

# Salvation: Here A Little; There A Little

## Many People Answering But Still the Same Answer

### Introduction

In serving God, the most important question of all to have answered is, “what must I do to be saved?” Many preachers, churches, and denominations differ in their answer to this all-important question, so to find the correct answer we must not appeal to religious history or creeds, but rather to the infallible Word of God. We must not accept a pat or simplified answer to such an important question but must search the scripture for every witness of what we are commanded to do. Supposed hypothetical and philosophical scenarios created by men cannot be our basis for answering this question either, but rather we must obey, believe, and teach the full scriptural answer of God’s Word.

The purpose of this lesson is to prove that the New Testament teaches over and over again a four-step process of initial salvation. That four-step Biblical answer is: belief in Jesus Christ, repentance, water baptism in the name of Jesus, and receiving the gift of the Holy Spirit. There is a present and future aspect of salvation that will not be addressed in this specific lesson. For example, “he that endures to the end shall be saved”<sup>1</sup> and believers must daily, “keep themselves in the love of God.”<sup>2</sup> The question of this lesson is “what must a person do to be completely converted from their past lifestyle to a lifestyle living and pleasing to God; what does God command a person to do when they first come to God; what is required to fully enact the grace and saving power of God in an individual’s life?” Some sort of obedience is required; Jesus Christ died to save all men but the scriptures make it clear that not all men are saved.

**The New Testament consistently teaches a four-step answer to the question of salvation: belief in Jesus Christ, repentance, water baptism in the name of Jesus, and receiving the gift of the Holy Spirit.**

There are some very sincere Christians and believers who may have completed only one of some of these four steps. The Biblical response to this lesson would be to act in faith and obey all of the commandments. Even beyond salvation, we must not take a minimalist attitude toward the things of God: do not try to get by with the least that you can do, but rather you should strive to experience and receive everything that God has for you!

Instead of proposing our own solutions to this all-important question, let us turn to the Word of God and see how great men of God answered the query.

### Simon Peter’s Answer on the Day of Pentecost

Since we are in the Era of Grace, it would make sense to begin with the first gospel message ever preached in Grace. We must understand that although Jesus often taught principles and concepts about the time of Grace to come, His actual ministry was conducted under the Era of the Law of Moses because it was not until His death on the cross that Law came to an end.<sup>3</sup> That means that we who are under Grace cannot model our salvation after the thief on the cross, the woman caught in the act of adultery, or any of the other examples where Jesus pronounced people’s sins as forgiven. Certainly we can preach from and learn many important concepts from these stories, but for individual accounts of conversions under Grace, we must move past the Gospels and to the record of the early apostolic church after the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ; we must look to the book of Acts.

---

1

See Matthew 10:22.

<sup>2</sup> See Jude 21.

<sup>3</sup> See Hebrew 9:15-17. Since a new covenant or testament requires the death of the one who made it, Law did not end until Calvary.

**Written by R. Jeremiah Sibley, all rights reserved.**

**Copies of this study may be freely distributed for not-for-profit use only.**

**Unless otherwise noted, scripture quotations are from The Holy Bible, English Standard Version, Copyright © 2001 by Crossway Bibles, a division of Good News Publishers. Used by permission. All rights reserved.**

# Salvation: Many People Answering But Still the Same Answer

The first sermon preached in Grace was by Simon Peter on the Day of Pentecost. The disciples and many other believers – one hundred and twenty in all – had just experienced a mighty demonstration of God's Spirit and had been filled with the Holy Spirit with the evidence of speaking in other tongues.<sup>4</sup> As these newly Spirit-filled believers staggered about on the street as drunk men would, a large crowd quickly gathered and began to inquire of what was happening. It was Simon Peter who stood up and preached a masterful sermon proving that Jesus Christ was indeed the Messiah of their Jews, their long-awaited Savior. He preached with such conviction that many in the crowd believed the message and after Peter had finished, they asked the question:

**Acts 2:37-41** Now when they heard this they were cut to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, "Brothers, what shall we do?" 38 And Peter said to them, "Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. 39 For the promise is for you and for your children and for all who are far off, everyone whom the Lord our God calls to himself." 40 And with many other words he bore witness and continued to exhort them, saying, "Save yourselves from this crooked generation." 41 So those who received his word were baptized, and there were added that day about three thousand souls.

