

## Lesson 6: Jesus Reveals the Plan of Salvation

- I. The path to salvation was created when Jesus willingly went to the cross sacrificing Himself on our behalf to satisfy the justice of a Holy God.
  - A. As a result, there is a way to restore our relationship with God through Jesus as our Redeemer
  - B. Paul summed it up like this: "But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from the wrath of God through Him." (Rom 5:8-9)
  - C. Since it is now possible for us to be saved from the wrath of God through Jesus, all that remains is to know how.
  - D. That is the subject of this lesson- What did Jesus Reveal about the Path to Salvation?
  
- II. As we begin examining God's plan of salvation, we want to focus directly on what God has to say about the subject
  - A. We are not interested in the uninspired teachings of men or the traditions of established religious organizations
  - B. Since God is the source of all spiritual authority, His words are the only ones that matter
    1. Those Words and His message to us come directly through what is revealed in the Bible - "But know this first of all, that no prophecy of Scripture is a matter of one's own interpretation, for no prophecy was ever made by an act of human will, but men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God." (II Pet 1:20-21)
    2. Paul gave this reminder in II Tim 3:16-17, "All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work."
    3. The teachings about God's plan of salvation are found in the Scriptures of the New Testament as part of the Christian Age
    4. Only by carefully studying the Bible, can we discover the truth about salvation
    5. As always, that is our approach
  - C. To obtain the truth accurately, however, Bible studies always must be based on sound learning principles
    1. First, we must respect the context of each verse understanding the setting and intent of the writing
      - a. This is necessary to determine what passages apply to us
      - b. And how we are to use them
    2. Second, we must remember all Scripture is inspired and true since it comes to us from a single source - that being God Himself (II Tim 3:16-17)
    3. Because all Scripture is inspired by God, everything it says is consistent and true
      - a. Verses from different chapters or books will never contradict each other
      - b. If we detect a conflict among different Scriptures, then there is something wrong with our understanding of what the Bible teaches

- c. In that case, we must continue studying to find the correct interpretation, one that makes all passages fit together as they should
      - d. The best commentary on a Bible verse comes from other Scriptures
    - 4. By faithfully adhering to these principles, you can "Be diligent to present yourself approved to God as a workman who does not need to be ashamed, accurately handling the word of truth" as taught by Paul in II Tim 2:15
  - D. Because the topic of salvation is so critically important to humankind, God has gone to great lengths to communicate clearly how we go about claiming the sacrifice of Jesus as the payment for our sins
  - E. Although the Bible reveals only one path to salvation, that path can be discovered by examining the Scriptures in three different ways
    - 1. Since each way must lead to the same conclusion, this redundancy provides an important check on the accuracy of our understanding
    - 2. So what are these three study approaches leading us to the plan of salvation?
      - a. The first way for us to learn how to obtain salvation is by studying the teachings of Jesus directly - in so doing, we examine what He had to say about being saved
      - b. Secondly, we can look at the final instructions Jesus gave to His Apostles just before ascending into Heaven - we expect these parting words to be among His most important thoughts and commands
      - c. Thirdly, we can examine what the Apostles actually taught and did to bring salvation to a lost world
    - 3. If performed properly, all three of these studies must take us to the same answer
  - F. By carefully pulling all this information together, we confidently can construct a clear picture of what God requires for our redemption and salvation
- III. We shall begin by examining the teachings of Jesus to learn what He said was necessary for our salvation.
- A. Jesus acknowledged the importance of His earthly mission during an encounter with Zaccheus, the tax-gatherer, saying "For the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost" (Luke 19:10)
  - B. Since Jesus was well aware of what He was to accomplish, it seems only logical to expect that He would spend time talking about salvation during His preaching and teaching ministry - and that He did.
  - C. Jesus identified four specific things that are "necessary" for salvation, meaning these things must take place if we are to be saved from our sins
    - 1. The first is found in John 8:24 where Jesus spoke to the Jews saying: "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."
      - a. In making this bold statement, Jesus defined something that was absolutely essential to obtain God's forgiveness of sins
      - b. Jesus linked salvation directly to the belief that "I am He"
      - c. Without that belief, Jesus said, "you will die in your sins" and hence be lost - separated from God for eternity.

