

Basic Doctrines: Salvation

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"Brother, are you saved?" ask street-corner evangelists and well-meaning members of "fundamentalist" churches of people who either are not "churched" or are members of other denominations. Yet if we were to ask these questioners to explain precisely what they mean by "being saved," most could not give a satisfying answer. Although frequently discussed by religious people, the doctrine of salvation eludes them. Is salvation "going to heaven"? Is it a special condition we find ourselves in after "giving our hearts to the Lord"? Is it a reward that God gives us after we follow a certain formula or repeat certain words?

More importantly, how do we obtain salvation? Do we need to experience an emotional experience to obtain it? Must we respond to an altar call? Are we required to join a church? And once we obtain it, do we always have it? Is the teaching of "once saved, always saved" valid? Where can we find the answers to these questions? Despite the different teachings of various churches, the only place where we can find the correct answers is the Bible. Only God Himself can provide the truth about this subject, so in this study we will determine from God's own Word what salvation is and how to obtain it.

1. Why was John the Baptist born? Luke 1:76-77.

Comment: John the Baptist's message laid the groundwork for the ministry of Jesus Christ who would reveal the knowledge of salvation and demonstrate that it comes about through the remission of sins.

2. Why was Jesus Christ born? Matthew 1:21.

Comment: The Son of God became a human being to save people from their sins. Thus, salvation is the process whereby sinners are rescued from the consequences of sin.

3. What is sin? I John 3:4.

Comment: Although many ministers condemn sin vehemently, most do not understand what it is! In I John 3:4, God gives us a clear definition of sin: the attitude and practice of breaking God's laws. These laws, summarized in the Ten Commandments, define what is right and wrong, and the breaking of them constitutes sin.

4. Who needs to be saved from sin's penalty? Romans 3:23.

Comment: Every human being who has ever lived—except Christ—has broken God's laws. Therefore, everyone needs to be saved from sin's consequences.

5. What are the consequences of sin? Romans 6:23.

Comment: A wage is payment for work. Death, then, is what we "earn" as a result of committing sin. This is not eternal *life* in hell fire but **death**, the complete annihilation of one's life.

6. What does God offer to save us from death? Same verse.

Comment: God offers eternal life to those who are willing to meet His conditions. Therefore, salvation—being delivered from the consequences of sin—is receiving the gift of eternal life. Though some think that we already have an immortal soul, the Bible makes it plain that the only way we can receive eternal life is to receive it as God's gift.

7. What is the first thing we must do to obtain salvation? Acts 2:38; 3:19; Luke 18:18-20.

Comment: Our first step is to repent from sin. This means, not only being sorry for having committed sin, but also turning or changing from a life of transgressing God's commandments to a life of obedience to them.

8. Can salvation be obtained by simply repenting and deciding to obey God's laws? Romans 3:20.

Comment: Merely keeping the law will not justify anyone. Being justified means having one's sins forgiven and coming into a right relationship with God.

9. How then are we justified? Romans 5:8-9.

Comment: We are justified by faith in the suffering and death of Jesus Christ. Because Jesus Christ's life was worth more than all the rest of humanity combined, His death paid the penalty of the sins of the whole world. Through faith in His suffering and death, we receive forgiveness of sins and are brought into a right relationship with God.

10. Does being justified mean we are saved? Verse 9.

Comment: The scripture states that "we shall be saved from wrath through Him." "Justified" does not mean "saved"; nor does it mean that we have eternal life. It simply means that our guilty past has been wiped clean because Christ paid the penalty for our sins. Once justified, we can proceed to the next step in the process of salvation.

11. How then do we receive salvation? Romans 5:10; Hebrews 7:25; 8:1.

Comment: We are saved—receive salvation—by a living Jesus Christ! After He died, God the Father raised Him from the dead. Today, Christ is alive and powerful and sits at God's right hand to make intercession for us. He will help us overcome sin and live righteously as He did (Hebrews 4:14-16).

12. Can justified Christians return to a life of disobedience to God and still be saved? Romans 6:1-2,15-16; Hebrews 6:4-6; 10:26-31; I John 2:4.

Comment: To receive salvation, a Christian must now live a life of obedience to the law of God. Those who claim that they know Christ and still continue in a life of breaking God's commandments are liars.

13. Does God give us the power to obey Him? Acts 2:1-4; Romans 5:5; 8:14; Ephesians 4:23; II Timothy 1:6-7.

Comment: God's Holy Spirit imparts to us His love, giving us the power to obey His laws in their full spiritual intent. The repentant sinner is then a changed person—his whole outlook and purpose is changed as he is led by the Spirit.

14. How then do we receive salvation? Romans 8:11.

Comment: Only after this process and living a life of overcoming, will God "give life" to our "mortal bodies." Through the Holy Spirit which dwells in us, He will grant us the gift of eternal life by a resurrection, just as with Christ. Then, and only then, will we have salvation!