

Has God Called YOU?

The things of God are foolishness to the mind of man. Love your enemies? Bless them that curse you? Trust a God whom you've never seen in person, nor talked to face-to-face to provide for your needs? These are ridiculous ideas to the normal human mind. Why is that? Why do these things that are so clearly written in the Bible make so much sense to you, yet sound like gibberish to your friends?

Why is it so difficult for your friends and family to see these things that are so very clear and simple to you? God gave us the answer:

John 6:44 (NKJV) *NO ONE can come to Me UNLESS the Father who sent Me draws him...*

To understand the things of Christ, something special must happen to a person; something that would not be possible for the human mind alone. Something that has not yet happened to your skeptical friends and family. God must "draw you" to Christ, or you cannot find Him.

John 6:65 (Philips) *...NO ONE can come to me unless my Father puts it into his heart to come.*

You can sign your name on every membership book in every church on Earth, go to church every day of the week, but you CANNOT find Jesus unless the ability is GIVEN to you by God! God must CALL you to Himself for you to receive the promises you've read in these lessons. The random stranger on the street cannot just pick up a Bible and decide to devote his life to God. Oh, he can try – but without God's guidance, he'll end up as just another false Christian.

Philippians 2:13 *For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure.*

God must be actively and PERSONALLY involved in your salvation. The desire to follow the true Jesus and the ability to understand His message must be GIVEN to each and every one of us BEFORE we can be saved.

So the question is...

LESSON 19: HAS GOD CALLED YOU?

No one today seems to understand what "a call" is. People think "a call" is something only preachers hear, something that happens to missionaries when God sends them off to preach to savages or dig wells in Uganda. But where does the Bible say that? What exactly is a call? And why do you need one?

Can the normal person understand the things of God? **1 Corinthians 2:14**. By nature, are you subject to the law of God? **Romans 8:7**. CAN you be subject (obedient) to the law of God, by yourself? (Same verse). What is your nature like? **Jeremiah 17:9**. Can you, of your own free will, change your nature into a nature like God's? **Jeremiah 13:23**. Can Man save himself from sin? **Matthew 19:25-26**.

It is impossible to find Christ on your own *because every principle in the Bible is contrary to our instinctive behavior*. Our instinct is to slap our enemy back, not turn the other cheek and let him hit us again. Our

instinct is to grab a gun and defend our house, not to trust God to protect us. Our instinct is to take everything we can get away with and give nothing back.

Is God's way completely different from ours? **Isaiah 55:8-9**. Is God's way fair, and Man's way unfair? **Ezekiel 18:29**. Is there a way that makes sense to man? **Proverbs 14:12**. What is the result of living the way of life that makes sense to us? (Same verse). What is Man's wisdom good for? **Jeremiah 4:22**. What does God want US to be like? **Romans 16:19**. What are these two types of wisdom, these two ways of living like? **James 3:13-17**. Where do the two ways of life lead – and which do most men find? **Matthew 7:13-14**.

So you can see there are two completely different ways of life; the way that makes sense to us, the way that leads to sin, suffering, and death... and the way that is foolishness to us, that leads to righteousness, happiness, and life. **Left to ourselves, we would ALWAYS choose the way that ends in death, because that is the only way that makes sense to us!**

What does Man's way strive for? **Ecclesiastes 6:7**. And what is the most important thing to Man? **Job 2:4**. What does Man put as top priority? **Ephesians 5:29**. Does this concern for his self extend to his family? **Verse 28**. Does this make him noble? **Luke 6:32-34**.

Man's way takes care of himself first, and then his immediate family, and then his friends. Loaning money to a friend, knowing he will do you a favor some day, isn't noble. It's actually self-serving, because you expect to reap gain off of it. Taking care of your wife, knowing she will reciprocate, is also self-serving. It makes sense, even to carnal men, because they're going to benefit from those actions. But that isn't particularly noble, that's just wise. That's the world's wisdom you read about in James, the wisdom that takes care of its own.

Does God's way just take care of His own? **Luke 6:35**. What does God's way command? **Ephesians 4:28**. What is God's way? **1 Thessalonians 5:15**. Man's way only does good to his friends – what does God's way do? **Galatians 6:10**. What do we seek if we follow God? **1 Corinthians 10:33**. How should we treat our enemies? **Matthew 5:44-45, Romans 12:17-21**.

GIVE AND GET

The simplest way to sum up these two ways of life is "Give" and "Get". Man's way thinks only of himself. He will take care of his family and friends only when it suits him. That's the way that seems right to us – taking care of ourselves. That's Satan's way, the way of the world. The way of GET, the way of taking everything we can from anyone we can.

God's way is the exact opposite. God's way thinks of others first. Taking care of them, even if it costs His own life, is His primary concern. He commands us to act like Him, and do good even to our enemies, feeding them when they're hungry, praying for them, doing good even to those who are actively trying to harm us.

God's way is the way of GIVE. The way of unselfishness. The way of love.

Man's way is the way of GET. The way of selfishness. The way of hate.

Every action and every thought you'll ever have is fulfilling one or the other of these ways of life. Before you learned about God, all you thought about was taking care of yourself or taking care of your own. Doing good to an enemy would be foolish! Why feed someone who wants to kill you? Let him starve! That'll be one less enemy, and good riddance! That's what makes sense to us!

What then can you do? HOW can you be saved? How can you become a part of the Kingdom of God, if your nature is the enemy of God, and deceitful above all things, and incapable of understanding the things

of God? This is the same question that puzzled the disciples, which Jesus answered for them in **Matthew 19:25-26**. God has to be actively involved OR IT CAN'T HAPPEN!

SO GOD MUST CALL YOU

By now you should be able to realize why you, on your own, could never come to know God. Your every instinct and reasoning will lead you AWAY from God at every turn, as you seek to get, to take, to think only of yourself when God's ways are the exact opposite. So must God GIVE you the ability to learn the truth? **Philippians 2:13**. Who gave understanding to Peter? **Matthew 16:17**.

Peter had not figured this out for himself; the great religious teachers of Israel had not taught it to him, because not only did none of them understand it, *but no man can give you this knowledge*. Men can say these things, *but men can't make you understand it*. Only God can do that.

Can you understand God's message without His help? **John 3:27**. Unless God draws you to Christ, can you come to Christ? **John 6:65**. To understand the gospel, what has to happen? **Verse 44**. When God calls you, what happens? **Ephesians 1:18**. To whom does God speak? **Revelation 2:17**. When you are called, have you repented (changed your life)? **Romans 11:29**. Are you called by grace (in spite of your sins)? **Galatians 1:15**.

No amount of meditation, thinking happy thoughts, or monastic isolation will ever allow you to know God unless God calls you and opens your mind to understand some small piece of truth. Perhaps someone tells you that Christmas is actually a pagan holiday; perhaps someone mentions that Sunday observance is not in the Bible, or quotes **John 3:13** at you; something that challenges your beliefs and shows you a tiny piece of truth, and then God watches to see what you do with it.