- d. So what did Jesus mean by saying you must believe "I am He" - several earlier verses give us the explanation
  - 1) Jesus said, ". . . I am the bread that came down out of Heaven" (John 6:41)
  - 2) In John 8:12, Jesus said, ". . . I am the light of the world . . . "
  - 3) In verse 18 He said, "I am He who testifies about Myself, and the Father who sent Me testifies about Me"
  - 4) John 8:19 goes on to tell us, "So they were saying to Him, "Where is Your Father?" Jesus answered, "You know neither Me, nor My Father; if you knew Me, you would know My Father also."
  - 5) Within these passages, there is a clear reference to Jesus as deity
    - a) He called Himself bread that came down from heaven, the light of the world and one who can bear witness of Himself
    - b) He also claimed God as His Father Who sent Him
    - c) All that makes Him the Son of God, a fact taught in Phil 2:5-11; Luke 1:35; Luke 22:66-70; and John 11:4 to name just a few
- e. Believing that Jesus is the Son of God is critically important to our salvation
  - 1) It is the very thing that gives us the way out of the Problem of Sin
  - 2) There are, after all, only two possibilities: either Jesus is or He is not the Son of God
    - a) If Jesus is not the Son of God, then He is just a man; even worse - He is a liar
    - b) If just a man, Jesus then would be a sinner like all the rest (Rom 3:23)
    - c) And a sinner cannot offer Himself as a sacrifice for the sins of another because a sinner must answer for his own guilt
    - d) On the other hand, if Jesus is the Son of God, then He alone is capable of living a perfect, sinless life and sacrificing Himself on behalf of our sins
    - e) Without that perfect, sinless sacrifice, there is no solution to the problem of sin, and we are all hopelessly lost
- f. By believing in the deity of Jesus as God living in human form, we accept the Truth of all He said and did to offer salvation to humankind: "Now I make known to you, brethren, the gospel which I preached to you, which also you received, in which also you stand, by which also you are saved, if you hold fast the word which I preached to you, unless you believed in vain. For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received, that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that He was buried, and that He was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures," (I Cor 15:1-4)
  - 1) Peter said "And there is salvation in no one else; for there is no other name under heaven that has been given among men by which we must be saved." (Acts 4:12)
  - 2) Our belief in the Good News of Jesus is critical since it is His death, burial and resurrection that gives us an assured path to salvation with eternal life in Heaven
  - 3) Note the words of the Hebrew writer: "And without faith it is impossible to

please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is and that He is a rewarder of those who seek Him." (Heb 11:6)

2. The second requirement Jesus placed on our salvation involves repentance
  - a. In commenting on the death of those killed by Pilate while they were offering sacrifices, Jesus admonished his disciples adding - ". . . unless you repent, you will all likewise perish" (Luke 13:3)
  - b. These same words were uttered after noting the unexpected calamity of those trapped under the collapse of the tower of Siloam; there again Jesus said: ". . . unless you repent, you will all likewise perish" (Luke 13:5)
  - c. Repentance was a key element in the message of John the Baptist as he prepared the way for the Messiah by fulfilling the prophecy of Isaiah 40:3
    - 1) John preached a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins (Luke 3:3)
    - 2) His message was for all to "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand" (Matt 3:2)
    - 3) As he saw the Pharisees and Sadducees coming for baptism, He called for them to ". . . bear fruit in keeping with repentance" (Matt 3:8)
  - d. The notion of repentance also was echoed by Jesus as He started His ministry declaring: ". . . Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand" (Matt 4:17)
  - e. The repentance spoken by John and Jesus refers to a change in heart brought on by Godly sorrow (II Cor 7:10)
    - 1) It is turning from the pursuit of physical lusts and a life of sin to pursue holiness just as God is Holy
    - 2) That means focusing on Godly behavior to avoid missing the mark
  - f. When you think about it, this seems only reasonable
    - 1) The whole idea of redemption and salvation involves overcoming the barrier between us and God, a barrier that was created by sin
      - a) Our iniquities are what separated us from a Holy God in the first place according to Isaiah 59:1-2
      - b) That sin is what put us on the path to damnation in Hell
    - 2) If we are determined to remove the sin barrier by appealing to the sacrifice of Jesus to restore our fellowship with God, why would an honest heart want to reconstruct that barrier by continuing in sin?
    - 3) II Pet 2:20-22 describe the foolishness of such a choice: "For if, after they have escaped the defilements of the world by the knowledge of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, they are again entangled in them and are overcome, the last state has become worse for them than the first. For it would be better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than having known it, to turn away from the holy commandment handed on to them. It has happened to them according to the true proverb, "A DOG RETURNS TO ITS OWN VOMIT," and, "A sow, after washing, returns to wallowing in the mire." "
    - 4) Hebrews 6:4-8 speak of the danger in returning to a life of sin:

