

*What
Must
I Do
To Be
Saved
?*



By Robert G. Dockery

Introduction

We live in an age which is troubled by a number of perplexing and sobering questions. Many of the questions which concern us are Economic: Can world-wide inflation be controlled...? Does the world face economic collapse...? Should I change jobs...? Some of the questions we face are political: Can there be lasting peace in the Middle East...? How can we best deal with world-wide change...? Does the future hold war or peace...? Our most immediate problems are often personal: Is this the one I should marry...? What career should I pursue...? Can we afford a larger house...? Am I doing what is best for my children...? Life is literally filled with question marks!!!

There is a question which is far greater in importance than any of these other questions which we might ask... In comparison with this question all others become trivial and unimportant... It is a question which has the gravest possible consequences, both in this world and in the world to come...

1) We first encounter this question in the New Testament as John the Baptist was preaching in Luke 3.10. When John warned the people of the coming wrath of God and exposed their hypocrisy and sin, the cry went up: *"What shall we do then?"* This is a question which will assume overwhelming importance as the Gospel story continues to unfold!

2) The ministry of John gave way to the work and personal ministry of Jesus. Luke 18.18 tells of an occasion when Jesus was eagerly approached by a certain ruler with the urgent question: *"Good Master, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?"*

3) We turn to Acts 2. It is the birthday of the Church. The Apostle Peter has just completed a stirring sermon – the first Gospel Sermon ever preached. In his sermon Peter demonstrated the guilt of his audience in rejecting and crucifying the Son of God. Acts 2.37 notes: *"Now when they heard this, they were pricked in their heart, and said unto Peter and the rest of the Apostles, Men and Brethren, what shall we do?"*

4) We come next to Acts, chapter 9. Saul of Tarsus, on his way to Damascus to search out and seize Christians for persecution, is struck down by a brilliant light and is confronted by Jesus the Christ. In fear and trembling he manages to ask: *"Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?"* (Acts 9.6.)

5) Finally, we come to Acts 16. Paul and Silas have been imprisoned in Philippi for preaching the Gospel. During the night an earthquake

opens the prison doors. The jailer, fearing the worst, prepares to take his own life but is prevented by the Apostle Paul. At this point the jailer inquires: "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" (Acts 16.30.)

This is the greatest question ever asked! It was asked by a variety of people in a number of different situations. But one thing which they all had in common was the intense yearning to make their lives acceptable to God! We can consider no greater question today than the question: "What must I do to be saved...? ...?"

The Question Considered

The significance of this question can be gauged by looking at the individual words which are used in asking it.

1) What... Salvation begins with a question mark. Man is not saved by doing "what comes naturally," or "following his own inclinations." Man by himself does not have the answer. "The way of man is not in himself: it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps." (Jer. 10.23.)

2) Must... It is not a question of "What might I... could I... What maybe, might, possibly be an answer...?" It is a matter of necessity. That which is to be done is mandatory; definitely required.

3) I... This is a personal question. It applies to each of us individually. It is not a question about somebody else but about me!

4) Do... The world has a misconception at this point. Religion is not primarily something which is "gotten", "felt", "received", or "realized". It is something done! "And why call ye me Lord, Lord, and **do** not the things which I say?" (Luke 6.46.) "Not every one that sayeth unto me Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that **doeth** the will of my Father which is in heaven." (Matt. 7.21.) "But wilt thou know, O vain man, that faith without works is dead?" (James 2.29.) Action is necessary!

5) To Be Saved... "Saved" is a word which we associate with some of the most crucial situations in life. For example, a person is lost overboard from a ship and frantic efforts are made to launch a life-boat so that person can be saved! Someone is critically injured in a car wreck and is rushed to the hospital emergency room where the doctor is asked: "Can you save him?" Or imagine that three small children are trapped in an upper story of a burning apartment house. A fireman risks his own life to attempt a daring rescue so that they can be saved! Saving souls is more crucial than any of these situations! The soul is

eternal. (Matt. 16.26.) It is a fearful thing to be eternally lost. "Fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear him which is able to destroy both body and soul in hell." (Matt. 10.28.)

Three things make this the greatest question ever asked: (1) The value of the soul; (2) The fearfulness of being lost; (3) The length of eternity! No other question can possibly have such serious or long-reaching implications! All must come to grips with this great question!

