

Lesson Four

Instructions To Believers About Salvation

Basic Studies in the Good News of Jesus Christ
By Dr. Bill Denton

There is a lot of disagreement among Christians about salvation. You may hear some say that all you have to do to be saved is believe in Jesus. You may hear others say something different. What does the Bible say? Amazingly, what often gets left out of the discussion are the very clear instructions given to believers in Jesus about being saved. Instead of promoting a particular church doctrine, or even a popular answer about salvation, it makes more sense to see what the Bible urges believers to do so that they can be saved.

What's important about these instructions is this: No act of obedience results in you saving yourself, nor will God save you because you got things right. You are saved by Jesus Christ through His death on the cross. His blood is the sacrifice for sin that cleanses us from the guilt and consequences of all our violations of God's will. Still, you might be surprised to discover that God wants to see more than just a decision of our minds. There are a few other things that are related directly to salvation in the same way as belief. We might even say that all of these things are based on our belief in Jesus as Savior. It's important to remember two things: First, we're the ones with a problem, not the answer; and second, Jesus is the one with the real solution to our problem. Let's take a look at three important responses of faith: repentance, confession, and baptism. All relate to salvation.

Repentance

I tell you, no, but unless you repent, you will all likewise perish (Luke 13:3, 5, NASU).

"Life or death" things matter! Such things are important because one way results in life, but the other way results in death. We pay attention to "life or death" things because the consequences are so serious. Jesus put repentance in this category. Notice that repentance I put to us in the same way as belief in Jesus:

Therefore I said to you that you will die in your sins; for unless you believe that I am He, you will die in your sins (John 8:24, NASU).

Jesus said that if people did not believe in Him, then they would die in their sins. In Luke 13:3 and 5, repentance is presented in the same way. Believe or you die in your sins. Repent or you will perish. Both are important elements of salvation. Believe and you will not die in your sin, but live. Repent, and you will not perish, but live. Belief and repentance result in life. There are many verses that tell us God wants for us to repent. These tell us that repentance is very much connected to living as opposed to perishing. Here are others that instruct sinners to repent.

Mark 1:15 (NASB95)

15 and saying, "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel."

Luke 24:46–47 (NASB95)

46 and He said to them, "Thus it is written, that the Christ would suffer and rise again from the dead the third day, 47 and that repentance for forgiveness of sins would be proclaimed in His name to all the nations, beginning from Jerusalem.

Acts 3:19 (NASB95)

19 "Therefore repent and return, so that your sins may be wiped away, in order that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord;

The word "repent" means to "change your mind." It carries the idea of "turning" from sin back to God. Sinners need to change the way they think.

Earlier in our study, you learned about the problem of sin. Worse, you learned that the real problem is that YOU are a sinner. More, you learned that sin brings God's judgment and condemnation. You then discovered that Jesus is the answer for your sin problem, that He died so you could be saved. You do not have to suffer judgment or condemnation. That's good news!

Now, think about this for a moment. Why would God send Jesus to die for your sins, to offer forgiveness for sins, and to relieve you from suffering the consequences of your sins and then leave you in the same mess where he found you? Repentance makes good sense. But the instruction to repent only makes sense to those who believe in Jesus. Repentance is the response of an obedient faith, one that accepts Jesus as the Son of God, trusts Him to do the saving, and is then willing to follow the will of the Savior. He wants to move you away from your sins. Do not miss the connection the Bible makes between salvation and repenting. It's a "life or death" thing.

In the early part of your study, you were asked to identify some of the sins you recognize in yourself. Go back to that earlier study and review the list of sins you made. Or write down a new list. You need to get your sins in mind at this point because to be saved, you're going to have to do something about the way you think about your life and how you live it.

Are you willing not to change your mind about the sins on your personal list? Are you willing to give them up? Are you willing to do your best to stop practicing them? Check your answer:

- Yes
- No

Those who refuse to repent will find no comfort in the Bible about salvation. However, people who do repent are promised that their sins will be forgiven.

Repentance is the part of our response to Jesus that says, "Because I believe I'm lost in sin and because I believe You (Jesus) will save me, I will change my mind about the way I live. I will turn away from my sins and turn to You."

You will find that repentance is not just a one-time act. As you continue to discover sins in your life and as you struggle with persistent sins, you will find many opportunities to repent and ask God's forgiveness through Jesus Christ.

Confession

Confession is an open, verbal statement about what we believe. Earlier, you were asked to think about "life or death" things. The Bible speaks about confession in much the same way. Jesus said,"

32 "Therefore everyone who confesses Me before men, I will also confess him before My Father who is in heaven. 33 "But whoever denies Me before men, I will also deny him before My Father who is in heaven. Matthew 10:32–33 (NASB95)

This is another one of those one-way-or-another statements. It's clear that Jesus said if we confess Him, he will confess us. If we deny Him, He will deny us. It's one way or the other.