"For in the case of those who have once been enlightened and have tasted of the heavenly gift and have been made partakers of the Holy Spirit, and have tasted the good word of God and the powers of the age to come, and then have fallen away, it is impossible to renew them again to repentance, since they again crucify to themselves the Son of God and put Him to open shame. For ground that drinks the rain which often falls on it and brings forth vegetation useful to those for whose sake it is also tilled, receives a blessing from God; but if it yields thorns and thistles, it is worthless and close to being cursed, and it ends up being burned."

- 5) Paul preached against the idea of continuing to sin while relying on God's grace to cover our willful disobedience saying: ". . . Are we to continue in sin so that grace may increase? May it never be! How shall we who died to sin still live in it?" (Rom 6:1-2)
- 6) Paul went on to preach the importance of repentance in Rom 6:11-13: "Even so consider yourselves to be dead to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus. Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body so that you obey its lusts, and do not go on presenting the members of your body to sin as instruments of unrighteousness; but present yourselves to God as those alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness to God."
  - g. An appeal for forgiveness and salvation must go hand in hand with a change in heart, turning to a Holy lifestyle just as God is Holy (I Pet 1:13-16)
  - h. Without a desire and commitment to repent, an appeal for forgiveness is insincere and equivalent to asking God to save us but allow us to continue living in sin
  - i. That is impossible for a Holy God (Isa 59:1-2)
3. As a third condition for salvation, Jesus said we must confess the name of Jesus
  - a. Confession is openly professing our belief in Jesus as the Son of God and author of our salvation
  - b. It provides accountability and ownership for our belief as well as an explanation to the world for the changes in heart and behavior that come from Godly repentance
  - c. Luke 12:8-9 state: "And I say to you, everyone who confesses Me before men, the Son of Man will confess him also before the angels of God; but he who denies Me before men will be denied before the angels of God."
  - d. In Matt 10:32-33, Jesus spoke to His disciples saying: "Therefore everyone who confesses Me before men, I will also confess him before My Father who is in heaven. But whoever denies Me before men, I will also deny him before My Father who is in heaven."
    - 1) By confessing the name of Jesus before humankind, we are assured that Jesus will be our advocate acknowledging us before the Father in Heaven
    - 2) Alternatively, Jesus tells us if we reject Him before others, He too will deny us before the Father.
    - 3) Paul cited this principle in II Tim 2:11-13, "It is a trustworthy statement: For

if we died with Him, we will also live with Him; If we endure, we will also reign with Him; If we deny Him, He also will deny us; If we are faithless, He remains faithful, for He cannot deny Himself."

4. The fourth and last requirement Jesus placed on our salvation comes from being baptized
  - a. This is also part of what is called the Great Commission
  - b. In Mark 16:16, Jesus said: "He who has believed and has been baptized shall be saved; but he who has disbelieved shall be condemned"
  - c. This Scripture makes a contrast between conditions leading to salvation and those leading to condemnation
    - 1) In the first part of the verse, we learn salvation results from a personal response that begins with belief and ends with baptism
    - 2) Here Jesus taught that if believers are baptized, they will be saved
    - 3) In the second part of the verse, He confirmed that without the first step of belief, all are condemned and neither baptism nor anything else matters
    - 4) This is consistent with the prior teaching in John 8:24 where Jesus made belief a necessary condition for salvation saying: ". . . unless you believe that I am He, you will die in your sins."
  - d. The Biblical definition of baptism comes from an examination of the Greek text in the early New Testament manuscripts as copied from the inspired writers
    - 1) The meaning of the Greek word is to immerse, submerge, or completely overwhelm
    - 2) It does not mean to sprinkle or pour
    - 3) Although there are words that would translate as sprinkling and pouring, they are never used by the inspired writers in this context
    - 4) Unfortunately, the actual word found in the Greek manuscripts was not translated in any of the common English versions of the New Testament
      - a) Instead, a transliteration was performed whereby English letters were substituted for the Greek ones to create a new English word, "baptize"
      - b) This, of course, was done without justification and obscures the linkage of this new word to the meaning of the original Greek
      - c) Unfortunately, this also makes it easier for others to alter the intended meaning to something that better suits their own purpose or doctrine
      - d) It does not, however, change the fact that the true meaning of God's inspired word is "to immerse"
    - 5) From the context of many different Scriptures, it is clear that the inspired text of the New Testament defines baptism as a total immersion in water
      - a) John baptized in water (John 1:26) - at Aenon near Salim because John 3:23 says there was much water at that location;
        - i) Note John chose that specific site for a reason
        - ii) He chose it because there was enough water to immerse large crowds of people
        - iii) This is much more water than would have been required for sprinkling or pouring