Those asking the question had obviously believed that Jesus was their Savior during the message so Simon Peter's answer of what must be done was "repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit." This is the first message of Grace. Jesus had given Peter the "keys of the kingdom"<sup>5</sup> to unlock salvation in the Grace era and repentance, water baptism in the name of Jesus and receiving the gift of the Holy Spirit were the key commandments given to unlock the door of salvation to the Jews. Later Phillip would preach to the Samaritans – half Jew; half Gentiles – and they would believe, repent, and be baptized in the name of Jesus and when Simon Peter came he prayed for them to receive the gift of the Holy Spirit again sanctioning and completing the same four-part commandment.<sup>6</sup> God would also use Peter to unlock salvation to the Gentiles by preaching to the household of Cornelius who had been living a repentant lifestyle even before Peter arrived and when Peter preached a message of how Jesus was their Savior, they received the Holy Spirit with the evidence of speaking in other tongues just as Simon Peter and the 120 had received on the Day of Pentecost. And then Peter commanded them to be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ.<sup>7</sup> The keys of the kingdom used by Simon Peter to teach salvation was believing that Jesus is the Savior, repentance, water baptism in the name of Jesus, and receiving the gift of the Holy Spirit just as they did on the Day of Pentecost. He was consistent throughout his ministry in this message.

Now think of the Day of Pentecost message again: this was an opportunity for Peter to preach to people who were hearing the gospel of Jesus Christ for the first time and he immediately taught this four-step process. This is the first scriptural example of bringing people into grace, so why is the answer of Peter not the answer of every minister when confronted with new believers asking "what must I do?" Simon Peter was the one given the keys of the kingdom by Jesus Christ and the one chosen to preach the first gospel message to the Jews, Samaritans, and Gentiles and without exception he preached this same message. Furthermore the other disciples stood with and supported him in this four-part message. Since this is what the true church of Jesus Christ first taught under grace, then who are we to change it today?

Glancing back up to the scriptural record, notice what verse 40 says: "save yourselves from this crooked generation." Acts 2:38-39 does not record all of Peter's lengthy response but simply sums up the main gist of his teaching. Repentance, water baptism in the name of Jesus, and receiving the gift of the Holy Spirit was how the crowd would be saved from the evil generation of their time. This is the answer to the question in verse 37; it is still the only answer to give today!

## The Preaching of John the Baptist

---

4

See Acts 2:1-4.

<sup>5</sup> See Matthew 16:19.

<sup>6</sup> See Acts chapter 8.

<sup>7</sup> See Acts chapter 10.

# Salvation: Many People Answering But Still the Same Answer

Simon Peter was not preaching a new thing that he came up with from his own human imagination. A careful look back at the preaching of John the Baptist who preached even before Jesus' ministry began shows that John taught the people to look forward to obeying such a four-part command. John's purpose in coming was that people would believe in the Christ that was soon to come:

**John 1:6-7 There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. 7 He came as a witness, to bear witness about the light, that all might believe through him.**

John not only taught that they should believe in Jesus Christ that was to come, but that they must prepare themselves by true repentance:

**Matt 3:1-2 In those days John the Baptist came preaching in the wilderness of Judea, 2 "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand."**

John the Baptist did not stop at preaching the need for repentance but also commanded water baptism:

**Mark 1:4 John appeared, baptizing in the wilderness and proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins.**

Since John did not yet know the name of Jesus Christ when he baptized in the wilderness, we find that his converts had to later be rebaptized in the name of Jesus,<sup>8</sup> but it is not deniable that he taught in the "baptism . . . for the forgiveness of sins." In like manner, although John's disciples could not receive the Holy Spirit because it would not be poured out until the Day of Pentecost, John taught that they should receive it when Jesus comes:

**Mark 1:7-8 And he preached, saying, "After me comes he who is mightier than I, the strap of whose sandals I am not worthy to stoop down and untie. 8 I have baptized you with water, but he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit."**

Jesus would baptize you with the Holy Spirit! So we find that Simon Peter was only preaching on the Day of Pentecost what John the Baptist had proclaimed even before Jesus began His ministry!

## The Teaching of Jesus Christ

Jesus Christ taught many things as recorded in detail by the four gospels. But among Christ's teachings, four commandments stand out in importance and from the strong emphasis that Jesus placed upon them. Jesus boldly told the Jews:

**John 8:24b for unless you believe that I am he you will die in your sins."**

That is, it was absolutely imperative that they believe that He was their Savior/Messiah! And notice the similar strong language in another place:

**Luke 13:3 No, I tell you; but unless you repent, you will all likewise perish.**

And again mark the same imperative language in Jesus' discourse with Nicodemus:

**John 3:5 Jesus answered, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God.**

Jesus taught during His earthly ministry the same message of John the Baptist and the same commandments later preached by Simon Peter: men and women must believe that He is the Savior of the world, repent of their sins, be baptized, and receive the Holy Spirit.

