g. look at all four accounts of the crucifixion, etc.
- In fact, this is a key aspect of Bible interpretation in general:
 - John 17:17 with Ps 119:160 – God’s word, taken in its entirety, is truth
 - **We must not interpret one passage in such a way that it is forced to contradict other passages of Scripture**

To Be Saved: Different Answers?

1. Examples in the book of Acts

Elements of Conversion in the Book of Acts

Text	Teaching	Believing	Confessing	Repenting	Baptizing
Acts 2:38	YES	<i>implied</i>	<i>implied</i>	YES	YES
Acts 8:12	YES	YES	<i>implied</i>	<i>implied</i>	YES
Acts 8:13	<i>implied</i>	YES	<i>implied</i>	<i>implied</i>	YES
Acts 8:37	YES	<i>implied</i>	YES	<i>implied</i>	YES
Acts 9:5ff	YES	<i>implied</i>	<i>implied</i>	<i>implied</i>	YES
Acts 10:34ff	YES	YES	<i>implied</i>	YES	YES
Acts 16:14ff	YES	<i>implied</i>	<i>implied</i>	<i>implied</i>	YES
Acts 16:25ff	YES	YES	<i>implied</i>	YES	YES
Acts 17:32ff	YES	YES	<i>implied</i>	<i>implied</i>	<i>implied</i>
Acts 18:8	YES	YES	<i>implied</i>	<i>implied</i>	YES
Acts 19:1ff	YES	<i>implied</i>	<i>implied</i>	<i>implied</i>	YES

To Be Saved: Different Answers?

2. New Testament verses about salvation

- Do certain verses in the New Testament teach different paths to the same salvation in Jesus Christ?
- Is Rom 10:9,10 all a person needs to be saved?
- What about 1 Pet 3:21 or John 3:16? Or Acts 2:38 or Eph 2:8-9 or Rom 6:1-4? And the list goes on...
 - Carefully examine each verse in context: who was it written to and what do we know about them?
 - What else is said in the same book/letter about gaining salvation in Christ?
 - **Cross reference with other verses in the New Testament:** “the entirety of God’s word is truth” (Ps 119:160)!

To Be Saved: Different Answers?

2. New Testament verses about salvation

- **Example 1:**
- Rom 10:9,10 – Believe and confess: is this all a person must do to be saved in Christ?
 - In light of the whole New Testament, what about hearing , repentance, and baptism, etc.?
 - Rom 1:7 – this letter is written to saved people who already knew *how* to be saved in Jesus Christ
 - Rom 6:1-4 – previously in the same letter, Paul examined the fact that a person begins to walk in newness of life (i.e. is saved) *upon being baptized*
 - Acts 22:16 – “we” and “us” in Rom 6:1-4 indicates that the Romans shared Paul’s same baptism to “wash away” sins!

To Be Saved: Different Answers?

2. New Testament verses about salvation

- **Example 2:**
- I Cor 1:21 – Does God save those who *only* believe and nothing more?
 - I Cor 1:13 – These Christians (1:2) had also all been baptized in the name of Jesus Christ
 - 1 Cor 12:13 – Specifically they had all been baptized into Christ (see Acts 18:8 with Gal 3:26f, Col 2:12)
 - Acts 22:16 – “we” in I Cor 12:13 indicates that the Corinthians had been baptized in the same way as Paul, i.e. to “wash away” sins!
- Again, could we say a person truly “believes” if they reject Christ’s teaching on baptism? See Mark 16:16, etc.

To Be Saved: Different Answers?

2. New Testament verses about salvation

- **Example 3:**
- I Pet 3:21 – Is baptism all a person must do to be saved?
 - I Pet 1:7-9 – The salvation of their souls is said to be the result of their faith (cf. Col 2:12)
 - I Pet 1:22 – Their obedience came from listening to and believing in the truth (cf. John 8:32, 17:17)
 - I Pet 4:16-19 – These saved persons were warned to fully obey the gospel, faithfully doing good
- What would baptism mean without faith in the power of God and the resurrection of His Son?
 - Mark 16:15-16; Rom 6:1-4; Col 2:12; etc.

