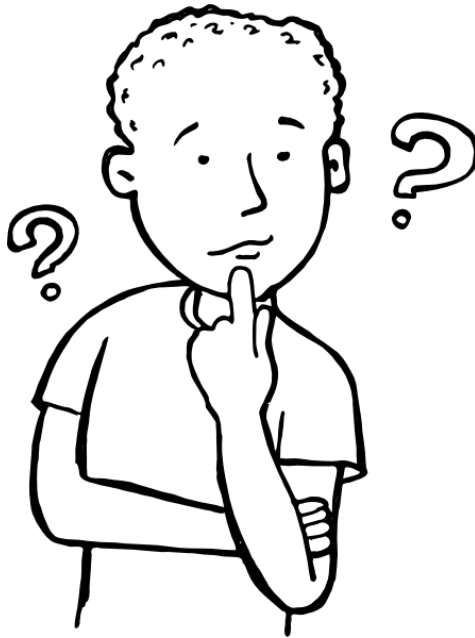


SHARON COPLEY ROAD CHURCH OF CHRIST

Why Am I Here?

Lesson 4

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Why Am I Here?

Lesson 4 – Obeying the Gospel

In Lesson 3, we saw that God, despite our sin, has extended grace (that which we do not deserve) toward us through the sacrifice of His Son, Jesus Christ (**Eph. 2:8-10**). We noticed that the message of salvation is referred to as the gospel (**Rom. 1:16**), that there is only one true gospel (**Gal. 1:6-9**), and that those who do not render obedience to the gospel will forfeit eternal life (**2 Thess. 1:3-10**).

In this lesson, we want to answer the question of “how?” How does a person obey the gospel? Men have proposed a number of different answers to that question. You have probably heard at least one of the following ideas:

- If you want to be saved, pray this prayer.
- If you want to be saved, accept Jesus into your heart.
- If you want to be saved, just believe.
- If you want to be saved, reach out and touch your television set.

Are these “prescriptions” what the Bible actually teaches though? This question gets to the heart of Paul’s words about there being just one true gospel. The facts of the gospel (**1 Cor. 15:1-4**) are almost always conveyed accurately. The variations we find involve the doctrine (or teachings) of Christ which are a part of the gospel message (**2 John 9**). Consider the following passages: **Matthew 28:18-20; Mark 16:15-16; Acts 2:42; John 14:26; 16:12-15; Acts 2:1-4; and 8:30-36**.

1. As you compare the accounts of the great commission in Matthew and Mark, what can we conclude about what all is contained in the gospel message?
2. What did the first Christians continue in after obeying the gospel in **Acts 2**? Given what we read in **John 14, 16**, and the first four verses of **Acts 2**, what can we conclude the “*apostle’s doctrine*” was? (cf. **1 Cor. 2:13**)
3. In the account in **Acts 8**, the eunuch asks Phillip about baptism (**vs. 36**). What had Phillip preached prior to this that, again, explains to us what all is contained in the gospel message?

What is the Bible’s prescription? What does the true gospel teach regarding salvation?

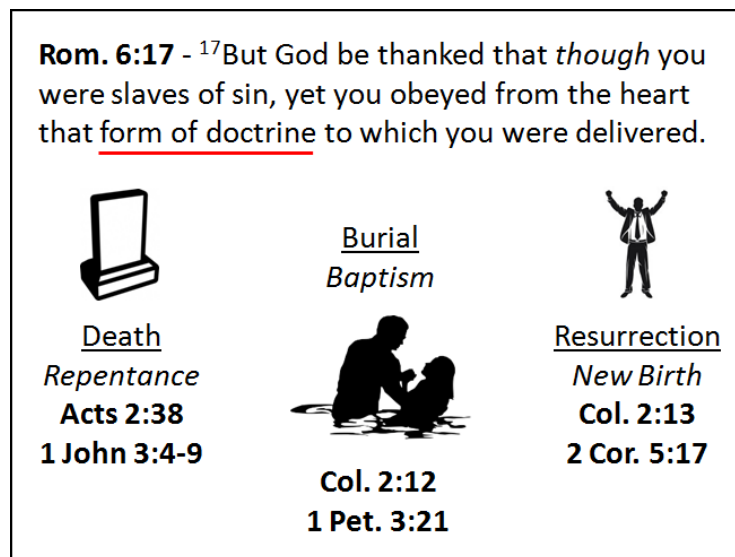
Putting on Christ

In **Romans 8:1**, Paul stated that “*There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit.*” In **Ephesians 1:7** we read that “*In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace.*” **2 Corinthians 5:17** states that “*if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed*

away; behold, all things have become new.” In Christ we have forgiveness of our sins. In Christ we are no longer under condemnation. In Christ we are created anew. We also find that in Christ is salvation and eternal life (**2 Tim. 2:10; 1 John 5:11**)! Obviously, to be “*in Christ*” is synonymous with having obeyed the gospel, given what we have noticed about the result of gospel obedience. How then does one put on Christ? Read the following passages: **Gal. 3:26-27** and **Romans 6:1-13**.