---

<sup>8</sup> See Acts 19:1-6.

# Salvation: Many People Answering But Still the Same Answer

After His resurrection, Jesus put an even greater emphasis on this four-fold message of salvation. We are given three accounts of what is commonly known as “The Great Commission” or Jesus’ final instructions to His disciples before His ascension into the heavens. Both Matthew, Mark, and Luke record this event in detail<sup>9</sup> and a quick perusal of the promises and directions of Jesus here show a focus upon what Simon Peter later preached:

Matthew 28:19-20 records Jesus’ final commandments and promises as follows:

1. Go and teach all nations
2. Baptize them
3. I will be with you always – a reference to His abiding Spirit that they would shortly receive.

Mark 16:15-18 records these elements of Jesus’ final commandments:

1. Go and preach the Gospel to every creature.
2. He that believes and is baptized shall be saved.
3. Numerous miraculous signs, including speaking with other tongues, will follow believers. The reference to speaking in other tongues is a reference to the sign that accompanied the gift of the Holy Spirit.<sup>10</sup>

In Luke 24:46-49 and Acts 1:4-5, Luke records Jesus’ final instructions as this:

1. The disciples are witnesses of His death and resurrection
2. Preach repentance and forgiveness of sins among all nations<sup>11</sup>
3. Wait until they receive the power from on high, which is the baptism of the Holy Spirit

It is also obvious from the teachings of Jesus Christ that He did not consider one or a few of this four-fold salvation message to be enough. To those who had only believed, Jesus told:

**John 8:31-32 So Jesus said to the Jews who had believed in him, "If you abide in my word, you are truly my disciples, 32 and you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free."**

Jesus was stressing the importance of continuing on after the first step of believing in Him as their Savior and obeying all that He had told them to do! As we have seen, Jesus told Nicodemus who had come to secretly confess his belief that he must be born again of the water and of the Spirit. Towards the end of Jesus’ ministry, we find that He cried out to the multitudes that followed His every move:

**John 7:37-39 On the last day of the feast, the great day, Jesus stood up and cried out, "If anyone thirsts, let him come to me and drink. 38 Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, 'Out of his heart will flow rivers of living water.'" 39 Now this he said about the Spirit, whom those who believed in him were to receive, for as yet the Spirit had not been given, because Jesus was not yet glorified.**

They had believed in Him, but as the Spirit had not yet been given, it was important that they follow through until they had received the Spirit of God living within them through the baptism of the Holy Spirit. This is why Jesus commanded His disciples who had believed in Him, repented of their sins, and already been baptized in the name of Jesus:

**Acts 1:4-5 And while staying with them he ordered them not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for the promise of the Father, which, he said, "you heard from me; 5 for John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now."**

This group of disciples had preached about Jesus, performed many miracles, and cast out devils in the name of Jesus, but it was imperative that they wait until the Holy Spirit was poured out and receive all that God had for them. Such is the importance of this four-fold command today: the answer that Simon Peter gave on the Day of

<sup>9</sup> Matthew 28:19-20, Mark 16:15-18, Luke 24:46-49 with Acts 1:4-5. Remember that Luke wrote both the Gospel of Luke and the Book of Acts and one is just a continuation of the other.

<sup>10</sup> See Acts 2:1-4.

<sup>11</sup> “Forgiveness of sins” is a reference to water baptism; see Acts 2:38.

# Salvation: Many People Answering But Still the Same Answer

Pentecost was only teaching what John the Baptist and Jesus Christ had already been preaching and as such it is still the answer to the most pressing question of men today!

## The Preaching of Phillip

The 8<sup>th</sup> chapter of Acts records the ministry of Phillip, the Grecian evangelist. This is not the Phillip of the twelve, but another Phillip appointed to help with the widow's ministry. What did Phillip preach? We can discern the answer from the story of his preaching to the Samaritans:

Acts 8:5 Philip went down to the city of Samaria and proclaimed to them the Christ.

Phillip preached first of all that they must believe in "the Christ" that is that Jesus was the Christ or the Messiah/Savior. The people did believe and we find that:

**Acts 8:12 But when they believed Philip as he preached good news about the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women.**

When the Samaritans believed the message about the name of Christ, they were baptized in the name of Jesus Christ.<sup>12</sup> Peter and John then came down from Jerusalem and prayed them through to receiving the gift of the Holy Spirit:

**Acts 8:17 Then they laid their hands on them and they received the Holy Spirit.**

Obviously, Phillip preached the same message that Simon Peter preached!