How does God usually give this first tiny piece of truth? **1 Corinthians 1:21**. So is preaching a necessary part of this calling process? **Romans 10:14-15**. Is the call direct from God, or does God work through preachers? **2 Thessalonians 2:14**.

Your call is your first introduction to truth. And it may come through a friend, through a preacher, even a preacher from a false church, or God can even use a newspaper article to initiate the first spark of understanding. Each person is different, but the point of this call is to see if you are willing to follow it, or if you love your own lifestyle too much.

But don't think this call comes in the form of a fiery twenty-story-tall Jesus who appears at the foot of your bed saying, "I am God, follow me!" There are not many of us who would not obey with such a call! But God seldom works that way, preferring to work through "*the foolishness of preaching*". Why? As it says, "*to save them that believe*"!

God doesn't want you to follow Him just because He's bigger than you. He'll settle for that as a last resort, but it isn't His ideal. Nor does He want you to follow Him because He provides free food (**John 6:26-27**). He wants you to follow him because you believe what He says (**John 6:28-29**), and share His vision of a world run according to His perfect law.

So to find out why you're here God works through fallible men like me, people in whom you can find flaws but who show you infallible truth. If you want a reason to reject this truth, you can find one – I'm too young or too old, too rich or too poor, use words that are too big or not big enough. By working through fallible men like me God ensures that you can always find an excuse, if you want one.

So when someone tells you that you shouldn't keep Christmas, will you reject it without thinking about it? Will you hate the person who told you the truth? Will you look for some flaw in them, so you can dismiss the things they said? Or will you study to see if Christmas really IS pagan – and when you find that it is, will you have the courage to stop keeping it? That's what God wants to find out!

Read **John 6:45**. After God “draws” (calls) you to Christ (**verse 44**), *if* you HEAR Him, *and* LEARN the truth, *THEN* He gives you more truth and leads you to Jesus – the REAL Jesus. At this point, you don’t have any clue how much you have to learn; you have no idea where this new truth is going to take you. Read **Hebrews 11:8**. Abraham was called by God, given one simple command in **Genesis 12:1-3**. Abraham had never been in Canaan, he had no idea what terrors might wait for him there. But God had said to do it, so he did it.

When you started studying this course, or whenever you first learned the truth, you had no idea where it might lead; but if you’re still studying, it’s because you realized what the Bible said was true, and wherever it led, you didn’t care – God had commanded it, and that was enough.

When God calls a person, they haven’t yet repented. They couldn’t have, because they didn’t know the truth! So God calls us by grace, overlooking our sins of ignorance – and at that point, all sins are sins of ignorance! And if we obey one piece, He shows us another, then another, and gradually God teaches us what we need to know.

How God teaches us is explained in **Isaiah 28:9-10**. This process begins at the call and continues for the rest of your life. A bit here, a bit there, one piece of understanding on top of another. **And each piece must be obeyed before you receive the next.**

WHOM DOES HE CALL?

To our human way of thinking, God should call the educated, the wise, the well-dressed; He should look at those people already living a good, clean life and call them into the truth. But that’s MAN’S way of thinking. Remember, God’s way is the opposite! Look what He said in **Luke 16:15**.

So whom does God call? **1 Corinthians 1:26-28**. Why? **Verse 29**. Is it because of our righteous acts that God called us? **Titus 3:3-5**. Is it based on our works – our good deeds in the past? **2 Timothy 1:9, Romans 9:11-13**. Is this unfair of God? **Verses 14-24**.

That last passage is long and a bit confusing at first. The point is that God does not call people based on their actions, nor on how well educated or selfless they are. Some He called, and some He didn’t; and according to Man’s way of thinking it appears to make no sense and actually seems a bit unfair.

For example, if you read the story of Jacob and Esau in **Genesis 25** and **27**, Esau seems to be, by far, the better man. Jacob was a liar, deceiver, and cheat; Esau was a hunter, hard worker, and tried to please his parents. Yet before they were even born, God said He loved Jacob and hated Esau. God called Jacob, and rejected Esau. Jacob got the blessings and birthright, Esau didn’t. That seems unfair to us.

But there are several reasons why that happened. God saw something in Jacob’s character that had real value; something deeper than the lying and deceiving. Those acts were sins and Jacob paid a heavy price for those throughout his life (**Genesis 47:9**). But before Jacob was even born God saw in his nature something precious. He saw that if Jacob could be turned from his cheating ways – a relatively simple change – there was a person underneath who would stubbornly, doggedly, hold on to truth against God Himself (**Genesis 32:24-28**) – and that’s what God values above all else.

Meanwhile, Esau was probably more righteous than Jacob before Jacob was called. But Esau didn’t care about the blessings God gave him, nor his birthright, and sold it to Jacob for a single meal. That birthright was a precious gift from God, the same one God has offered you, the chance to be a part of the kingdom of God. So when Esau put such a low value on it, God was deeply offended (**Hebrews 12:16-17**). God recognized this nature in Esau before the twins were even born, and this is why God called Jacob and not Esau. Not because Jacob was stronger, better, nobler, or wiser than Esau; in fact, it was quite the opposite. But because if Jacob could ever be turned from his sins, he had the potential to be something greater. The other reason Jacob was called is simply because Jacob needed God more.

Why did Jesus come? **Luke 19:10**. Whom did Jesus come to call? **Matthew 9:13**. Why? **Luke 5:31-32**. Read the story in **Luke 7:36-46**. So why did righteous Esau have less potential than sinful Jacob? **Verse 47**.

It's a simple fact that an adulterer, liar, and thief who turns from his ways is forgiven a great deal, and knowing he deserved death and realizing how close he came to being destroyed for his sins, keeps him humble and focused on the right way of life. On the other hand, an upstanding citizen (by the world's standards) won't feel the same relief at being forgiven because there simply wasn't as much to forgive.

By their thinking, they brought a lot of goodness to the table already, God just helped polish them up a bit. Of course, very few people consciously feel that way, but their actions reveal how they really feel – they were pretty good to begin with, God just “helped” them be a bit better. **When the fact is, the most upright citizen on Earth would commit the most heinous sins imaginable if put in the right situation, as would you yourself.**

So after being called, Jacob truly appreciated the mercy of God, and lived accordingly. On the other hand, while Esau would have gladly taken that mercy, he valued it at exactly one bowl of soup.

WHAT ARE YOU CALLED TO?

We've covered who is called, and a bit about what the call IS. But a call is TO something. Someone calls you to their house, to come to dinner, to join an army; what is God calling you to? Each of the following scriptures gives you a different thing we are called to. You should write them down on a pad and put them all together to get the real picture.

We are called to: **Romans 1:7, 1 Thessalonians 2:12, 1 Timothy 6:12, Revelation 19:9, 1 Peter 5:10, 2 Peter 1:3, Hebrews 9:15**. Now add all those things together, and what do you get?

So you are called to be a saint, part of the bride of Christ, glory and eternal life and so on. **All of these things are part of the same reward**, the one you studied in Lesson 6 – the first resurrection. **But we are called as sinners; and no sinner can obtain that reward**. So the very first step in that call, the very first thing we are called to do is... what? **Mark 2:17**.

