
WHAT MUST I DO TO BE SAVED?

The question, “*What must I do to be saved?*” was asked by several different people in the Bible.

1) The multitudes listening to John the Baptist.

Luke 3

7 Then he said to the multitudes that came out to be baptized by him, “Brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come?”

10 So the people asked him, saying, “What shall we do then?”

2) The rich, young ruler:

Luke 18:18

18 Now a certain ruler asked Him, saying, “Good Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?”

3) Jews on the Day of Pentecost:

Acts 2:36-37

36 “Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly that God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ.”

37 Now when they heard this, they were cut to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, “Men and brethren, what shall we do?”

4) Saul of Tarsus on the road to Damascus:

Acts 9:6

6 So he, trembling and astonished, said, “Lord, what do You want me to do?” Then the Lord said to him, “Arise and go into the city, and you will be told what you must do.”

5) The jailer at Philippi after he became an apostle:

Acts 16:30

30 [The jailer brought Paul and Silas] out and said, “Sirs, what must I do to be saved?”

This is the most important question ever asked by any man. It was asked by a variety of different people on different occasions and it’s a question which we should all be concerned about.

THE QUESTION CONSIDERED

Let’s begin our study by carefully noticing each word in the question.

- 1) **What** – Salvation begins with a question mark. Man by himself does not know how to be saved and he must ask a question.

Jeremiah 10:23

23 O LORD, I know the way of man is not in himself; It is not in man who walks to direct his own steps.

1 Corinthians 2:9-10

9 But as it is written: “Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, Nor have entered into the heart of man The things which God has prepared for those who love Him.”

10 But God has revealed them to us [the apostles] through His Spirit. ...

Man must ask “*what?*” because by his own abilities he could never figure out what God wants him to do. Salvation requires revelation from God.

Over and over this is repeated in Scripture:

Proverbs 29:18

18 Where there is no vision, the people perish: but he that keepeth the law, happy is he.

“vision” – “*revelation*” from God. When the revealed will of God is absent, people perish.

Romans 10:14

14 How then shall they call on Him in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in Him of whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher?

“*What*” indicates the inability of man to save himself. He must be guided by divine revelation.

2) **Must** – This word indicates something that is essential; a necessity. It’s not:

- “What **might** I do?”
- “What **could** I do?”
- “What **may** I do?”
- “What **can** I do?”

“*Must*” suggests something absolutely required.

This is important to remember, because when we see Jesus, or His apostles answering this question, what they taught was absolutely essential. The Lord did not give “*suggestions*,” but rather He laid down requirements.

3) **I** – This shows that salvation is personal. It's not:

- “What are others doing?”
- “What has God done?”
- “What has Jesus done?”
- “What has the Holy Spirit done?”

The church has done all it can do! It has:

- Preached the gospel to the world
- Stood in the world as a light on a hill
- Functioned as the body of Jesus

God has done all He can do! He has:

- Designed the plan.
- Oversaw the unfolding of the plan.
- Sent His only begotten Son.
- Suffered the pain of sacrificing His Son.

Jesus has done all He can do! He has:

- Come to earth to work the plan out.
- Suffered on the cross.
- Taught and trained the apostles to preach the plan.

Holy Spirit has done all He can do! He has:

- Revealed the plan.
- Confirmed and verified it's authenticity.
- Preserved the revealed plan thru the ages.

The question before us is not what all these others have done, but what must “I” do.

4) **Do** – This word suggests activity on our part. It's not:

- “What must I **feel** to be saved?”
- “What must I **think**?”
- “What must I **receive**?”

Salvation includes us doing something – **it's a doing-thing**.

Luke 6:46

46 “But why do you call Me ‘Lord, Lord,’ and do not **do** the things which I say?”

Matthew 7:21

21 “Not everyone who says to Me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who **does** the will of My Father in heaven.

James 2:20

20 But do you want to know, O foolish man, that faith without works is dead?

Revelation 22:14

14 Blessed are those who **do** His commandments, that they may have the right to the tree of life, and may enter through the gates into the city.

Action is necessary for salvation.

5) **To be saved** – This phrase describes how critical the question before us is. We associate “*saved*” with very critical situations in life.