The Question Answered

The modern religious world gives all sorts of different answers to the question, "What Must I Do To Be Saved...?" Many people are bewildered by the variety of conflicting answers which are heard. Which is right...? How can I know which road leads to salvation? God has given us a Book which has the answer! It is within the pages of God's Word that we are told what we **must** do! If we will take our Bibles and study them carefully, we will note that it is the New Testament Book of Acts which tells about the beginning of Christ's Church. This same book gives us eight separate detailed accounts of what men and women in the First Century were told to do in order to be saved! If we can see what they did and do the same things ourselves we can be sure we have the right answer to life's most crucial question.

It is of the utmost importance that we examine these model cases of conversion carefully and follow their pattern exactly.

1) Pentecost (Acts 2.14-42.) We have already noted that this was the day upon which the Church began. Peter preached a powerful sermon which emphasized that Jesus was the Christ and that his listeners had been guilty of an enormous crime in rejecting Him. In response to their anguished question: "What shall we do," Peter replied: "Repent and be baptized..." (Acts 2.38.) The record goes on to note: "Then they that gladly received his word were baptized; and the same day there were added unto them about 3000 souls." (Acts 2.41.) Note what happened: Christ was preached and people believed what they heard. By word of mouth they indicated as much and were commanded to repent of their sins and be baptized. This they gladly did!

2) The Samaritans (Acts 8.5-13.) Philip the Evangelist went down to Samaria and "preached Christ." (Acts 8.5.) "The people with one accord gave heed unto those things which Philip spake." (Acts 8.6.) "When they believed Philip teaching the things concerning the kingdom of God...they were

baptized." (Acts 8.12.) Note the summary: Christ was preached; people believed; they changed the direction of their lives; and they were baptized!

3) The Ethiopian Treasurer (Acts 8.26-40.) While on his way back to Ethiopia from Jerusalem, this devout government official was met by Philip, who "*preached unto him Jesus.*" (Acts 8.35.) As a result of this preaching, the Ethiopian desired to become a Christian and verses 36-39 describe what was done. This conversion story follows the pattern of the previous two: Christ was preached; the Ethiopian believed; he confessed his faith; change of will or repentance took place; and he was baptized!

4) Saul of Tarsus (Acts 9.1-18; 22.3-16; 26.12-18.) This was one of the most dramatic conversions ever recorded. So significant was it that parts of it are described three different times in the Book of Acts. Saul of Tarsus, a brilliant Jewish scholar and avowed enemy of Christianity was headed for Damascus to persecute God's people there. But on the road he had a meeting with Jesus which left him sightless and which convinced him that Jesus was, in truth, the Son of God. After three days of fasting and prayer in Damascus, Saul was visited by Ananias, a preacher sent to instruct him in what he needed to do to be saved. The preacher's instructions are found at Acts 22.16, "*And now why tarriest thou? Arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord.*" (Acts 9.18 specifically tells us that Saul complied with this command. Again, we have the same pattern: faith followed by sincere repentance; the making known of faith; and baptism for the forgiveness of sins.

5) Cornelius (Acts 10.1-48.) Cornelius was a Roman soldier who earnestly desired salvation. By the providence of God, Peter, a preacher, was sent to him. Peter's sermon centered on the life and work of Jesus the Christ and concluded with the words: "*through his name whosoever believeth in him shall have remission of sins.*" (Acts 10.43.) After a Divine demonstration of the fact that Gentiles were suitable candidates for salvation, Peter "*commanded them to be baptized in the name of the Lord.*" (Acts 10.48.) Here again we find Christ being preached, people believing the message, their implied repentance, and their being baptized in order to be saved.

6) Lydia (Acts 16.13-15.) Lydia was a business woman converted by Paul in Philippi during the Second Missionary Journey. He found her, in the company of a group of women, at a place of prayer by a riverside.

We are told that Paul preached, (*Acts 16.13-14*), and as a result Lydia was baptized (*Acts 16.15.*) Not specifically mentioned in this brief account (but implied) is her faith following the message, and her determination to change the direction of her life. This was indicated by the fact of her baptism.

7) *The Keeper of the Roman Prison at Philippi (Acts 16.23-33.)*

Paul and Silas were imprisoned because of an act of kindness bestowed upon a demon-possessed slave girl. When an earthquake opened the prison doors at midnight, the Roman official charged with the keeping of the prison assumed that the prisoners had fled and prepared to take his own life. But Paul hastily called out to assure him that everyone was still there. Bringing them out of the inner prison, he put the question to them: "*Sirs what must I do to be saved?*" (*Acts 16.30.*) "*Believe,*" Paul commanded, and then, so that he could believe: "*They spake unto him the word of the Lord, and to all that were in his house.*" (*Acts 16.32.*) And the same hour of the night he "*was baptized, he and all his, straightway.*" (*Acts 16.33.*) Again the pattern holds true: Paul preached Christ; people heard and believed, were willing to commit their lives unto the Lord and were baptized.