To Be Saved: Different Answers?

2. New Testament verses about salvation

- **Example 4:**
- **Eph 2:8-9** – Does having faith and God's grace mean that we don't need *any* obedient works to be saved?
 - I Pet 1:22, 4:17; Heb 5:9; II Thes 1:8 – The Scriptures make it clear that only the *obedient* will be saved
 - Eph 2:9; Titus 3:5 – However, no one can *earn* salvation by any formula of good works he or she chooses
 - Matt 10:14, 17:5; John 6:29; I John 3:23; John 12:42; Matt 10:32; Acts 17:30; Acts 2:38, 22:16 – Listening to the truth, believing in Christ, confessing Him, repenting from sins and being baptized in Christ **are all *works* that man chooses to do before receiving salvation from God!**

To Be Saved: Different Answers?

2. New Testament verses about salvation

▪ Example 4: What can we conclude?

- Our interpretation must agree with all the Scriptures.
- **Neither faith nor grace imply that our salvation does not depend also on obedience:**
 - Read Gen 6:8,22; Josh 6:1-20; Heb 11:7-10; Jam 2:14-26
 - Even when we stand in His saving grace, God still demands our obedience to receive His blessing (see Titus 2:11-12)
 - Faith is only made perfect, i.e. able to save, if accompanied by obedience (see Heb 3:13-4:2)
- **God's grace does not profit and faith is dead if we are not willing to obey!**

To Be Saved: Different Answers?

2. New Testament verses about salvation

- Example 4: What can we conclude?

1. God demands our obedience in order to be saved
2. We cannot possibly earn salvation by obedient works of our own choosing
3. There are some works that God requires **equally** of all people who seek salvation in Christ



No Reason To Boast!!

To Be Saved: Different Answers?

2. New Testament verses about salvation

- **Example 4: What can we conclude?**
 - **God's grace in combination with a believing and obedient heart brings salvation through Christ's blood!**
 - *"not of works, lest anyone should boast"* – these *"works"* cannot refer to hearing, believing, confession, repentance, or baptism!
1. All of these works (i.e. obedient choices of man) are absolutely necessary for any person to be saved
 2. If all Christians have done these things to be saved (cf. Eph 4:4-5; etc.), **how could any one of us possibly boast in our salvation?**

To Be Saved: Different Answers?

Bottom line: The inspired word of God reveals the truth when we examine it as a **whole**.

- **No one verse alone is enough to establish all a person needs to know and do to be saved in Christ!**
- In fact, taking only one verse out of context and without consulting the whole word can be deceitful
 - See Matt 4:5-6 with John 8:44
 - Also II Pet 3:14-18; II Tim 4:1-4; etc.
- **Search the Scriptures, listen to the whole truth, and learn to “obey all things [Christ has] commanded” (Matt 28:20)!**

Will God Forgive All Sins In Christ?

Some people bear so much guilt from their past misdeeds that they question whether or not God can and will forgive them.

- The unequivocal answer from Scripture is: YES!
 - In Jesus Christ (Eph 1:7; Col 1:14; Gal 3:26-27), God forgives every sin
 - See I John 1:7; Titus 2:14; Heb 8:12; the example of Saul, I Tim 1:15; etc.
 - The gift of God's forgiveness is available to all who will repent and come to Him in Christ (cf. John 3:16; Acts 2:38-39; etc.)

Will God Forgive All Sins In Christ?

What about “blasphemy against the Holy Spirit”?

- Read Matt 12:22-32 with Mark 3:20-30
- The verses on the previous slide show that there is not a single sin that God is not willing to forgive
- In Matt 12 and Mark 3, a group of unbelievers defiantly blasphemed the work of the Spirit (i.e. Christ’s miracles) and attributed them to Satan
 - These works of the Spirit were God’s testimony to the truth of Christ!
 - See Acts 2:22; John 5:36, 10:25, 14:8-11 (with 20:30-31); I Cor 12:11
- **These unbelievers rejected Christ, blaspheming the very proof of His deity, and thus would remain unforgiven and lost!**

Will God Forgive All Sins In Christ?

What about “blasphemy against the Holy Spirit”?