Being “called” doesn't mean you're called to witness to aborigines. It doesn't mean you're called to preach the word. Those things *can* happen later, but the first and most important thing you're called to is *repentance*.

REPENTANCE

The first word out of Jesus' mouth, John the Baptist's mouth, or Peter's mouth when they preached the gospel was REPENT. (**Matthew 4:17, Luke 3:3, Acts 2:38**, respectively). Because until you do that, you CANNOT do anything else!

Why not? **Luke 6:47-49**. [Note: Hearing Jesus isn't enough! You must hear Him AND obey Him!] What is repentance? **Acts 26:20**. What leads you to repentance? **Romans 2:4**. Can you repent without God's help (His call)? **2 Timothy 2:25**. What comes before repentance? **2 Corinthians 7:9-10**. And what must you repent of? **Revelation 9:20-21**. And HOW does God bring you to repentance? What has to happen? **Job 42:1-6**.

Repentance begins when God shows you that you are wrong. That you have lived your entire life under the philosophy of GET, and you LIKED IT THAT WAY! It means that you realize you have SINNED against God and His law, frequently and without remorse.

It means you realize that under the law of **Romans 6:23**, you have earned the death penalty. It also means you admit to yourself that you DESERVE that penalty. That by rights, God SHOULD kill you where you stand for your past deeds! And if there is *any chance* of changing His mind, you should walk *very softly!*

It means for the first time in your life, you realize WHAT you are – and when you truly see how sinful your nature is, you will ABHOR yourself. And that leads you to the attitude of REPENTANCE. But it isn't merely a change of attitude! That's where so many "altar-call repentances" go astray! Because there must be ACTIONS that accompany this repentance!

Read **Matthew 3:8**. You can't "repent" and then continue stealing – can you? **Ephesians 4:28**. What must the wicked do to live? **Ezekiel 33:19**. You must not only feel sorry about what you have done, you must then DO what is right! You must CHANGE the way you've lived and *never, ever do it again!* **Acts 17:30**. Is it ABSOLUTELY NECESSARY that you truly HATE sin and the works of sin, and hate yourself for succumbing to it? **Luke 14:26**.

Today, so many churches have meetings where they try to work up an emotional state of remorse, to get the person to walk down the aisle and publicly "repent". But where are the WORKS that show that repentance? **The works you are commanded to show?**

A temporary feeling of remorse, saying the words "I give my heart to Jesus", means *nothing at all to God*. It has been said by billions of people who serve the false Jesus, most of whom go back to their normal, worldly sins the very next day. REAL REPENTANCE is the knowledge that EVERYTHING you have ever done or thought has been wrong! That even your best act was tainted with selfishness and your life is WORTHLESS without God's intervention.

Real repentance doesn't happen overnight. It doesn't happen because a charismatic speaker manipulated your emotions into self-reproach. At best, that might spur you to look at yourself a little closer and see yourself for what you are – but TRUE REPENTANCE only happens as you study the Bible and truly UNDERSTAND how different God's way is from your way!

It takes time, and it takes actions to PROVE that you really want to change your life and BE a different person – and that you're willing to do WHATEVER IT TAKES. It is a change of your entire way of life, a complete *conversion* of yourself into a new, Godly person.

CONVERSION

Is it absolutely necessary that you be converted to be saved? **Matthew 18:3**. Must you learn a new way of life to be converted? **Psalms 51:13**. How do you get converted? **Psalms 19:7**. Are you converted just by knowing Christ? **Luke 22:32**.

Pay close attention to that! Peter had known Jesus *personally* for YEARS, and STILL wasn't converted! Because Jesus said to Peter in the future tense "WHEN you are converted..."! So many people think they know Jesus, and some few actually do, but far fewer are truly CONVERTED! But what IS true conversion?

The original Greek word used is *epistrepho*. It means, literally, "to turn". Nothing more fancy than that, simply the verb "to turn". It isn't a special ecclesiastical term, it just refers to ANYTHING that turns around. So many of these religious-sounding words are overcomplicated by preachers! Conversion is SIMPLE!

There are two ways of life. All of us have been following the way that seems right to us all our lives. That way ends in DEATH, according to God. Not because God is going to kill us, but because SIN will kill us. Sin carries its own reward! (**Jeremiah 2:17, 19**). How should you feel about those former acts of yours? **Romans 6:21**.

Repentance means you realize what that verse says, and you HATE that way you've been going down, and hate yourself for following it! And so you tell God so, and beg His forgiveness! (**Hosea 14:1-2**). That's repentance – but conversion is when you *turn your life around!* It's when you STOP going down that path

and TURN to a NEW path! That's why you repent FIRST, and THEN you are converted – because unless you realize your path is wrong, you have no reason to turn from it!

Which comes first – repentance or conversion? **Acts 3:19**. How does God say to repent and be converted? **Joel 2:12-13**. What does God do when people turn their life around (are converted)? **Jeremiah 26:3**. What are the three steps Paul mentions? **Acts 26:20**.

Note what Paul said! First *repent!* Realize you were wrong and feel appropriately ashamed about it! Then be converted, TURN to a new way of life – and then do WORKS that prove you are living differently today! It's those works that most churches completely ignore today, that Paul says are a FOUNDATIONAL PIECE of TRUE repentance, conversion, and salvation!

Must you turn to God before God turns to you? **Zechariah 1:3-4**. Is it the same in the New Testament? **James 4:7-10**. What will happen if you don't turn back to God? **Ezekiel 18:30**. Does God want to kill the wicked? **Ezekiel 33:11**. Is there any other option? (Same verse). What happens when God pronounces a death penalty on the wicked? **Verses 14-16**. Can you be forgiven no matter what you've done? **Nehemiah 1:9**. What does God promise to those people? **Isaiah 1:18**.

It doesn't matter what you've done. It doesn't matter what punishment God has pronounced on you. You are not clever enough to have come up with some new sin God hasn't got covered. What's in the past is in the past, *if it's in the past*.

Too many people “repent” then half-heartedly try a new life, and in a few weeks or months they're back doing what they've always done. That's not the fruit of true repentance, it's just a temporary fear of punishment or depression with your lot in life. **You can realize you caused your own problems without realizing you ARE your own problem.**

Once you truly see the evil you've caused to yourself and others by your sinful, evil, law-breaking ways, you will “abhor yourself” and shudder at the thought of going back down that road again. *That* is repentance.

After you realize that, the next step is conversion; the commitment to start a new way of life. Then if you are keeping your commitment, there will be clear changes in your life – works – that prove you have truly started down that road, and are well on your way to being a new person.

COUNT THE COST

What did David pray to God? **Psalms 51:10**. And what did Paul tell the Ephesians regarding conversion? **Ephesians 4:22-24**. Someone who is truly converted must do what? **1 Peter 4:1-2**. What was our life devoted to before conversion? **Verse 3**. Will this seem strange to our friends? **Verse 4**.

God's way is not a slight fork in the road from Satan's way. It isn't a minor course change, it is a complete reversal of your every thought and act! Make no mistake, they are completely opposite directions! Don't underestimate the magnitude of the change God will expect from you!