- iv) Also note John preached a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins; baptism was linked directly to salvation
- b) The baptism of the Ethiopian Eunuch provides further evidence as to the act being a total immersion in water
  - i) The participants had to travel to a location of sufficient water for baptism (Acts 8:36)
  - ii) They went down into the water (vs 38)
  - iii) And after immersion came up out of the water (vs 39)
- c) There is no textual justification or Biblical example of baptism being performed by an act of sprinkling or pouring; these are man-made traditions that are not found in the Bible.
- e. Jesus also alluded to the necessity of water baptism in His remarks to Nicodemus recorded in John chapter 3
  - 1) Prior to this encounter, three important events had taken place
    - a) First, John the Baptist had made his appearance bearing witness of the coming Messiah, and he was performing a water baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins (John 1:15; Luke 3:3)
    - b) Second, John had baptized Jesus and people beheld the Spirit descending upon Jesus as a dove out of heaven (Luke 3:21-22)
    - c) And third, Jesus had begun His ministry performing signs and wonders to confirm the word while echoing the message of John for all to ". . . Repent for the Kingdom of Heaven was at hand" (Matt 4:17)
  - 2) When Nicodemus approached Jesus that night and began acknowledging Him as a teacher from God, "Jesus answered and said to him, 'Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God.' " (John 3:3)
    - a) Jesus was explaining to Nicodemus what must be done to enter the Kingdom of God; he had to be born again
    - b) This confused Nicodemus for he was thinking of a physical rebirth
    - c) Jesus, however, was talking about a spiritual birth consistent with the message of repentance that was being preached by John and Jesus
    - d) From that confused perspective, Nicodemus then asked Jesus how an old man can be born a second time
  - 3) "Jesus answered, 'Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.' " (John 3:5)
    - a) Here, Jesus was talking to a man who already had passed through his mother's womb to be born into the physical world telling him how it was now possible for him to be born again, this time into the Kingdom of God
    - b) It was through water and the Spirit
    - c) Now bear in mind, the only familiarity Nicodemus would have had with being born again through water would have come from the baptism of repentance being practiced by John the Baptist
    - d) Nicodemus also would have been aware that the Spirit descended from Heaven as a dove landing upon Jesus after Jesus arose from the water

of baptism (Matt 3:16-17)

- e) John himself publically bore witness of that fact in John 1:32-33
  - f) So when Jesus spoke of being born of water and spirit, Nicodemus logically would have attributed this to a baptism of repentance bringing with it a change in heart
  - g) That is just as Jesus intended
  - h) He also was providing Nicodemus with a preview of the path to salvation that would be imposed during the coming age of Christianity
  - i) Spiritual renewal was the message of John as well as the later teaching by Jesus in Mark 16:16 and by the Apostles during their ministry
  - 4) The purpose and significance of water immersion will be discussed in a later lesson
  - 5) For now, it is sufficient to note that baptism is immersion in water, and Jesus cited baptism as a necessary condition for salvation
- D. In summary, when Jesus says something must be done to obtain salvation, that something becomes a requirement since it is cited as a necessary condition
- 1. Note, however, this does not mean a necessary condition is also sufficient for salvation
  - 2. That is because other conditions also may be required
- E. Since all Scripture is inspired and true, if more than one requirement is specified in the Bible, then all requirements must be satisfied to obtain salvation
- F. Otherwise something Jesus said is necessary has been left undone/unsatisfied
- G. From the direct teachings of Jesus, we have identified four things that He said were required for salvation: Belief, Repentance, Confession and Baptism
- H. Since these are the only four requirements He specified, we conclude that these four conditions are both necessary and sufficient for salvation
- I. In other words, we lay claim to the sacrifice of Jesus as a payment for our sins and are saved from the wrath of God only when we have satisfied all four requirements: Believing, Repenting, Confessing and being Baptized
- J. This is God's Plan of Salvation for humankind as derived directly from the teaching of Jesus