In the letter to the church at Rome, the apostle Paul explained the connection between our confession of Jesus and salvation. He put it this way:

Romans 10:8–11 (NASB95)

8 But what does it say? "THE WORD IS NEAR YOU, IN YOUR MOUTH AND IN YOUR HEART"—that is, the

word of faith which we are preaching, 9 that 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; 10 for with the heart a person believes, resulting in righteousness, and with the mouth he confesses, resulting in salvation. 11 For the Scripture says, "WHOEVER BELIEVES IN HIM WILL NOT BE DISAPPOINTED."

Paul was trying to get these Christians to understand their faith and the resulting salvation. Faith produced their confession – that open, verbal statement of belief about Jesus held in their hearts. He wanted them to have full confidence in Jesus, and unwavering belief in his power to save them from their sins, but he also wanted them to understand how important it was to confess the Savior.

In this confession, we are saying in effect, "Friends listen as I tell you what I believe about myself. I am a lost sinner, condemned to perish. But Jesus, God's Son, died that I might be saved. I believe in Him and all that He did for me, and I am making it known what I hold dear in my heart."

That is no small statement, for it is the only way anyone other than yourself will ever clearly know what you believe about Jesus Christ.

Another verse from Hebrews says this:

Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful (Hebrews 10:23, NASU).

Jesus is faithful. He will never let us down or fail us. His promise to save us is a sure one. We should "hold fast" our confession of faith in Jesus. That means we should hold on to it tightly. How do we hold on tightly to something we say? By not only making our confession openly to others but also by living it out in our lives.

When we state our belief in Jesus, it is literally more than words, for it expresses the belief and hope of our hearts in the saving work of Jesus Christ on the cross that cleanses us from our sins and brings us God's gift of eternal life. Confession does not promote us; it promotes Jesus. It can only say about ourselves that we are sinners who need to be saved. It says about Jesus that He is the Savior.

Baptism

Baptism is one of the most controversial subjects you can think about. There is great variation of understanding and belief about baptism. The approach of this study is to encourage you to consider what the Bible says and to see what believers in Jesus who wanted to be saved were taught about baptism.

Does it matter whether one is immersed or sprinkled? Does pouring water on someone's head count as a baptism? Do these questions matter? They do if your interest is to learn what the Bible teaches.

An in-depth study of the form of baptism is beyond the scope of this study. However, scholars almost universally agree that, originally, baptism was an immersion in water. The Greek word "baptidzo" (basically means "to immerse or overwhelm.") The practice of the early church was to immerse believers. Other practices, such as sprinkling or pouring, came much later. Immersion is a fitting form of baptism because of the symbolism of the act. As we will see shortly, baptism is a burial and resurrection; thus, immersion is the only form that is true to the symbolic meaning. Therefore, in this study, you need to know that by "baptism" we mean "immersion" in water.

The popular idea heard so often today is that baptism has nothing to do with salvation. We are told that baptism is an "act of merit," so therefore it cannot have anything to do with salvation. If it did, then we would be earning our salvation, and that would destroy grace.

However, that is an explanation about baptism that is not found in the Bible. In fact, you will soon discover that the Bible connects baptism to salvation in the same way that belief, repentance, and confession are connected. Instead of presenting baptism as a “work of merit,” the Bible presents it as what we might call a “work of faith.”

Would you be surprised to know that instead of saying that baptism does not save us, the Bible actually says that baptism DOES save us? Take a look at this verse:

Corresponding to that, baptism now saves you—not the removal of dirt from the flesh, but an appeal to God for a good conscience—through the resurrection of Jesus Christ, 1 Peter 3:21NASB95

Here is this same verse in two other translations. Read these carefully, and then we’ll look at something interesting.

There is also an antitype which now saves us— baptism (not the removal of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God), through the resurrection of Jesus Christ, (1 Peter 3:21, NKJV).

also to which an antitype doth now save us – baptism, (not a putting away of the filth of flesh, but the question of a good conscience in regard to God,) through the rising again of Jesus Christ (1 Peter 3:21, YLT).

These two versions (Young’s Literal Translation and the New King James Version), use a very unique word to refer to baptism. It is the word “antitype.” Get your minister or your Sunday School teacher to explain the concept of “types” and “antitypes.” Basically, “types” are shadows and “antitypes” are realities. Peter used Noah and the flood waters as a “type”; in other words, it served as a shadow pointing to something else. Noah and his family rode out the flood in the ark. The waters of the flood destroyed the sinful world but saved Noah and his crew. The reality, or “antitype,” is baptism, and the really shocking thing is Peter’s statement about what it does. He said that baptism saves. That is quite different from what a lot of others are saying, and even with this passage, you’ll find that many try to turn it around to say the opposite.