- It's important to see that the specific blasphemy committed by the Jews in Matt 12 cannot be committed by us today...
 - They blasphemed the miracles of the Spirit, but now the era of miraculous spiritual gifts is over (see Acts 8; I Cor 13:8-13; etc.)
- However, a person might commit this same error and remain in unforgiven unbelief by:
 - Attributing the word of God, revealed by the Spirit, to man or the devil (see John 16; I Cor 2; etc.)
 - Attributing the growth and change of godly people, learned by the Spirit (Gal 5:16-26), to false religion or even the devil
- **The point is this: until such a person is willing to listen to Christ and be saved by obedient faith, he or she cannot be forgiven by God. [Read Acts 4:12]**

Will Only Members of the Church Be Saved?

The Short Answer:

- If a person desires to be saved, he or she must come to that salvation through Jesus Christ
 - “I am the way, the truth, and the life: no one comes to the father except through Me” (John 14:6)
 - “Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved” (Acts 4:12)
 - “But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name” (John 1:12)
- And if you are saved in Jesus Christ, God adds you to the church, the spiritual body of Christ – no exceptions!
 - Read Acts 2:47; Eph 1:22-23 w. I Cor 12:13, Rom 6:4, Gal 3:26-27
 - Saved people don’t choose whether or not to be part of the church: the church is only composed of saved people!

Will Only Members of the Church Be Saved?

The Not-As-Short Answer:

- If by “church,” you mean any particular local congregation:
 - **No:** salvation does not necessarily depend on what local church a person chooses to join
 - All Christians must choose a local church with which to work and worship (see *Answering Questions about the Church*), **and we will answer to God for our decision (cf. II Cor 5:10)**
 - Unfaithful churches may contain faithful members (cf. Rev 2:18-29; 3:1-6) ... (*though it is difficult to conceive why they would remain there indefinitely if things don't change...*)
 - Faithful churches may contain unfaithful members (cf. I Cor 5; Rev 2:12-16) in need of exhortation and repentance
 - SO, it is impossible for us to know the number of saved people simply by counting faithful local churches...

Will Only Members of the Church Be Saved?

The Long Answer:

- If you made it through the first two slides, you are still wondering whether there are saved people who are not part of any faithful or unfaithful church...
 - **i.e. can people who are not Christians be saved?**
 - Those who heard the gospel but rejected it...
 - Those who heard the gospel, believed, but never became a Christian...
 - Those who never heard the gospel at all...
- 1. The Christian must believe that all unsaved people desperately need to hear the gospel to be saved, or else we would have no motivation to teach it (cf. Mark 16:15-16; Col 1:28-29)

Will Only Members of the Church Be Saved?

The Long Answer:

2. No one is really innocent: all rational, competent adults have sinned and separated themselves from God
 - See Rom 3:9,23; Isa 59:1-3; Rom 6:16,23; etc.
3. The prescription for forgiveness of those sins and reconciliation with God is to believe and obey the gospel of Christ, one and all
 - John 3:16,8:24; Rom 3:21-26; Heb 7:25; I Pet 1:22-25; etc.
4. The New Testament speaks of those who reject the gospel as having proved themselves “unworthy of everlasting life” (Acts 13:46)
5. And of those who believe but will not live for Christ as those who Christ will reject before the Father (Matt 10:32-33)

Will Only Members of the Church Be Saved?

The Long Answer:

- Concerning those who live and die having never heard the gospel:
 - **If you're reading this, you are not in that hypothetical position: listen to the gospel and be saved in Christ!**
- ***But, in the end, will you judge who is saved or lost!?***
- *We cannot possibly know the eternal fate of every soul:* God will judge all mankind and reward each according to His works (II Tim 4:1; Matt 16:27)
 - “Who can tell if God will turn and relent, and turn away from His fierce anger, so that we may not perish” (Jonah 3:9; cf. Joel 2:12-14, II Sam 12:22)

Will Only Members of the Church Be Saved?

- **To all those who have opportunity to hear the saving message of Christ: test its truth, believe and obey to be saved, and preach that gracious message to anyone and everyone who will listen!**