Hopefully, since you've been studying this course for about a year now, you've made a lot of these changes already. But you haven't made a formal commitment yet. To use a metaphor, you've been dating God; getting to know Him, to see if you're going to like spending eternity with Him. You've heard a lot of great things about doing things God's way; but to be perfectly fair, you need to study some of the unpleasant things about choosing this way of life.

What will you have to put up with as a Christian? **John 15:19-21**. What will people call you? **Matthew 10:25**. Will all men love you? **Matthew 10:22**. What will they do to you? **Verse 17**. Will you suffer? **2 Timothy 3:12**. What will you have to do to follow God? **Matthew 16:24**. What if it comes to a choice between following God, and keeping your family happy? **Luke 14:26**. Now keep reading **verses 27-33**.

This is the time where you must decide if it's going to be worth it or not. This is where you "count the cost". Are you willing to give up everything if necessary? Will you be able to tolerate your family hating you, your friends avoiding you, losing a job now and then, being lied about, persecuted, and who-knows-what-else?

I'm not saying it's not worth it. It is, many times over – but are you able to see it through? Or will you be like the man who tried to build the house, and half-way through found out he didn't have enough money? Will you commit to following God, and then after sacrificing many things, find that you just don't have what it takes to follow Him ALL the way?

God's price is high. But His is the only real offer on the table – and if you truly trust Him, He's not lying when He says, "*my yoke is easy, and my burden is light*" (**Matthew 11:30**). It IS light, but only if you're pulling the yoke WITH Him. If you're pulling against Him, it will be a terribly frustrating life. Yes, there will be persecutions – but if you have faith, they won't last (**Psalms 34:19**).

But decide now, before you make this commitment, if this is really what you want. If you really will follow God WHEREVER He leads. Because you have to fully make that commitment before you can find "newness of life".

NEWNESS OF LIFE

Newness of life is the inevitable result of true conversion. It's actually what conversion means: that you've *turned* down a different road – the way of God. And that change is what begins the second half of the process of creation (**Genesis 1:26**). You already look like God, and this is where you begin to start acting like God, and behaving in His likeness. Read **Colossians 3:10**. [Note: the word "image" is a bad translation; it should read "likeness", as it does in the Philips or Murdoch translation.]

Does this transformation change you away from the world, and towards God? **Romans 12:2**. How? (Same verse). What is it about your mind that needs changed? **Romans 8:7**. How can you change that? **Isaiah 55:7**. What is the goal of that change? **Ezekiel 36:26**.

You will find that God's way of life will affect every single thing you do or think; you will have to completely rewrite your mind to value the things God values and hate the things God hates. You will have to decide the person you used to be must die. And if you continue to live, it will be only as a completely new and different person.

YOU MUST DIE

The person you used to be, and to some extent still are, is not worth saving. You're rather like one of those collapsing 100-year-old abandoned farmhouses alongside the road. It's a deathtrap, not even safe to work on; the only thing that can be done is to tear it down and start over.

Are we all under a sentence of death in our former lives? **2 Corinthians 1:9-10**. Are we all dead in our sins when we come to God? **Ephesians 2:1-5**. Why? **Verses 2-3**. Do we die as Jesus did? **Galatians 2:20**. How are we crucified? **Galatians 5:24**. Why? **Romans 6:6**. Should we mortify (kill) our earthly body? **Colossians 3:5**. [The BBE version reads "...put to death your bodies which are of the earth".]

Our old self earned the death penalty. We acknowledge that. But the problem is, we are still that person. We still have all the same habits and desires that led him/her to sin. And so we must both literally and symbolically kill that old person. The symbolic way will be explained in a moment, but the literal way is quite simple. When Paul learned the commandment, what happened to him? **Romans 7:9**.

Each time you learn a commandment, you have to either follow the lusts of your heart or the word of God. If you follow God, then a piece of you must die. Your mind must change so radically that it will be

unrecognizable. You have to put it – this desire for sin – behind you and never look back, just as if it was dead. Why? **Romans 8:13**.

That verse is badly misunderstood by so many, but it's so simple! It simply says that if you follow the desires of your body, which is led by your selfish heart, you will die – just as **Proverbs 14:12** said! On the other hand, if you follow the commands of the spirit of God, and put to death the acts of your old self, you will live. It's that simple.

As you read above, **crucify your old man and you'll automatically have a new man**. And that's how you live in "newness of life". How should our lives be spent now? **2 Corinthians 5:14-15**. Whose will should we fulfill now? **1 Peter 4:2-3**. Will your friends think you are crazy? **Verse 4**.

This new person will have very little in common with the old person. Which is a great thing, because the old person brought suffering to you and everyone around you! You are killing that person **because you hate him!** But on the other hand, it means you won't enjoy the same sorts of activities as he did; and people you used to consider friends will shun you because you don't participate in the same old sinful activities.

Since you'll be a new person, you probably will have a new taste in friends anyway, but it will still be traumatic. But it's worth it, and everyone who has ever been called has gone through it. Your new person will make new friends; stronger friends, friends that are truly worth having and will be there for you when you need help. You'll find new activities that fulfill you more than drinking and carousing ever did. And even if you don't... you're doing what's right. You're obeying God, and following the only true way of life, and that's all that really matters.

BAPTISM

So far you have studied most of the high points of the process of repentance, conversion, and newness of life. You know the idea behind all this, but now it's time to study the ritual itself. So many wrong ideas about baptism are taught, all because no one stops to ask the Bible, "Should we be baptized? How? When? Why?" – so that's what we'll do now.

As always before we can intelligently discuss something, we have to find out exactly what it is. The Greek word for "to baptize" is... well, *baptizo*. "To baptize" is a word that was copied into English directly from the original Greek word. *Baptizo* means, according to Strong's "to **immerse, submerge**; to make overwhelmed (i.e. FULLY WET);"

As usual, this is not complicated and there is no excuse for so much confusion over such a simple subject. *Baptizo* is simply the Greek word meaning "to immerse" or "to submerge". **It isn't a special church-related term, it is a simple verb**. By itself, the word "to baptize" doesn't necessarily imply water; ancient Greek writers spoke of having "baptized" their cucumbers in vinegar to make pickles. It simply means "submerged".

To make it easier to understand, you can mentally replace the word "baptize" with "submerge" every time you read it in the Bible. The Bible speaks of several different baptisms, in various substances and ways, but we will start with the one most people are familiar with...

WATER BAPTISM

Baptism is immersion. That is the meaning of the word. **Doing anything that does not completely submerge a person in water is not baptism**. Baptism by sprinkling is a contradiction – literally, it means "submersion by sprinkling", which is not possible.

Did Philip dip his fingers in the water and sprinkle it on the man and pronounce him baptized? **Acts 8:38-39**. How much water is required to baptize people? **John 3:23**. What does baptism represent? **Romans 6:3-4**. Can you be "buried" by sprinkling? (Same verse).