ILL: Someone in *car wreck* taken to hospital. We ask doctor, “*Can you save him?*”

When *house burns* down we ask if everyone inside was **saved**?

“*Saved*” indicates life threatening situations.

Furthermore, our question is not speaking of saving the body, but of saving the soul.

Matthew 16:26

26 “For what profit is it to a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul?”

Matthew 10:28

28 “And do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. But rather fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell.

Three things make this the greatest question ever asked:

- a) **The value of the soul**
- b) **The fearfulness of being lost**
- c) **The length of eternity**

No other question is as serious as this one.

JESUS ANSWERS THE QUESTION

Let’s begin by considering the answer Jesus gave the young man that asked Him this question.

Luke 18:18-23

18 Now a certain ruler asked Him, saying, “Good Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?”

19 So Jesus said to him, “Why do you call Me good? No one is good but One, that is, God.

20 “You know the commandments: ‘Do not commit adultery,’ ‘Do not murder,’ ‘Do not steal,’ ‘Do not bear false witness,’ ‘Honor your father and your mother.’ “

21 And he said, “All these things I have kept from my youth.”

22 So when Jesus heard these things, He said to him, “You still lack one thing. Sell all that you have and distribute to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow Me.”

23 But when he heard this, he became very sorrowful, for he was very rich.

Jesus point this young man to “*the law.*” What law? The law of Moses. At this time the OT law of Moses was still in force.

Galatians 4:4

4 But when the fullness of the time had come, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the law,

This law lasted until Jesus died on the cross.

Colossians 2:14

14 having wiped out the handwriting of requirements that was against us, which was contrary to us. And He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross.

Jesus was pointing the young man to the law of God that was then in effect. But when the Lord died, a new law came into force. This new law contained new requirements for salvation.

Hebrews 9:15-17

15 And for this reason He is the Mediator of the new covenant, by means of death, for the redemption of the transgressions under the first covenant, that those who are called may receive the promise of the eternal inheritance.

16 For where there is a testament, there must also of necessity be the death of the testator.

17 For a testament is in force after men are dead, since it has no power at all while the testator lives.

Before the Lord's death, men were saved under different conditions than men living after His death.

This is why we cannot look to the *"thief on the cross"* and say, *"I want to be saved like him."*

Luke 23:42-43

42 Then he said to Jesus, "Lord, remember me when You come into Your kingdom."

43 And Jesus said to him, "Assuredly, I say to you, today you will be with Me in Paradise."

The idea many people have is, *"He didn't have to be baptized and I'm not going to be baptized either."* But there are two things we must remember:

- a) We don't know if he was ever baptized or not.
- b) He lived under the OT law that required different conditions for salvation.

THE APOSTLES' ANSWER

Let's turn now to the answer the apostles gave to this question.

The apostles preached after the death of Jesus. They preached the terms of salvation which the NT requires and they spoke as official representatives of the Lord.

1 Corinthians 14:37

37 If anyone thinks himself to be a prophet or spiritual, let him acknowledge that the things which I write to you are the commandments of the Lord.

Luke 10:16

16 "He who hears you [the apostles] hears Me, he who rejects you rejects Me, and he who rejects Me rejects Him who sent Me."

2 Corinthians 5:20

20 Now then, we [the apostles] are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were pleading through us: we implore you on Christ's behalf, be reconciled to God.

"Ambassadors" are official representatives of the king; they speak on behalf of the king.

Because the apostles were speaking officially on behalf of Jesus, we must listen carefully to the answer which they gave men to this question.

1) The Philippian jailer (Acts 16:23-34).

(Review the story)

Hear the question asked by the jailer:

Acts 16:30

30 And he brought them out and said, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?"

Notice, as we continue reading this story, that the apostle did not say, *“There’s nothing for you to do. Salvation is offered without any effort of any kind on your part.”* He did not say that.

Acts 16:31

31 So they said, “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved, you and your household.”

Some people want to put a period there and end the story and go to the next chapter as though this was all the jailer was told. But there’s more to the story. This is not all he was told to do!