1. According to these passages, what transfers an individual into Christ?

Romans 6:17 states that “*though you were slaves of sin, yet you obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine to which you were delivered.*” This verse helps us to understand the purpose of the instructions we are given to obey the gospel/put on Christ. Do you recall the facts upon which the gospel is founded (**1 Cor. 15:1-4**)? The chart below shows us how repentance and baptism are a form of the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ:



1. Why, logically, would God demand that we repent? (cf. **Rom. 6:23; Isa. 59:1-2; 1 Pet. 2:24**)
2. What does baptism symbolize? (cf. **Col. 3:9-10; Rev. 7:13-14; Acts 22:16**)
3. Jesus stated in **John 3:5** that “*unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God.*” Explain the meaning of this using the other passages we have been considering. (cf. **Titus 3:3-7**)

What makes baptism work?

Going through the motions of baptism will not, in and of itself, save an individual. In **Matthew 15:8**, Jesus condemned certain ones of the Jews stating *“These people draw near to Me with their mouth, and honor Me with their lips, but their heart is far from Me.”* It is necessary, therefore, for a person to have belief. Christ said in **Mark 16:16** that *“he who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned.”*

Read **Colossians 2:11-13**. We are raised through what?

Some will dismiss baptism because they point out, and rightly so, that we are not saved by works but grace (**cf. Eph. 2:8-9**). According to the passage above, however, who is the one working/operating when we are baptized?

Baptism works because of our belief and trust in the powerful working of God! Faith, according to the Bible, involves both belief and action. We do not act so as to merit salvation; we act so as to demonstrate to God that we believe His promises, trust His ability to accomplish His Word, and love Him for all that He is and has done for us by embracing the new man made in the image of Christ.

Read **Hebrews 11:6**. How important is faith?

Read **Romans 10:17**. How does one get faith?

Read **James 2:14-26**. Do we have faith if we are not fulfilling God’s commands?

Read **1 John 4:19**. Why ought we to love God?

Read **John 14:15**. If we love God, what will we do?

Confession

Another essential element in the process of obedience to the gospel is confession. What do we mean by confession? Read **Acts 8:36-38**.

1. Does confession have anything to do with reciting one’s sins?
2. What was the confession that the eunuch made?

A lot of times, people will quote from **Romans 10:10** in support of “belief only” or “confession only” for salvation. This verse states that *“with the heart one believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.”* Notice, though, that belief leads one *unto* righteousness and confession leads one *unto* salvation. In other words, those actions will be followed by repentance, baptism, and faithful living because of the attitude of the individual under consideration. It is important that we look at the whole of Scripture and not just a verse here or there if we are going to properly understand God’s desire for us.

God’s way works

The story of Aaron’s sons in **Leviticus 10:1-3** illustrates for us that when we do things the way God has prescribed, the desired result is achieved. When we do things our own way, however, the result is just the opposite. We read in these verses that *“Nadab and Abihu, the sons of Aaron, each took his censer and put fire in it, put incense on it, and offered profane fire before the Lord, which He had not commanded them. So fire went out from the Lord and devoured them, and they died before the Lord. And Moses said to Aaron, ‘This is what the Lord spoke, saying: ‘By those who come near Me I must be regarded as holy; And before all the people I must be glorified.’” So Aaron held his peace.”*

It is important that we follow God’s prescription for salvation rather than making up our own version.

With regard to baptism, the Bible states in **Ephesians 4:5** that there is *“one baptism.”* We have already demonstrated the necessity of baptism, but let us consider some further details by looking at the following questions.

1. According to **Mark 16:16** and **Ezekiel 18:20**, why would infants be unfit candidates for baptism?
2. According to the language of **Romans 6:4** and **Colossians 2:12**, would sprinkling or pouring water over a person’s head constitute the *“one baptism?”*
3. Some will baptize for a purpose other than the remission of sins. For example, some will baptize as *“an outward sign of salvation already received.”* Is this consistent with Scripture? (cf. **Acts 2:38**)

Conclusion

The plan of salvation is really quite simple. It is truly amazing to consider that the God of the universe loved us enough to provide us with a pathway unto salvation despite our imperfections. A pathway, through His Son (**John 14:6**), that allows us to fulfill our purpose; a pathway that allows us to realize true joy and contentment. Ultimately, we can be with God in heaven for all eternity because Jesus Christ conquered death for us all. The Hebrew writer, in **Hebrews 2:14-15**, states, *“Inasmuch then as the children have partaken of flesh and blood, He [Christ] Himself likewise shared in the same, that through*

death He might destroy him who had the power of death, that is, the devil, and release those who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage.” The apostle Paul asked the question in **Romans 7:24**: “*who will deliver me from this body of death?*” He goes on in **verse 25** to answer that question: “*I thank God—through Jesus Christ our Lord!*”

Obedience to the gospel is just the beginning, though. As we noted earlier, such is referred to by Christ as a new birth (**John 3:3-5**). So what comes next? We will explore that question in Lesson 5.