Hold on a minute before you run too far with that. Pay attention to what gives baptism its power. It is the resurrection of Jesus Christ. That is the point you need to understand about baptism. Without Jesus, baptism has no power. Jesus provides baptism with its meaning and its symbolism, and that is what makes it effective against sin.

Baptism plays an important role in the conversion stories found in the New Testament. If you compare what people were taught then to what they are sometimes taught today, we might summarize it this way: In the Bible, people were encouraged to be baptized as a display of faith in Jesus Christ because they wanted to be saved. Today, it almost seems that people are discouraged from being baptized as a way of showing faith in Jesus. People tend to disconnect baptism from salvation, but the Bible consistently maintains a direct connection between our faith in Jesus, his sacrifice that provides for the forgiveness of sins, and baptism that pictures the transforming power and process of the gospel.

Read the following passages that tell us about baptism. Check the boxes as you finish reading each passage.

- Mark 16:16
- Acts 2:38-42
- Acts 8:26-40
- Acts 16:14-16
- Acts 22:16
- Romans 6:1-18

- Galatians 3:26-27
- Colossians 2:8-14
- 1 Peter 3:21

Baptism is something that every believer is to experience. It draws its power from that which it symbolizes: the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. There is no hint that it is any kind of “act of merit”; rather it is an act of faith in Jesus by people needing to be saved.

Let’s tie these things together in a pictorial way. The story of Jesus begins with his birth. He was God come in the flesh to live among us. He came to die on the cross as a sacrifice for sins. He was buried in a tomb, but three days later he rose from the dead, giving us hope of eternal life. He ascended back to heaven to sit at the right hand of the Father. One day, He will return and call the whole world into judgment. At that point, the saved will be glorified with Him and receive a home in heaven.

Jesus came into this world for you! He came to experience life the same way you do. He understands all about temptation and the pull of sin. However, he lived a perfect, sinless life, enabling him to be your Savior. You can know how much God loved you by knowing that He sent His Son to die for your sins.

On the cross, Jesus served his greatest purpose -- to be the sacrificial lamb, giving his blood to wash our sins away. He was the perfect, sinless man who died for all of us who are so imperfect and sinful. He took our place, took our punishment, and gave us his life.

Death could not hold Him. Three days after His burial, his disciples discovered that the tomb was empty. He appeared to them many times after that, continuing to teach them and proving beyond any doubt that He is God’s Son.

After spending several days more with his disciples, Jesus ascended back to heaven. He serves us as our great High Priest, continues to give us strength to overcome sin, and rules over His kingdom. He is King of kings and Lord of lords. We serve a risen Savior Who is also our King and our Priest.

One day, Jesus will come again to judge the world. For Christians this is not a fearful time; rather, it is one of joy and celebration. He is coming -- not to save us, for He did that on the cross -- to judge the world and to take us home to heaven. We will be with Jesus forever!

Do you see what God has done for you through Jesus Christ? Do you understand all of this was done because he loves you very much? Do you understand it was all necessary because you are a sinner and your sins had made a separation between you and God? Do you understand that you can’t resolve the problem, that only God could provide an answer for sin? We call the story of Jesus the “gospel” or “good news,” because it is the message revealing how God solves our sin problem and offers salvation and eternal life.

Again, you must also focus on what it is that you believe about Jesus. Do you believe this message about how God solved our sin problem? Do you believe Jesus is God’s Son? Do you believe Jesus took your sins upon himself and bore them on the cross? Do you believe that, in his blood, there is a sacrifice capable of taking away your sins? This is an extremely important point, and although we have covered this earlier, we come back to it now because you need to keep clear in your mind that Jesus saves through his death on the cross.

Let’s return to the subject of baptism. Answer the questions below based on the verses you read about baptism earlier.

From Mark 16:16, fill in the blanks below with the correct answer.

How does Mark identify the condemned person? He/she is the one who does not _____

How does Mark identify the saved person? He/she is the one who has _____ and has been _____.

Circle the correct answer in the sentence below.

Mark connects / disconnects salvation and baptism.

In Acts 2:38ff, what two instructions are given to the people who wanted to know what they must do?
_____ and _____

What are the two results of repentance and baptism in Acts 2:38? _____ and _____

In Acts 22:16, what does Ananias tell Saul to do, and why? _____

Romans 6 is a powerful passage where Paul is teaching that we must no longer live like we did before becoming a Christian. We cannot follow the same sinful lifestyle. He bases that on some very real changes that occur at baptism. From that passage, answer these questions.

Believers are baptized into the _____ of Jesus.

In baptism, we are _____ with Jesus into death.

The purpose of baptism is that as Christ was raised from the dead so we live in _____

Rom. 6:17-18 tells us that when the Romans were obedient from the heart to a "form of teaching" then they were freed from _____ and became slaves of _____.