This jailer had never heard of Jesus before. He was told to believe in someone he had never heard of before. So, in order that he might believe, the apostle preached to him about Jesus:

Acts 16:32-33

32 Then they spoke the word of the Lord to him and to all who were in his house.

33 And he took them the same hour of the night and washed their stripes. And immediately he and all his family were baptized.

Salvation, under the NT, requires baptism.

The jailer was asking what he must do to be saved. What things were essential? To this questions he was told:

- He must believe
- He must be baptized

This should not surprise us because Jesus told His apostles, after He had died and resurrected, and after the NT had come into force:

Mark 16:16

16 “He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned.

This is exactly what the apostle preached to the jailer.

2) The Jews on Pentecost (Acts 2).

After Peter had preached a powerful sermon about Jesus being the resurrected Son of God, these Jews were troubled in their conscience.

Acts 2:37

37 Now when they heard this, they were cut to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, “Men and brethren, what shall we do?”

These men wanted to know that to do. Peter did not reply, “*There’s nothing to do; salvation requires no effort on your part.*”

Acts 2:38

38 Then Peter said to them, “Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.

Salvation required doing two things: repenting and being baptized.

Acts 2:40-41

40 And with many other words he testified and exhorted them, saying, “Be saved from this perverse generation.”

41 Then those who gladly received his word were baptized; and that day about three thousand souls were added to them.

Being saved from this “*perverse generation*” required repentance and baptism.

Q: Why didn’t Peter tell these people to, “*Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved, you and your household*”???

A: Because Peter began where these people were; they already believed on Jesus.

From this passage we learn the purpose of baptism: the remission of sins!

3) Saul of Tarsus (Acts 9:1-19).

(Review the story)

Acts 9:6

6 So he, trembling and astonished, said, "Lord, what do You want me to do?" Then the Lord said to him, "Arise and go into the city, and you will be told what you must do."

Saul wanted to know that to do. The Lord did not say, "*There's nothing to do; salvation is completely free from any effort on your part.*"

Saul was to go into the city and a preacher would be sent to him and tell him what he must do. Listen carefully to what the preacher told him to do, because the Lord Himself said it must be done to be saved:

Acts 22:16

16 'And now why are you waiting? Arise and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on the name of the Lord.'

Q: Why didn't the preacher tell Saul, "*Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved, you and your household*"??? Or, "*Repent, and be baptized for the remission of sins*"???

A: Because the preacher began where Saul was; he already believed in Jesus and had already repented.

DIFFERENT ANSWERS?

As we look at these three examples of conversion, it seems as though each person was receiving a different answer to the same question. But on closer examination we will find they were all being told the same thing. We must only take into account where each individual was beginning from.

ILL: Taking a trip and asking, "*How far is it to California?*"

ILL: It took several steps to get here today. The first step was essential, but only the last step put me in this building.

There are several steps necessary to be saved, but baptism is the last step that puts us *“into Christ.”*

Galatians 3:27

27 For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ.

Romans 6:3-4

3 Or do you not know that as many of us as were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death?

4 Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.

1 Peter 3:20-21

20 ... once the Divine longsuffering waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was being prepared, in which a few, that is, eight souls, were saved through water.

21 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,

CONCLUSION

There are many important questions which we all have to ask:

- “Should I stay in school, or quit?”
- “Should I marry this girl, or look for someone else?”
- “Should I stay married to my wife, or should I divorce her?”
- “Should I keep this job, or look for another?”

But the greatest question you will ever ask is: **What must I do to be saved?**

The apostles of the Lord have given us the answer to this question and how we respond will determine our eternal destiny.

WHAT MUST I DO TO BE SAVED?

QUESTIONS:

- 1) Prov 29:18 uses the word “vision.” What is this referring to?
- 2) What three things make this the greatest question ever asked?
- 3) When a rich young man wanted to know what to do to be saved, what did Jesus point him to?
- 4) How long did the OT law last?
- 5) What two things do we need to remember about the thief on the cross?
- 6) What is an “ambassador” and who are the “ambassadors of Christ”?
- 7) Why was Saul of Tarsus not told to “believe” on Jesus?
- 8) Why did different people receive different answers to the question, “What must I do to be saved?”