The only water baptism in the Bible is full submersion. The other methods of baptism were popularized in the late middle ages for the convenience of priests in performing deathbed baptisms and similar rituals. Now they live on as traditions, with no Biblical support. So now that we know what baptism is, **should we be baptized today?**

Was Jesus baptized in water? **Matthew 3:13-16.** Did this please His Father? **Verse 17.** Is Jesus our perfect example? **1 Peter 2:21.** Should we do everything He did? **1 John 2:6.** Did Jesus command the disciples to baptize after His death? **Matthew 28:19.** What would happen to those whom they baptized? **Mark 16:15-16.** Was just believing their gospel enough? (Same verse).

Could just anyone get baptized? **Matthew 3:7-8.** What was required first? (Same verse). What did Peter command the sinners at that first Pentecost? **Acts 2:38.** Which came first – repentance, or baptism? (Same verse). Who was able to be baptized? **Verse 39.**

Notice that only those whom God would call would be baptized. Remember, no one can just decide they want to be converted and follow God *unless God has first called them.* And THEN they repent, turn their life around, and THEN they can (and must) be baptized – in that order.

Is baptism for both men and women? **Acts 8:12.** What prerequisite is there for baptism besides repentance? **Acts 8:36-37.** What happened before Peter concluded with the command to be baptized? **Acts 2:37.** Why were they “pricked in the heart”? What had Peter been saying to them? **Verse 36.**

When God calls you He gives you understanding of right and wrong. He opens your eyes to see how the sins you’ve committed have affected yourself and others, and any normal person should feel bitterly sorry when they truly understand that. Then you realize that God should kill you for what you’ve done, that you deserve the death penalty so you can no longer hurt others. This is the first step of true repentance.

Peter had just told these people “you murdered Jesus Christ”, and their heart was pricked. They felt condemned, as well they should! And so they said, “*men and brethren, what shall we do?*” After that first feeling of condemnation, the next step is often hopelessness, a feeling of “what can God possibly do with me, I’m such a horrible sinner!” This is natural and proper.

That’s when the realization should come that there is nothing that God can do with you, as you are. You must die in order for a new person to live in your place – a better you, a “you” without the baggage of the old person’s vices and fears and deeds. It is at this point that baptism enters the picture.

To understand what Baptism symbolizes, turn to **Romans 6.** Read the whole chapter, then continue with this lesson. In **verse 3,** Paul says if you are baptized into Christ, you are baptized into His death. What does that mean? He explains in **verse 4.** Baptism symbolizes a *burial*; just as a dead person is submerged (baptized) in dirt, covered by the soil and seen no more, so a worthless, sinful human being goes into the waters of baptism *and never rises out of them!*

The being that rises out of the baptismal waters is – symbolically – a new person. The wages of sin is death, and baptism symbolizes that death. When you “die” in those waters, you are turning your back on your old life, committing to put to death every sin, every bad habit, every vice as soon as you find it. This is how your old man gets crucified (**verse 6**), and your old body is destroyed, and you are freed from sin (**verse 7**).

In **verse 8,** you see after baptism your fate is tied to Christ; you died with Him, and now you will live with Him. Now you are dead to sin (**verse 11**), and it is your responsibility to reject sin as He did (**verse 12**). Your life is no longer your own. The life you had ended at baptism, and the new life was resurrected, and owned, by God – and you should act like it (**verse 13**).

A NEW CONTRACT

You were given a life to live. You have wrecked it, and decided it's worthless – you repented. You have made contracts, oaths, promises, and are so far in debt (spiritually) that you can never dig yourself out. This is the situation you see in **Romans 6:23**. But then in **Romans 7:1**, you see the way out; the penalty of the law only lasts until your death. Just as a marriage vow is made “until death do us part”, as Paul mentions in **verses 2-3**.

When you die, those obligations are over. Foolish deals you should never have made are no longer binding because **the person who made them is dead**. Vows he made to God are no longer binding *because that person is dead*. Your old ways, your old obligations, your old family ties, are all cast off. All the contracts that old person had *died with him*. Debts that person may have had, you do not owe in God's eyes.

Of course, the world won't recognize this, so your credit card companies will still expect a check every month. But like taxes, you have no *spiritual* obligation to pay those old debts because the person you are now does not owe them (**Matthew 17:24-26**). **But like taxes, you should diligently pay your debts unless you can be freed from them legally**, “lest we should offend them” (**verse 27**). And like with taxes, God will provide the money miraculously to pay for these unjust debts, *if you trust Him* (**verse 27** again).

But the debts the new man accrues should be paid *very* faithfully, because your word should be as trustworthy as Jesus' own word. Vows you make are permanent this time. There will be no more “get out of jail free” cards. Baptism is a once-in-a-lifetime free pass from God to undo all your mistakes and start over. It only happens once, and if you mess up your new life, you're stuck with it.

Before you are baptized, you should seek to make reparations to the people you've wronged, (**Ezekiel 33:15**) **not to try and perform penance, but because it's the right thing to do**. You should try to pay back debts that you can, you should try to reconcile with those you've offended (**Matthew 5:23-24**). If you're truly sorry about the sins you've committed, you will do everything you can to undo your mistakes. These are “*fruits meet for repentance*” (**Matthew 3:8**).

Let me make this absolutely clear: you cannot undo the damage you've done, you cannot un-earn the death penalty, and you cannot save yourself no matter what you do. **No amount of good works will earn you salvation!** You need the forgiveness of God, not the forgiveness of men, to be saved.

That said, if you are truly sorry, you will be driven to undo every mistake you can. Not to get their forgiveness, but because it's the right thing to do. This is conversion – and proof of your new way of life.

Think of it this way; you've just learned you are under a death sentence. God has shown you that you must die, and why. You now have the remainder of your life to set your house in order and get your affairs together before you die. It will be embarrassing to confess your sins to people you've hurt, but it will also be humbling – something you probably need.

WHY IS BAPTISM NEEDED?

As I mentioned before, it's easy to get worked up into a frenzy of remorse and walk down the sawdust trail and give your heart to Jesus – and also easy to go out the next day and be the same person you always were – and baptism is a way of discouraging that. To explain how, you have to first understand circumcision.

Was circumcision first given to Moses? **John 7:22**. Who were these “fathers” to whom it was first given? **Genesis 17:9-10**. And what did circumcision signify? **Verse 11**. Who was to be circumcised? **Verse 12**. How long were Abraham and his descendants to perform this ritual? **Verse 13**. What happens to people who

refuse to perform it? **Verse 14**. What was the covenant God made with Abraham that circumcision symbolized? **Verses 1-8**.

That is the best simple definition of circumcision. God made a covenant with Abraham, a covenant of obedience; God's requirement for Abraham was "*walk before Me and be blameless*" (NKJV). In other words, Abraham's part of the contract was obedience and blamelessness in God's law. God's part of the contract was "*to be a God unto thee, and to thy seed after thee*", and the other blessings you studied in Lesson 11.

So that was the two sides of this deal God made with Abraham; each had obligations to fulfill, and each stood to profit from the arrangement. Abraham by receiving enormous blessings, and God by receiving a righteous friend (**James 2:23**). If you imagine this as a modern contract on a piece of paper, circumcision was the signature that "sealed the deal" and made it official, the "token of the covenant".