8) *The Corinthians (Acts 18.1-8.)*

In the course of the Second Missionary Journey, Paul came to the Greek city of Corinth. In this distinctly pagan setting, he found a small colony of Jews who had a synagogue. "*And he reasoned in the synagogue every Sabbath, and persuaded the Jews and Greeks.*" (*Acts 18.4.*) "*And Crispus, the chief ruler of the synagogue believed on the Lord with all his house, and many of the Corinthians hearing believed, and were baptized.*" (*Acts 18.8.*) Once more Paul preached Christ, those who heard believed, turned away from the world, and were baptized into Christ.

The Answer Considered

A careful analysis of the eight cases of conversion reveals a definite pattern. Though the eight cases we have considered cover vastly different types of people in radically different situations in life, the procedure for becoming a Christian is always the same. In every case, there was first the preaching of the Gospel message. (*1 Cor. 1.21.*) In every instance, faith was required. (*Mark 16.16.*) After the person involved had believed in Christ, it was necessary that he turn from the world and its evil toward Christ and His righteousness in the act of repentance. (*Acts 17.30.*) In some way it was necessary for faith to make

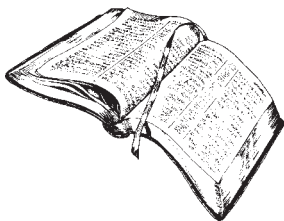
itself known. (*Romans 10.9-10.*) Finally, came the culminating act of baptism which resulted in the forgiveness of sin and entrance into Christ. (*Romans 6.3-4.*)

A lost person must hear something and do something as a result of what he has heard. Some object that this makes salvation a matter of works and not grace. But this is far from the case. What we do does not earn salvation; it merely puts us in a position where we can receive it! The Bible speaks of even faith as a work. (*John 6.28-29.*) Surely, no one would argue that salvation is possible without it! The point: We are not saved by deeds or works; but salvation is impossible without them!

A Clarification: The case of Israel at the Red Sea illustrates that God has always required people to *DO* something to become the recipients of grace. "*Stand still and see the salvation of the Lord,*" they were told. (*Ex. 14.13.*) But they had to walk through! Their own actions were required to lay hold of God's grace!

Conclusion

In our day many people talk about the many roads to heaven, or the many ways of being saved. It is significant that the Bible describes only one! Every New Testament example of becoming a Christian follows the same pattern; the names and places differ but the procedure is the same! It is deeply significant that salvation begins and ends in Christ. (*Heb. 5.8-9.*) It was Christ Himself who said: "*I am the way, the truth and the life: no one cometh unto the Father, but by me.*" (*John 14.6.*) It was also Christ who said: "*And why call ye me Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?*" (*Luke 6.46.*)



MTT. 28:18-19

EXAMPLES OF CONVERSION

MRK. 16:15-16

PREACHING	BELIEVED	REPENTED	CONFESSED	BAPTIZED	SAVED
PENTECOST ACTS 2:14-41		REPENT VERSES 37-38		BAPTIZED 38-41	REMISSION OF SINS 38-47 SAVED
SAMARIA ACTS 8:5-13	BELIEVED 12			BAPTIZED 12, 13	
EUNUCH ACTS 8:35-39	BELIEVED 36-37		CONFESSED 37	BAPTIZED 38	REJOICED 39
SAUL ACTS 9:17-18				BAPTIZED 18	SINS WASHED AWAY 22:16
CORNELIUS ACTS 10:34-48	BELIEVED 43			BAPTIZED 48	REMISSION OF SINS 43
THE JAILER ACTS 16:32	BELIEVED 31			BAPTIZED 33	
LYDIA ACTS 16:13	ATTENDED 14			BAPTIZED 15	
<u>PREACHING</u> ROM. 10:14	<u>FAITH</u> HEB. 11:6 HEB. 5:8,9	<u>REPENTANCE</u> LUKE 13:3	<u>CONFESSION</u> ROM. 10:10 II THESS. 1:7-9	<u>BAPTISM</u> GAL. 3:27	<u>SALVATION</u> II TIM. 2:10



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