In Gal. 3:26-27, what do those people do to "put on Christ?" _____

In 1 Pet 3:21, what does Peter say that baptism does? _____

It's time now to sit down with your study partner or mentor and talk about the things you have studied. Below, you will find a pictorial representation of baptism. You might find it helpful to talk with your partner about the symbolism and meaning of baptism. Be sure to talk to them about the way the Bible connects baptism to salvation and why. It's important that you understand baptism.

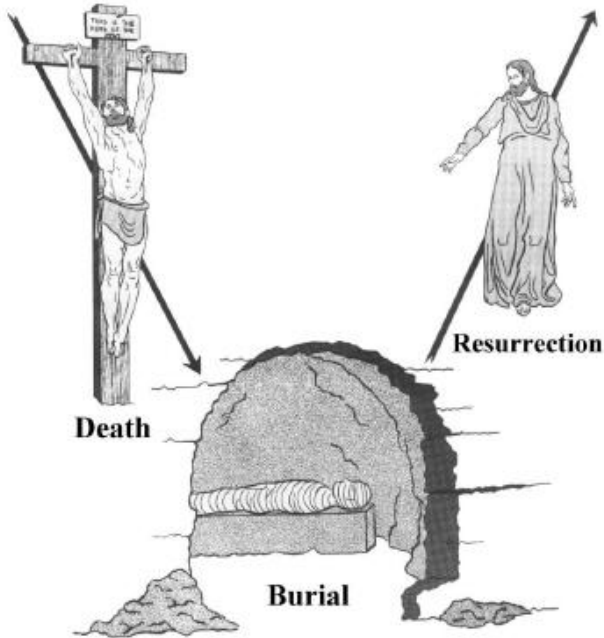
Study closely the pictorial presentation on the next page. The first pictures the gospel of Jesus Christ. The good news that Jesus died, was buried, and raised on the third. All this to forgive your sins and give you the gift of eternal life.

Following that page, you will find another quiz. Answer the questions and then send it to us by clicking on the "Submit" button at the bottom of the page. If we think you need to review any part of this lesson, we'll let you know. In the meantime, you can go ahead and start the next lesson.

God bless you as you grow in faith. Remember that understanding God's word and growing spiritually doesn't happen in an instant. It's really a life-long process. But you can be saved now! That's the greatest hope a sinner could have!

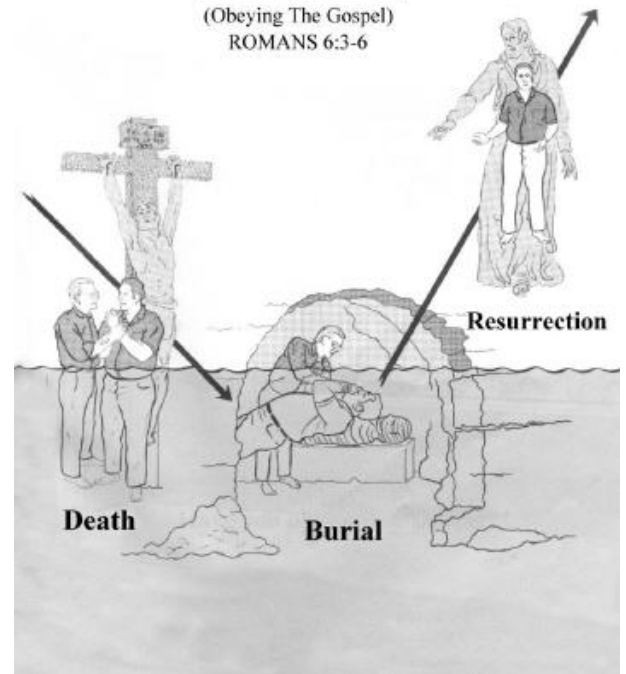
the Gospel enacted

I CORINTHIANS 15:3-4



the Gospel re-enacted in Baptism

(Obeying The Gospel)
ROMANS 6:3-6



Instructions About Salvation

Basic Bible Studies in the Gospel of Jesus Christ



This is Lesson 5. Retype the Lesson Number Here

1 = True

Your Name

2 = False

Your E-Mail Address

Answer True or False to each of the following

Repentance

T F

1. "Repent" means "change your mind."
2. Jn 8:24 makes repentance a "life or death" statement
3. In the Bible, repentance is optional.
4. I want to repent of my sins.

Confession

T F

5. Confession is a verbal statement of belief that Jesus is God's Son.
6. Rom 10:8-11 ties confession directly to salvation.
7. In the Bible, confession is optional.
8. I want to confess that I believe Jesus is the Son of God.

Baptism

T F

9. Baptism pictures Jesus' death, burial and resurrection.
10. 1 Peter 3:21 says that baptism saves.
11. In the Bible, baptism is optional.
12. I want to be baptized for the forgiveness of my sins.

Thank you for taking the time to fill out the quiz - We'll score your answers and return them to you soon.