Was this symbol a requirement to take the Passover, symbolizing payment for your sins? **Exodus 12:48**. What did circumcision do for Abraham? **Romans 4:11**. Does circumcision obligate you to do anything? **Galatians 5:3**.

Circumcision was the sign of your agreement to obey God fully, just as Abraham did (**Genesis 26:5**). It was used as the symbol of the Mosaic covenant and required you to obey the letter of the law only – thou shalt not steal, thou shalt not commit adultery, etc. Anyone caught breaking these laws was punished and if necessary executed or exiled.

Since these laws could be enforced by Israel, all infants were bound into this covenant on the 8th day by circumcision. It was non-negotiable, as this was the bare minimum covenant God would accept to allow you to live in His nation – your options for your child were either circumcision or exile. But even in the Old Testament, this old covenant symbolized by circumcision was not what God wanted.

What did God want circumcised? **Deuteronomy 10:16**. What is the long-term goal of God, after the return of Christ? **Deuteronomy 30:6**. What does God warn Judah (who were physically circumcised) against? **Jeremiah 4:4**. Is it possible to be circumcised in flesh, and uncircumcised in heart? **Jeremiah 9:26**.

Circumcision of the heart is a metaphorical cutting away of the hard, stubborn barrier Israel had set up between God and their thoughts. They were willing to obey Him outwardly – sometimes – but they flatly refused to allow Him access to their hearts. They would obey the law written on stone – sort of – but they would not let God write those laws in their hearts. God used circumcision as a metaphor to describe those who would let their hearts be led by God, calling such people "circumcised in the heart".

Is the New Testament about changing all that and writing the laws in the hearts of men? **2 Corinthians 3:3**. Did this replace the Old Testament covenant? **Hebrews 8:10**. Was circumcision commanded forever? **Genesis 17:13**. Should we still be circumcised today (physically)? **Galatians 5:2**. What about spiritually (circumcision of the heart)? **Romans 2:28-29**. Was circumcision abolished... or replaced? **Philippians 3:2-3**.

Circumcision was commanded *forever*. Therefore, it never was abolished. God doesn't say "forever", then later change His mind. He knows what "forever" means! But the true meaning of circumcision was never literal circumcision. God did command it, but it was never the real intent of the command – He wanted circumcision of the heart, not circumcision of the flesh.

Does circumcision matter? **Galatians 5:6**. What does? (Same verse). Is circumcision a non-issue? **1 Corinthians 7:19**. What IS an issue? (Same verse). Does circumcision help? **Galatians 6:15**. What does? (Same verse). Was Abraham saved by his literal circumcision or his spiritual circumcision? **Romans 4:9-12**. Are New Testament Christians circumcised at all? **Colossians 2:11**. And HOW are they circumcised? **Verse 12**.

There you have the answer! Circumcision was not abolished! It was *replaced* by baptism, the “*circumcision made without hands*”! That’s why circumcision disappeared from the true religion at the same time that baptism appeared! Baptism became the NEW symbol, the NEW seal of a NEW covenant made between God and Man!

Circumcision of the flesh symbolized the fleshly covenant God made with Man – the covenant of works. Baptism symbolized the new covenant God made with Man, the covenant of faith. If we look at this new covenant as another paper contract, baptism represents the signature on the dotted line confirming the agreement by both parties to the terms of the deal.

WHY IS A SYMBOL NECESSARY?

To answer that question, consider the marriage ceremony. There is no marriage ceremony in the Bible. No specific requirement for a minister to perform the ceremony, nor to have it recognized by the state, get a marriage license, and so on. I have known several people who just “got married” by going into the backyard, kneeling down, and praying and telling God they were married, and that was that. And I’m sure they meant it at the time, and were sincere in their prayer.

In principle, that might be fine... except people are “*deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked*”. And in each of these cases I know first-hand, after “the honeymoon was over”, a year or two later, they separated. When you asked either party about it, you were told “well, yeah, but... we were never *really* married anyway!”

When you asked them right after their “wedding” if they were married (which I did), they insisted that they were just as married as anyone else. But as soon as they wanted out of the marriage, as soon as things got a bit rough, it was very easy to say it wasn’t a real marriage after all. The vows they took suddenly became “statements”, not oaths, and the promises they made became “intentions”, not commitments. Why? Partly because there were no witnesses, and no symbol of the contract written down anywhere.

It is because of this human tendency to rewrite history to suit the needs of the moment that we have marriage contracts and require witnesses to consider a couple legally married. Baptism is similar; it is a physical ritual that you perform in front of witnesses that proves, forever and for always, that you committed yourself irrevocably to this way of life.

Baptism is the sign of the new covenant; it is literally no more than the signing of the contract between you and God. Just as signing a contract to build a house for someone does not build the house, it only enters you into an obligation to build it under the terms specified. But if you do not sign the contract, you will not get paid – and have no legal right to call yourself employed to build the house.

Likewise, if you are not baptized (“*buried with Him in baptism*”) you will not be “paid” (“*risen with Him*”). And you have no legal right to take part in the Passover (“*for no uncircumcised person shall eat thereof*”), nor to call yourself a Christian. A Christian follows Christ’s commands, one of which was, through Peter, to “*Repent, and be baptized every one of you*”. And a Christian follows His example and is baptized.

A FEW OBJECTIONS

1. Paul Didn’t Baptize

Some people claim since Paul didn’t baptize people, that baptism was abolished; is that really what he said? Read their source scripture for yourself! Always demand proof! Did Paul baptize people? **1 Corinthians 1:14-17**. Were the Corinthians baptized or not? **Acts 18:8**.

Note that Paul DID baptize, just not MANY people in Corinth. His point was that the Corinthians were bickering among each other, with some saying since THEY were baptized by Paul, THEY were better than those who had been baptized by other preachers (**1 Corinthians 1:11-13**).

And Paul was thankful that he hadn't fed these fires by baptizing many people there *personally*, otherwise they would have been divided among the Paul-baptized and the non-Paul-baptized, which wasn't the point at all!

2. Believe And Be Saved

Another objection is based on scriptures that seem to indicate that all you have to do is confess Jesus to be saved. A frighteningly large number of denominations teach that. Let's look at a few of the key verses; **Acts 16:30-31** seems to support that... if plucked from the pages of the Bible and read by itself. But keep reading! **Verses 32-34**.

Immediately after saying "*believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved*", the verse which some people use to say that is ALL you have to do, EVER, to be saved – just after that, they were BAPTIZED! Now if believing was ALL they had to do, why follow up immediately by baptizing them?

Likewise, some quote **Acts 2:21** for the same reason. Yet just a few moments later, Peter commanded them to repent and be baptized! The Bible is meant to be understood as a PACKAGE, not chopped up and parceled out verse-by-verse.

You read **Romans 6**, where Paul explained why baptism was necessary and what it meant; yet some use the same book to show that nothing is required *at all* of men to be saved except to confess Jesus – read **Romans 10:9**. But is that verse ALL God said about salvation in the Bible? Did He intend for this verse to be plucked out of the Bible and pasted on a billboard and presented as the complete recipe for salvation?