## The Message of Ananias

Ananias was never labeled a preacher or pastor but God used this saint of the Damascus church to deliver instructions to Saul who would become the Apostle Paul. Saul/Paul had believed that Jesus was the Messiah on the road to Damascus when God confronted him in a blinding light.<sup>13</sup> Saul/Paul was then instructed to go to a certain house in Damascus and to await further instruction of "what he must do." For three days he had been praying and fasting, repenting of his sins.<sup>14</sup> This is what Ananias told him to do:

**Acts 9:17 So Ananias departed and entered the house. And laying his hands on him he said, "Brother Saul, the Lord Jesus who appeared to you on the road by which you came has sent me so that you may regain your sight and be filled with the Holy Spirit."**

And then we find one more important instruction given by Ananias to Saul/Paul:

**Acts 22:16 And now why do you wait? Rise and be baptized and wash away your sins, calling on his name.'**

Saul/Paul had already believed that Jesus was the Savior and repented of his sins, to that Ananias delivered two more instructions: "be filled with the Holy Spirit," and "be baptized." Decades after the Day of Pentecost, God was still commanding that the same answer be given to those who needed forgiveness and converting!

## The Teaching of the Apostle Paul

Paul closely followed the message that had been first delivered to him by Ananias. Years later when Paul met twelve disciples of John the Baptist, we find this exchange:

---

<sup>12</sup> See Acts 8:16 for how they were baptized.

<sup>13</sup> See Acts 9:3-6.

<sup>14</sup> See Acts 9:9.

# Salvation: Many People Answering But Still the Same Answer

**Acts 19:1-7** And it happened that while Apollos was at Corinth, Paul passed through the inland country and came to Ephesus. There he found some disciples. 2 And he said to them, "Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?" And they said, "No, we have not even heard that there is a Holy Spirit." 3 And he said, "Into what then were you baptized?" They said, "Into John's baptism." 4 And Paul said, "John baptized with the baptism of repentance, telling the people to believe in the one who was to come after him, that is, Jesus." 5 On hearing this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. 6 And when Paul had laid his hands on them, the Holy Spirit came on them, and they began speaking in tongues and prophesying. 7 There were about twelve men in all.

These men had already repented in accordance with John's preaching to get ready for the Messiah, therefore they needed to believe that Jesus was the Savior/Messiah, be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ, and receive the Holy Spirit.

Later on, when asked directly by the Philippian jailer, "what must I do to be saved?" we find this:

**Acts 16:31-34** And they said, "Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved, you and your household." 32 And 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 wounds; and he was baptized at once, he and all his family. 34 Then he brought them up into his house and set food before them. And he rejoiced along with his entire household that he had believed in God.

Contrary to how some preachers twist it, this passage is not a deviation from the four-part pattern. In fact all but repentance is alluded to here:

1. Believe in the Lord Jesus
2. Be baptized
3. An experience of "rejoicing." Strongly implying the reception of the Holy Spirit.<sup>15</sup>

If simply believing in the Lord Jesus mentally was enough then why would Paul baptize them in the wee hours of the morning, particularly in light of the wounds and physical condition of Paul at this time? We must understand that while not all examples of scripture record redundantly the same information, together they form a complete portrait of what we must do. The scriptures are laid out in such a manner that it is "here a little; there a little."<sup>16</sup>

Further writings of Paul in the New Testament strengthen that he continued in this original four-part message. He reminded the Romans that they had been baptized in the name of Jesus and resurrected through the Spirit.<sup>17</sup>

**Rom 6:3-4** Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? 4 We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life.

He told the Corinthians that although they once were lost in their sin, yet they had found hope and salvation:

**1 Cor 6:11** And such were some of you. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God.

Paul described God's work of salvation as follows:

**Titus 3:5** he saved us, not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to his own mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit,

Most astute Bible scholars admit that "washing of regeneration" is a direct reference to water baptism and so Paul, even at the end of his ministry was still writing that we are saved by the washing of baptism and the power of the

---

<sup>15</sup> See Romans 14:17; 15:13; 1 Thessalonians 1:6.

<sup>16</sup> See Isaiah 28:10.

<sup>17</sup> See also Colossians 2:11-13.

# Salvation: Many People Answering But Still the Same Answer

Holy Spirit renewing us into a new creature! Paul obviously preached and believed the same message preached by all of the other Apostolic preachers and evangelists in scripture.

## The Message of Hebrews

We are not sure who wrote the book of Hebrews. Many think it was the Apostle Paul, but some cite Apollos or Barnabas or some other writer. We do know that it is inspired of God and that whomever the writer, they taught the same four-fold teaching of salvation.