- IV. As a first check on the accuracy of our understanding of God's Plan of Salvation, we now shall examine the words Jesus spoke to His Apostles just before ascending into Heaven - Here we are looking for consistency
- A. Because these are His parting words, we expect them to contain vital instructions defining His expectations for the ministry of the Apostles which was to follow
  - B. The Biblical text is found in three passages commonly called the Great Commission
    - 1. The first account is recorded in Matt 28:18-20 where Jesus said: ". . . All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age."
      - a. In this passage, Jesus makes several distinct points:

- 1) First, He justifies His right to issue the subsequent commands by citing His authority over everything in Heaven and on earth - He is in charge
  - 2) Second, He commands His Apostles to go to all nations and make disciples, i.e., grow followers who are dedicated to keeping His Word
  - 3) Thirdly, Jesus actually defines how to make these disciples;
    - a) He says to baptize them in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit
    - b) And then to teach these baptized followers to observe all that Jesus had commanded
  - 4) Jesus concludes by offering them the encouragement of knowing they are not alone in this undertaking - He will be with them always
- b. In issuing these commands, Jesus was instructing His Apostles how they were to continue the work of salvation after Jesus physically departed from them
  - c. Notice, Jesus specifically mentioned the importance of baptizing believers to make disciples and then continuing to teach them to equip them for Christian living and service
2. Another account of the Great Commission is referenced in Luke 24:46-47 where Jesus said: "Thus it is written, that the Christ would suffer and rise again from the dead the third day, and that repentance for forgiveness of sins would be proclaimed in His name to all the nations, beginning from Jerusalem."
    - a. Here Jesus references the prophecy of the Gospel, the Good News of the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus which secured the path to salvation for humankind through His sacrifice
    - b. Note also the message that was to be preached first in Jerusalem and spread to all nations included a call to repentance for the purpose of obtaining the forgiveness of sins; this made repentance a necessary condition for salvation
  3. The third account of the Great Commission is found in Mark 16:15-16
    - a. This passage already was mentioned in the prior section on the teachings of Jesus; nevertheless, it is repeated here for completeness and comparison
    - b. And He said to them, ". . . Go into all the world and preach the gospel to all creation. He who has believed and has been baptized shall be saved; but he who has disbelieved shall be condemned." (Mark 16:15-16)
    - c. As before, we see Jesus calling for the gospel to be preached to all the world
    - d. He further promises that those who believe and are baptized shall be saved, meaning their sins shall be forgiven.
- C. From these accounts of the Great Commission, which represent the last instructions of Jesus to His Apostles, we see how God planned to offer salvation to the lost world.
1. Although these passages do not record word for word everything that Jesus said, they do represent summaries provided by three different inspired writers
  2. That means everything written is true.
  3. As a result, to construct the complete picture of what Jesus commanded His Apostles to do, we must combine the instructions from all three accounts
- D. When we pull all the information together, we come up with the following composite defining what the Apostles were commanded to do

1. They were to go to all nations to all the world
  2. Preach the Gospel (Good News) of Jesus
  3. Make disciples - who believe, repent and are baptized in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit
  4. Those disciples were promised to receive the forgiveness of sins and be saved
  5. Then the Apostles were to teach them to observe all that Jesus had commanded
- E. Notice these instructions explicitly mention belief, repentance and baptism
1. Although a confession that Jesus is the Son of God is not directly specified in these accounts, it is still there implicitly
  2. Disciples are to be baptized in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit
    - a. By being baptized in their name, disciples are placing themselves into the service and ownership of Father, Son and Holy Spirit
    - b. Therefore, submitting to baptism commanded by and in the name of the Son is an acknowledgement and confession of a belief in the authority of Jesus as the Son of God
- F. So what we see in the Great Commission is Jesus commanding His Apostles to bring salvation to a lost world by making disciples who believe, repent, confess (implied) and are baptized to obtain the forgiveness of sins.
1. This is consistent with the teachings Jesus shared during his earthly ministry.
  2. We now have yet one more truth check available to us
  3. We can investigate how the Apostles interpreted these commands by examining the steps they took to implement the Great Commission
  4. Please join me in our next lesson as we consider how the inspired Apostles and evangelists actually applied the commands of Jesus to save those who were lost