If you record an hour of someone talking, you can chop up their words, put them back together, and make them say *literally anything imaginable*. If you pull a scripture here and there out of the Bible and reassemble them according to your own ideas, *you can make them say literally anything imaginable*.

With that sort of "Bible study", you can prove God is a woman or Satan doesn't exist or Adam made the animals. This is why God said "*no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation*" (**2 Peter 1:20**). **If you can't prove it, and defend it against every scripture in the Bible, YOU HAVE NO RIGHT TO BELIEVE IT!**

BAPTISM INTO WHAT?

Many churches today use baptism as little more than a membership contract. They baptize you into their church, into the trinity, into this or that; but what should you be baptized into? **Matthew 28:19**. As you read in the end of Lesson 14, that does *not* say, "baptizing them in the name of the trinity". Nor does it say "baptizing them in the name of the Father, and the *name* of the Son, and the *name* of the holy spirit".

It says literally "baptizing them in the name (the singular NAME, not "*names*") of the Father, and of the Son, and of the holy spirit". The only singular name the Father, Son, and everyone with the holy spirit share is... what? **Ephesians 3:14-15**. So this baptism is not into the trinity, or into any physical church, but *into the family of God!*

This baptism officially makes you a part of the *elohim*, and entitles YOU to use the name of Christ, to call yourself a "Christian". It officially makes you a member of the family of God, the body of Christ, the true Church of God. It is the beginning of your life as a God-fetus, the point at which you are conceived by God – more on that next lesson.

But it is *not* a baptism into any organization on Earth; it is *not* a loyalty oath you take to a certain church so that you can vote in that church. It is *not* something that is done weekly, yearly, or every time you move to a different sect. It is a once-in-a-lifetime commitment, very much like marriage, that binds you to obey the laws of God in your heart as well as in your body.

IMMEDIATE BAPTISM

Some will take issue with what you've studied here about repenting and stopping your sins before baptism. They'll say the instant a person wants to be baptized, they have a right to be baptized, and that simply isn't true – see **Luke 3:7-8**. The people responded, “What shall we do then”, that is, what must they do before he would baptize them (**verse 10**). His answers were recorded in **verses 11-14**. These are all *acts* of repentance; repenting of abusing people for money and bearing false witness (**verse 14**), repenting of extortion (**verse 12-13**), and greed (**verse 11**).

John required these things of people before he would baptize them, and so should any true minister of God. It's far more important that you understand the terms of baptism before you are baptized, than that you get baptized the second you hear about it. Much better to enter baptism with a full understanding of what you are doing and why, than just because a charismatic speaker convinced you that you had to have it.

But people will object saying, “But what about the 3,000 that were baptized in **Acts 2:41**, the same day as Peter told them about baptism”? – and it's a reasonable objection, but everyone overlooks three obvious facts!

1. John the Baptist's sole mission was “*to make ready a people prepared for the Lord*” (**Luke 1:17**). He had been getting people to repent and get their life in order as much as five years earlier! Preparing them for this very day when they were baptized and received the holy spirit (**Matthew 3:11**).
2. These people had either been following, heard the teachings of, or at the very least been aware of Christ for *years*! Everyone in the region knew of these things!
3. These were all adherents to the Jewish religion, gathered to Jerusalem to celebrate Pentecost! These were people who had (mostly) been faithfully obeying the Ten Commandments, Holy Days, unclean meats, and Sabbath *their entire lives*! ***The only thing they lacked to be Christians was a belief in Christ!*** So that's all that was required from them!

This was not like speaking to complete heathens who had never heard of the law or faith or God, telling them to believe in Jesus, have them mutter “okay”, and baptizing them! These people were PREPARED for this day, whether they knew it or not. The net result of the complete ministry of John the Baptist, Jesus, and the disciples was realized on this day!

And throughout the New Testament, many of the same circumstances prevailed; Moses was taught in every city (**Acts 15:21**), so the fundamentals of the law, Holy Days, unclean meats, and so on didn't need to be taught in the New Testament. Everyone knew it and had at least paid lip service to it! So what you see primarily done throughout the New Testament is the teaching of what they lacked – the belief in Christ and understanding of why He had to come and why He had to die.

Today's Christians start from a huge disadvantage, because they were not raised in righteousness; they were raised to think all that Old Testament stuff had been abolished, and all they had to do was “believe, and be saved”. In many ways, they are the exact opposite of the New Testament converts – they believe in Christ, in His existence and His death, but reject His message. The Jews believed much of His message, but rejected Him and His sacrifice. **A true Christian believes both.**

So today, before a person can enter into the New Covenant by baptism, they have to go back to the beginning and learn the basics of the contract they are thinking of signing. God wants no one to back out because they hadn't read the fine print. He wants no voided contracts, so He insists on informed consent. You have to have READ the contract and UNDERSTAND its requirements before He permits you to sign it.

WHO SHOULD BAPTIZE?

All true baptisms are performed by Jesus Christ. At the same time, no one is baptized by Jesus personally. Read **John 4:1-2**. Jesus baptized all those people... and yet Jesus never touched a single one of them. His disciples baptized people *for Him, in His place, as if it were Him doing it*.

Read **Acts 8:16**; notice the phrase "*baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus*". Jesus didn't baptize them. But they were baptized by someone else, in Jesus' name. There is much to learn about that phrase, but for now we'll keep it simple. To do something "in someone's name" had a different meaning before modern times. It meant literally to do something "in someone's place".

Expressions like "Stop *in the name* of the law!" or "I claim this land *in the name* of England" still survive to this day. Or as Webster defines the word "viceroy": "The governor of a country or province **who rules in the name of the sovereign with regal authority, as the king's substitute.**"

Doing something "in Jesus' name" means doing it *in His place, by His authority, or as His substitute*. When the disciples baptized in Jordan in Jesus' place, they were baptizing in His name. When a minister baptizes you today, they are doing it in His name – as a substitute for Him, since He isn't here to do it.

They are doing it with His authority, and it is every bit as binding as if Jesus had personally done it... but only if that person is qualified to speak for Jesus. People who teach things that Jesus didn't teach are not speaking in Jesus' name; not the real Jesus' name, anyway.

People who don't obey Jesus aren't acting in His name, and even if they had His authority once, they will no longer have it; just like an English viceroy who obeys the French will be disowned by England and no longer carry the authority of the king of England.

Baptisms were performed in the New Testament by many different people, not all of whom were apostles or ministers; Philip for example was only a deacon. Paul was baptized by Ananias, who was merely "a disciple" (**Acts 9:10-18**), apparently not a minister. Many in Corinth were baptized (**Acts 18:8**), but Paul claimed to have only baptized two of them and one family (**1 Corinthians 1:14-16**), so presumably others in Paul's company baptized the others, possibly Silas and Timothy (**Acts 18:5**).