In Hebrews 6, the basic principles of the faith are listed and the writer urges that the believers grasp these basic things so that he can move on to deeper tenants. He is urging the readers to go beyond spiritual babyhood and so lists what he considers the “first steps” of a Christian:

**Heb 6:1-2 Therefore let us leave the elementary teachings about Christ and go on to maturity, not laying again the foundation of repentance from acts that lead to death, and of faith in God, 2 instruction about baptisms, the laying on of hands, the resurrection of the dead, and eternal judgment. NIV**

Included in these basic foundational principles of Christianity are “faith in God,” “repentance,” and “baptisms” referring both to water baptism and spirit baptism. If these are the “baby steps” or foundational principles of Christianity, then it follows that they have not changed today! If the Apostle Paul wrote Hebrews this just further strengthens the fact that Paul preached the same basic message as Peter and Jesus. If another preacher wrote the book, then it further strengthens that all of the original apostolic preachers held to the same, four-part answer to “what must I do to be saved!”

## The Teaching of the Apostle John

The book of 1 John contains some significant statements in the area of initial salvation. John wrote:

**1 John 5:5-10 Who is it that overcomes the world except the one who believes that Jesus is the Son of God? 6 This is he who came by water and blood — Jesus Christ; not by the water only but by the water and the blood. And the Spirit is the one who testifies, because the Spirit is the truth. 7 For there are three that testify: 8 the Spirit and the water and the blood; and these three agree. 9 If we receive the testimony of men, the testimony of God is greater, for this is the testimony of God that he has borne concerning his Son. 10 Whoever believes in the Son of God has the testimony in himself. Whoever does not believe God has made him a liar, because he has not believed in the testimony that God has borne concerning his Son.**

John identified three inseparable elements that bear witness of salvation to us and agree or work together to save us: the Spirit, the water, and the blood. Those who truly believes that Jesus is the Son of God, the Savior, will have the witness of these three things within themselves. In other words, a true believer will have Christ’s blood applied to his life at baptism of water and the infilling of the Spirit. Again we see that although the style and the language may be slightly different, every witness of New Testament scripture comes together to teach the same basic message.

## Final Thoughts

The question is “what must I do to be saved?” The four-part answer was taught by John the Baptist and commanded by Jesus Christ. It was picked up from them and clearly brought forth on the first message of Grace, by Simon Peter in the 2<sup>nd</sup> chapter of Acts. Simon Peter preached the same message to the Jews, Samaritans, and Gentiles of Cornelius’ house. Phillip likewise preached the same message to the Samaritans. When God instructed Ananias to give Saul/Paul the commandments of the Lord, Ananias brought forth the need for this same plan. The Apostle Paul never deviated from this simple answer and taught it faithfully throughout his entire life. The writer of Hebrews also taught that this four-part answer was among the foundational and most basic tenants of Christianity. And the Apostle John writing almost seventy years after Pentecost still enumerated and emphasized the need for such things. The answer was given by many people in scripture, but the answer was still the same:

## Salvation: Many People Answering But Still the Same Answer

believe that Jesus Christ is the only Savior, repent of your sins, be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ, and received the gift of the Holy Spirit. If the question has not changed, then neither has the answer! This is the

<b>PREACHER</b>	<b>BELIEF IN JESUS CHRIST</b>	<b>REPENTANCE</b>	<b>WATER BAPTISM</b>	<b>RECEIVING THE HOLY SPIRIT</b>
<b>John the Baptist</b>	John 1:6-7	Matt 3:2,8; Luke 3:8	Matt 3:6; Mark 1:8; Luke 3:3	Matt 3:11; Mark 1:8; Luke 3:16
<b>Jesus Christ</b>	John 8:24 et al.	Matt 4:17; Mark 1:15; Luke 13:3-5	Matt 28:19; Mark 16:16; John 3:5; 4:1	Luke 11:13; John 3:5; 7:38-39; 20:22; Acts 1:4-8
<b>Simon Peter</b>	Acts 2:36; 3:20-26 et al.	Acts 2:38; 3:19	Acts 2:38; 10:48	Acts 2:38; 11:15-17
<b>Phillip</b>	Acts 8:5,37	X	Acts 8:12,16	Acts 8:15-16
<b>Ananias</b>	X	X	Acts 22:16	Acts 9:17
<b>Paul</b>	Galatians 2:16 et al.	Acts 17:30	Acts 19:3-5	Acts 19:2,6
<b>Author of Hebrews</b>	Hebrews 6:1	Hebrews 6:1	Hebrews 6:1	Hebrews 6:1
<b>John the Apostle</b>	1 John 5:8-10	1 John 1:7-10	1 John 5:8-10	1 John 5:8-10

answer given by the men who wrote the Bible. This is the original answer!