The conclusion is that any baptized person who has evidence of the spirit of God – such as repentance, conversion, faith, understanding, and power – is qualified to represent God in this capacity or any other. The more of the above he has, the better he represents God. This can include anyone in the true Church, whether they have an official office or not.

It is the responsibility of the person being baptized to make sure that the person baptizing them has the authority to do so, by comparing what they say and do to the word of God. However, once you do that and are baptized by them, remember this is an arrangement between you and God; your baptism is between you and Jesus *and no one else*.

If the minister should later fall away from the truth or reject God altogether, it will not affect your contract with God because the minister's name was not on that contract – only your name and God's name are **on that contract**. Only you and He can break it, and He has sworn that He never will (**Hebrews 13:5**).

RE-BAPTISM

Many of you have already been baptized in various churches. I'm sure you were sincere when you did it, and honestly believed it's what God wanted. But if it wasn't performed according to the Biblical instructions, it is null and void; for example, sprinkling or pouring is not baptism at all.

Or if you were baptized into a denomination, or into the trinity, you were not baptized into the family of God – and that's the only baptism that counts. Or if you were baptized by someone who was not qualified to represent Jesus, you were not baptized by Jesus. You got wet, but baptism is about more than that. If Jesus isn't involved in it, then you just washed the stink off – not the sins.

It's like a marriage ceremony; the preacher always concludes with “by the power vested in me by the state of _____, I pronounce you husband and wife”. That marriage is binding only because the state has given that man that authority! But if that man doesn't *have* that power to make that pronouncement, *then that marriage is invalid*.

If the couple later finds out that they were married by an imposter, someone who had no authority, then to be legally married they'll have to be remarried by someone who IS legally qualified to perform marriages. Likewise, if you were baptized by any minister of the false Christianity, **you weren't baptized by Christ**.

You were baptized by a minister who, though he doesn't realize it, is working for the false Jesus – who is none other than Satan himself. You may have the best of intentions, **but a member of the false Christianity cannot represent Christ at your baptism! Satan CANNOT baptize you into the family of God – and wouldn't if he could!**

Or if you were taught that God is something that He isn't; for instance, that He goes to church on Sunday, requires nothing of you for salvation, is going to send the wicked to hell and you to heaven, hates the Ten Commandments and is actually a trinity... then you weren't baptized into the contract God offered. You signed A contract with A Jesus, but not THE contract with THE Jesus.

If you were baptized without understanding your obligation to repent of breaking the laws of God and obey His laws in the future, then your baptism was meaningless. Or if you were baptized as an infant, unable to grasp speech, much less an eternal contract with God, you are not legally baptized.

And so if you were baptized and any of these situations describe you, you have not been legally baptized into the family of God... and until you are, you are not a true Christian. Because if you are ignorant of the terms of the contract, you cannot be baptized into the family of God.

God can work with you without repentance or baptism, even performing miracles through you (**Romans 11:29**). You can understand much truth and even have the spirit of God work with you (**Acts 10:44-48**), but until you are baptized and formally commit yourself to His covenant, you cannot partake of the Passover or have your sins forgiven. And **you will not be a part of the resurrection of Christ unless you take part in His death – which you do at baptism (Romans 6:4-7)**.

WHEN TO BE BAPTIZED

Peter said “repent, and be baptized”. He said it in that order for a reason. John the Baptist clearly required “works” to prove they had repented of their sins. Works such as you just read above. **If you are knowingly committing sins, being baptized won't help you.**

That is a shocking statement, so let me explain. I'm not saying you have to be perfect. Baptism is the beginning of the journey, not the end. But if you are still living with your girlfriend, you haven't repented of your old lifestyle – you're still actively participating in it. If you're still telling lies in order to sell a car, you haven't repented. If you're still working on the Sabbath or knowingly breaking any of the Ten Commandments, then you are still a servant of sin and until that changes you cannot be a servant of God.

How hard is it to say, “No, I won’t steal today”? Have you committed adultery today? If no, that’s one commandment you’ve kept. Have you killed anyone? That’s two. Prayed to any idols today? That’s three! See, this really isn’t that hard! **If you can’t get your life in order even that much, then you haven’t repented!** You should keep working on yourself and come back to God when you TRULY hate your old life and are REALLY ready to change.

You may want to review Lessons 3 and 4, since that is the code by which you will be living your new life. But after study, and repentance, and conversion, and works which prove repentance has taken place, it’s time to be baptized. When your conscience before God is clean, you are ready. This might take a few weeks or months or even years.

But when you’ve “gotten your house in order” – when you’re keeping the Ten Commandments, tithing, keeping the Sabbath and Holy Days, not eating foods God calls “abominations”, and living by “every word of God” to the best of your knowledge, then you are able to enter into this contract with God. And once you are, you should seek baptism as soon as possible, before God withdraws His offer; study this scripture: **Isaiah 55:6-7**.

God won’t abandon you when you’re sincerely trying; but if you keep putting Him off and putting other things first, He will move on to someone who truly “*seeks first the kingdom of God*”. Seek Him now, while He can still be found.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

God requires more from you than you’ve heard. God’s way isn’t like what the false Christianity teaches, where you only have to say a few penitent words, maybe a “sinner’s prayer”, and that’s it, you’re saved. God’s reward is infinitely greater than the reward offered by today’s so-called Christianity, and His requirements are also much greater.

But God’s way of life creates true, righteous character; His requirements produce beings who are qualified to rule the universe and who will never sin again. Satan’s way produces mindless sheep who are qualified to do nothing but sit on a cloud and harp, or stare into his face and say “holy, holy, holy” over and over until the universe itself dies of boredom.

God is working towards a future where billions of incorruptibly righteous people take part in building a family. One that will eventually populate the universe with righteous people who would rather die than hurt someone or cause even a tear to be shed.

Baptism is the beginning of your part in that future, not the end. Baptism will not give you a new-found ability to obey God. You will not have a greater power to resist sin. All it does is irrevocably commit you and God to the terms of the New Covenant.

You will not magically be transformed into a good person after being a sinner all your life. Much of that should have been done before you consider baptism. It will however make you a child of God. It will begin your life as a true Christian. It will make you a part of the family of God.

But this is only part of the story – the other half of the process of salvation is in Lesson 20. Meanwhile, I never actually answered the title question of this lesson, “Has God called you?” But the answer is easy: **1 Corinthians 2:14**. If what God says makes sense, then you’ve been called. If it doesn’t, you haven’t been. Yes, it’s that simple.

NOTES

This work is completely non-denominational and is meant to fulfill Christ's great commission to "*preach the gospel to every creature*" (**Mark 16:15**). **This publication is not to be sold;** "*freely ye have received, freely give*" (**Matthew 10:8**).

The Bible tells us to PROVE ALL THINGS, and The Simple Answers encourages people to do just that. If you cannot PROVE what you believe, you have no right to believe it! Many of the things we print are shocking because they are different from what you've heard, but if something we say offends or upsets you, we hope you will take the time to set aside your preconceived ideas and PROVE your point from the Bible to see if you truly have been right all these years.

We are dedicated to providing the SIMPLE answers to difficult questions. Please submit questions and/or comments to us using the contact information below.

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